



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Assembly**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Sixth Parliament  
First Session**

**Wednesday, 22 June 2016**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Committees .....	1
Standing Committee on Parliamentary Privilege and Ethics .....	1
Privileges Committee.....	1
Reports .....	1
Bills .....	1
Point to Point Transport (Taxis and Hire Vehicles) Bill 2016.....	1
Second Reading .....	1
Third Reading .....	17
Taxation Administration Amendment (Collection and Disclosure of Information to Commonwealth) Bill 2016.....	17
Second Reading .....	17
Third Reading .....	22
Marine Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 .....	22
Second Reading .....	22
Third Reading .....	28
Community Recognition Statements .....	28
Tribute to Frank Allen .....	28
Myall Electorate School Leaders Breakfast.....	28
Order of Australia recipient Dr Aiden Foy .....	29
st marys National Servicemen's Memorial .....	29
Tribute to John Beach .....	29
Australian Gymnastics Championships .....	29
tribute to JAN MARTIN.....	30
QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOUR list AWARD RECIPIENTS.....	30
TRIBUTE TO GARY BURRELL.....	30
TRIBUTE TO CHRIS JOHNSTON.....	30
SCHOOLS SPECTACULAR.....	30
DUDLEY COMBINED PENSIONERS AND SENIOR CITIZENS ASSOCIATION .....	30
HILLCLIMB CHAMPIONSHIPS.....	31
AURORA BALL .....	31
QUEENS BIRTHDAY HONOUR list AWARD RECIPIENTs .....	31
BLUE MOUNTAINS BUSHFIRE PLAN .....	31
TAREE AND DISTRICT EISTEDDFOD .....	32
TEA GARDENS PUBLIC SCHOOL.....	32
Cronulla Sharks Leagues Club.....	32
Pasami Saulo, Maitland rugby league player.....	33
myall lakes electorate rifle shooters.....	33
Rosemeadow Seniors Group.....	33
Craig muhlbock, special olympics world winter games representative .....	33
Myall University of the Third Age .....	33

## TABLE OF CONTENTS—*continuing*

Visitors.....	34
Visitors.....	34
Question Time.....	34
Goods and Services Tax.....	34
state budget .....	36
State Budget and Community Safety.....	37
Political donations and spending caps .....	39
State Budget and Transport and Infrastructure .....	40
Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight comments .....	41
State Budget and Housing.....	41
Callan Park.....	42
State Budget and Regional Jobs.....	43
Committees .....	44
Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development.....	44
Membership .....	44
Business of the House .....	44
suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders.....	44
Order of Business.....	44
Petitions.....	45
Petitions.....	45
Business of the House .....	45
Warragamba Dam .....	45
Precedence .....	45
TAFE NSW.....	46
Precedence .....	46
Motions Accorded Priority .....	47
State Budget and Regional New South Wales .....	47
Consideration .....	47
Goods and Services Tax.....	48
Consideration .....	48
State Budget and Regional New South Wales .....	49
Priority .....	49
Bills .....	54
Local Government Amendment (Governance and Planning) Bill 2016.....	54
First Reading.....	54
Second Reading .....	54
Adoption Amendment (Institute of Open Adoption Studies) Bill 2016.....	57
First Reading.....	57
Second Reading .....	57
Private Members' Statements .....	59
Leichhardt Streetscape .....	59
Central Coast Train Maintenance Facility .....	60

## TABLE OF CONTENTS—*continuing*

Tribute to Judith Helen Jakins, AM.....	61
Royal north shore hospital administrative building .....	62
Curran Public School .....	62
ikew Visitor Information Centre.....	63
Marist Catholic College Penshurst.....	64
Workers Compensation Legislation.....	65
NORTHERN TABLELANDS REGIONALISATION OPPORTUNITIES .....	66
PEACE SYMPOSIUM.....	66
Petersham TAFE West Street Campus .....	67
Camden Fire Station Centenary .....	68
Concord Hospital funding.....	69
Ryde Rotarians.....	70
Rock Fishers life jackets .....	71
ADOBE DIGITAL SCHOOL WORKSHOP .....	72
KIAMA STUDENT LEADERS FORUM.....	72
Ramadan 2016 .....	73
Ungarie Floods.....	75
Middle Dural Public School 125th Anniversary.....	76
BISHOP OF PARRAMATTA.....	77
PUBLIC SCHOOLS MAINTENANCE BACKLOG .....	78
Bills .....	79
Local Government and Elections Legislation Amendment (Integrity) Bill 2016.....	79
Returned.....	79
Matter of Public Importance .....	79
Refugee Week.....	79

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Wednesday, 22 June 2016**

**The SPEAKER (The Hon. Shelley Elizabeth Hancock)** took the chair at 10:00.

**The SPEAKER** read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

## *Committees*

### **STANDING COMMITTEE ON PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE AND ETHICS**

#### **PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE**

#### **Reports**

**The SPEAKER (10:12):** I inform the House that, together with Mr President, I have received correspondence from the Premier concerning the 2014 reports of the Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Parliamentary Privilege and Ethics and the Legislative Council Privileges Committee. The Premier has advised that the Government agrees broadly with the direction for reform contained in the reports and considers that the new arrangements proposed in those reports should apply consistently to members of both Houses of Parliament. He notes that the recommendations in the reports differ in some respects and requests that the Houses work together to provide a single set of recommendations. He further indicates that the Government is open to considering other reforms that may assist in improving the integrity, transparency or operations of the Parliament. Mr President and I responded in writing yesterday, advising that we will be pleased to assist in relation to this matter and outlining our proposed approach.

I table a letter from the Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and the President of the Legislative Council regarding recommendations contained in Report 2/55 of the Privileges Committee, dated 1 June 2016. I also table a letter from the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and the President of the Legislative Council to the Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney regarding recommendations contained in Report 2/55 of the Standing Committee on Parliamentary Privilege and Ethics and Report No. 70 of the Legislative Council Privileges Committee, dated 21 June 2016.

## *Bills*

### **POINT TO POINT TRANSPORT (TAXIS AND HIRE VEHICLES) BILL 2016**

#### **Second Reading**

**Debate resumed from 21 June 2016.**

**Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) (10:13):** I speak on the Point to Point Transport (Taxis and Hire Vehicles) Bill 2016, which proposes a series of broad measures following the release of a report by the Point to Point Transport Taskforce. This legislation will create two different authorised entities—providers of taxi services and providers of booking services; establish a new regulatory framework for the point to point industry; install a new standalone regulator; allow the deregulation of booked fares; and introduce new measures to ensure compliance by ridesharing services and other business models.

In 2015, the Point to Point Transport Taskforce presented a report with a recommendation concerning the future sustainability of taxis, hire cars and other emerging point to point transport providers. The taskforce recommended legislating and modernising the regulatory regime. I note that the Government has accepted 56 of the 57 recommendations of the taskforce. These were necessary due to the emergence of ridesharing services and the lack of regulation, which has been a challenge. This bill will create a more level playing field for taxi services and providers of booking services.

The bill before us will provide a \$250 million industry adjustment package, which the Government has approved. This package will deliver up to \$10 million for a buyback scheme for perpetual hire car licensees; provide funding for transition assistance of \$20,000 per perpetual licence; and provide assistance for taxi licensees facing hardship due to the changes. This package will be funded through a temporary passenger vehicle levy equivalent to \$1 per trip for up to five years. A transitional assistance panel will be established with representation from the NSW Taxi Council to oversee the assistance package. This panel will also advise the Minister on eligibility.

The legislation will create a Commissioner for Point to Point Transport, who will have significant and wideranging powers. The commissioner will have the following functions under clause 139: administer the

authorisation and licensing scheme established by the Act; manage the enforcement of the Act and regulations; recommend safety and other standards for passenger services and for booking services; assist in the determination of liabilities for an enforcement of payment of the passenger service levy; and advise the Minister on matters relating to passenger services and booking services.

This bill will also allow ridesharing by removing red tape relating to ridesharing such as limitations on vehicle types and regulations for ridesharing companies in the new regulatory regime. Under the creation of the two-tiered system, taxis will and can only undertake rank and hail work, as is the case under the Passenger Transport Act 1990. Other booking providers will face severe penalties if they undertake rank and hail work. The safety regime will now make companies directly accountable for the safety of the vehicle and drivers operating under them. The bill will ensure that taxi service providers and booking service providers have a primary duty of care to the health of drivers, passengers and other persons in the provision of the service. Taxis will be forced also to undergo two annual inspections. I welcome any legislation that provides a level playing field for the taxi industry and booking service providers, which is why I support the legislation before the House.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (10:17):** I speak on the Point to Point Transport (Taxi and Hire Vehicles) Bill 2016. I commence by acknowledging the taxi service providers in my electorate who have discussed with me the issues they are having as a result of the disruption they are suffering in this brave new world. I acknowledge Mr Roy Wakelin-King in the gallery. I have known him for a number of years from my time working in the transport industry. Some months ago I met him and Mr Emery, Chief Executive Officer of Central Coast Taxis, with the member for Wyong, my predecessor in the small business portfolio. I spoke to Mr Wakelin-King last night. He has been an advocate for the many small businesses in this space.

I worked in the transport industry for 17 years prior to my entry to this place and have a very good understanding of Transport for NSW and the challenges that operators have faced with emerging technologies and consumer behaviours that are changing quickly in transport. The single most important issue in transport is safety. Under the former Labor Government, my own company worked through the implementation of one of the most comprehensive safety management systems in Australia, which put the onus on operators to keep their heavy vehicles safe and compliant and ensure that their drivers were safe and caring properly for passengers. Under Labor, New South Wales was seen as raising the bar on safety in public transport in respect of vehicles for passengers and the wider road-using community. Employee records, which is the most important aspect of ensuring employees are paid properly, were implemented and comprehensive.

These changes were very important for the viability of public transport in our State to ensure that public transport, which is such a core tool for reducing congestion, was able to continue to operate efficiently and effectively on a statewide level. They were difficult times and changes for operators and their staff but they were done with transparency, clarity, and communication with the sector. Labor takes very seriously its obligations to protect the safety of all road users and passengers and to ensure drivers are paid properly. Now we see another area of significant change in the transport industry—point to point transport. The taxis and hire cars that provide the links between mass transit systems of ferries, trains and buses are undergoing fundamental changes.

Earlier this month I heard Gary Ellem, a thought leader at the University of Newcastle, talk about transport and the opportunities and challenges of emerging technologies in this area. I have to say it was seriously mind blowing. The opportunities of technology in the field of transport will transform the way we move around our communities. The ability of computers to change point to point technology systems will change not just taxis but in future will lead to significant changes to group point to point travel, that is, buses.

And then there are the driverless cars. I spoke to Gary about this issue, because in a region like mine with such high unemployment relative to the rest of the State for such a long time under this Government, and with such a reliance on heavy vehicle drivers in our economy, I wanted to know how I would be able to ensure that jobs would still be available for members of our community in such an environment. Gary was very positive about the opportunities for employment. He talked about how seriously growing public transport in our community would enable us to come to a point where public transport was frequent enough, cost-efficient enough and better for people to the extent that they might make a permanent move away from cars.

In the short term, that would create much more work for bus drivers. In the final analysis, if we did go to driverless cars then we would still need to have the car equivalent of a flight simulator to take over in the event of breakdowns, accidents or other emergencies, or we might have a return to people being employed to provide the safety, security and social interactions that drivers provide in vehicles. There might be conductors or security guards, and with more reliable and accessible public transport there might even be carers for people with disability.

These are all amazing opportunities for the community but they require us to grapple with enormous challenges and risks to small businesses and government, and they are raised in the bill that we are debating today. How will we provide a level playing field for taxis, hire cars and Uber drivers when it comes to compulsory third

party insurance green slips? How will we ensure that women, people with disability, young people and other vulnerable members of our community are not exposed to safety issues when they travel as passengers? When the Government is no longer going to authorise drivers of vehicles under Roads and Maritime Services what will this do for passenger safety? Drivers will have to undergo criminal background and medical checks, as well as the requirement to have a licence. But how in this new environment will we ensure centralised agency oversight of the suitability of drivers?

We have seen this happen in other industries. Sometimes consumers need to be protected for their own good. We saw the Government's failure to do this, and its desire to throw up its hands when it cannot get its head around the technology. Indeed, the Government could not work out a way to deal with the burgeoning problem of fraud in the booking of travel arrangements over the internet. Instead of strengthening the protections for consumers and the industry, it dismantled the travel agency compensation fund, leaving consumers totally unprotected and leaving travel agents who paid high interest fees to get into the industry struggling to pay ongoing exorbitant insurances to provide the same protections to their customers.

In this bill we yet again see the Government letting an international operator with an aggressive policy of non-compliance compete with those mums and dads who year-in, year-out have been providing a service to our community. Where has the Government been in the past 12 months, or indeed the past few years when Uber commenced its operations in Australia? Luckily, it was the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Luke Foley, who had the foresight a year ago to see that consumer behaviour was moving far more quickly than the Government on this issue and called for regulation. It is such a pity that the Government has not embraced taxi owners in compensation for the risks that this change has placed on their small businesses. The compensation package is not adequate for those taxidriviers who paid a small fortune, and it was all they had, to buy themselves a job just to try to provide a service to our community.

Only now, on the one-year anniversary of the Leader of the Opposition's budget reply speech, do we see the Government coming in with a package that is, frankly, insulting to the many mums and dads who have scrimped and saved to get a taxi plate and then worked their guts out to pay it back and provide for their families. When I was growing up we lived next door to a taxi-owning family. This family was not rich. They worked hard. They had a large market garden that they spent their waking hours tending to provide food for their family. They supplemented that with the income they got from driving all night in the taxis. They were not rich. They were not entitled. They were not leaners; they were real workers. I saw the struggles and the sacrifices they made to keep their taxis on the road and to provide for the family.

This bill should do more for the mums and dads, not for the investors. These are businesses of mums and dads who did not just make a bad investment decision. They worked for hours a day to pay off the job that they had bought for themselves when they bought their taxi plates. They did not throw their money away on a property market which did not appreciate. They did not throw their money away on the stock market. Many of them were migrants and they bought jobs for themselves. I am also concerned about the cherry-picking of routes and event times in regional areas. It is hard enough to run a taxi in a regional area like Maitland. People in Maitland do not have the ability, like people do in Sydney, to walk outside and hail a cab. Operators in Maitland at many times of the day are struggling make an income. The peak events in regional areas provide operators with a little bit of incentive to continue their work.

We also need to look at the fairness of compensation. How can hire car vehicles get a \$60,000 compensation package and taxis only get \$20,000? More importantly, the adjustment package applies only to those who purchased taxi plates after 1 July 2015. Although NSW taxi licence prices have been falling since 2012, when they were selling for well over \$400,000, in the past year there have been more than 70 licences sold for between \$200,000 and \$332,000. Where is the compensation for people who bought at those prices? What about these 70 people—these 70 mums and dads who have purchased taxis? What compensation will they get? Although the bill does not address the amount of compensation, how was the magic figure of \$250,000 determined? What modelling was done to find out how much money the consumer levy would raise?

Why are we not looking at an industry assistance package like those for forestry, water, dairy, river red gums and marine industries? Most importantly, why does the Minister have discretion? I acknowledge that there are very large operators in this State who operate taxis but there are also small mum-and-dad organisations—there is a huge gap between the size of the small operators and that of the large ones. As that is clearly the case we need to ensure that solutions are implemented with transparency and clarity. The Minister for Transport and Infrastructure has not demonstrated that transparency and clarity in many of his dealings with the community in my electorate. Examine the thought processes of the Minister, who has ripped up a rail line in Newcastle but, 18 months later, has not replaced it with anything. That is the kind of deal the taxi industry will get from this Minister, and it is just not enough.



**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (10:27):** I make a contribution to the debate on the Point to Point Transport (Taxis and Hire Vehicles) Bill 2016. I am pleased to finally see a bill that will regulate Uber and other ridesharing services and which will also modernise the regulation of the taxi industry. Labor foreshadowed this some time ago, and now the Government has caught up. The creation of a Point to Point Transport Commissioner is warranted to ensure that this industry transformation works well for industry participants and passengers. But this bill is not without its shortcomings. Too much power is vested in the Minister to implement changes to the industry through regulation—significant changes that should be debated by this House. And the compensation package and its mechanism need to be reviewed sooner rather than later.

There is no information provided on the financial modelling to justify the levy; it is quite possibly inadequate to fully compensate the loss it is designed to ameliorate. The member for Rockdale spoke about this yesterday. He is very well informed on the issue, having worked as an accountant with many families who have invested in the taxi industry over many decades. When I worked at Transport for NSW, I mainly worked on taxi policy—specifically wheelchair-accessible taxis—so I am very familiar with the current regulatory framework and the issues facing the industry and passengers. The taxi industry is a significant player in the Granville electorate. Premier Cabs, the largest taxi network outside the Sydney central business district, operates from Granville and employs around 500 people either directly or indirectly.

I know dozens of taxidriver families. Working as a taxidriver or investing in taxi licences has been a common pathway to successful settlement in Australia for migrant families for decades—from Lebanese and Turkish migrants who have been driving taxis for decades, some of whom are now owner drivers, to more recent arrivals from Afghanistan who have been driving cabs for only the past few years. Those who have invested in taxi licences have seen the value of those licences almost halve since the introduction of ridesharing services. Compensation is necessary and a mechanism for compensation is outlined in the bill, but too much remains undisclosed. Consumers will pay a \$1 fee to fund the compensation, but who is to say if this will be over or under the cost of adequate compensation commensurate with the loss in value of people's investments?

We are not only talking about changes in technology and fashion rendering someone's investment less valuable. This is not like suggesting governments should compensate video shop owners for videos going out of fashion. We are talking about people who have made investments in taxi licences at a market value determined by the regulatory monopoly on point to point passenger services. Many of those investors have no other investments. We know that. Their taxi licence is their superannuation. As for the drivers, they work hard, long hours for little remuneration. Bailment means drivers often earn much less than the minimum wage; it means they have to pay to go to work. I was really hoping that this bill would go some way to addressing the major flaws in the bailment system and also ensure that drivers for ridesharing services are not treated just as poorly as self-employed contractors. But it does not. It is a major deficiency and one that Labor will seek to amend in the other place.

Ridesharing, it seems, is here to stay. The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] found that 22 per cent of those surveyed had used a ridesharing service in the preceding year. Users cite customer service and price as the reasons for choosing ridesharing services. But their cost models are not the same. Compulsory third party [CTP] insurance cripples the taxi industry. They are deemed to be the highest risk vehicles when setting premiums. Ridesharing vehicles are usually insured as private vehicles—for 10 per cent of the cost—yet they are often doing the same thing, conveying passengers. The effect of that is to give a free ride to ridesharing services, which by being on the road more will have more accidents. That will increase the insurance premiums of their entire vehicle class, that is, cars for private use. After acquiring or leasing licences, which ridesharing services do not need either, insurance is one of the largest costs incurred to operate a taxi. I am pleased that the Minister has acknowledged the discrepancy around CTP insurance and has committed to addressing it.

Overall, I am disappointed that the approach to point to point transport has been to remove regulation from the taxi industry, bringing it down to the level of ridesharing services instead of bringing ridesharing services up to the standards required of taxis. Taxis are on the road for most of the day every day. The wear and tear on the vehicles is enormous. There is no need to remove the requirement that taxis operating in Sydney be under six years old. There is no good reason why ridesharing vehicles should not also be limited to newer vehicles, given that they may be driven as heavily as taxis. In fact, it is widely believed that the maintenance required on vehicles used as heavily as taxis rises significantly after six years, so the current restrictions are sensible and practical.

Reducing the frequency of vehicle inspections will not improve customer service. It is true that a recent blitz on taxis found a large percentage were not completely roadworthy and compliant despite the frequency of inspections. That is no reason to abandon the frequency of inspections; it is a good reason to subject all point to point services to the same regulatory regime. But, as far as I am concerned, the removal of driver authorisations that the Minister flagged in his second reading speech is of greatest concern. Taxidriver families have invested time and money in gaining qualifications that are now worthless. Beyond that, there are important customer service

principles, particularly for more vulnerable customers such as people with disabilities, which are taught as part of the driver authorisation training. In fact, those principles should be strengthened and all point to point drivers should undergo that training.

There is a misconception that customers with disabilities all use wheelchair-accessible taxis. That is not the case. Many people with disabilities can and do use standard taxis or ridesharing services, but that does not mean they do not need additional care and attention. I do not believe the training provided by ridesharing services is adequate, nor do I believe that establishing that someone does not have a criminal record is a high enough threshold to identify their suitability to enclose customers in a car, where they become inherently vulnerable. I have seen no evidence that ridesharing services provide adequate and specialised training for drivers to ensure that they can meet the needs of customers with disabilities.

Lowering the standards of all point to point service providers to that of ridesharing services is not the solution; raising ridesharing services to the standards applied to taxis is. Every year there are at least a few hundred taxidriver that lose their driver authorisation and can no longer work in the industry as a taxidriver. Around two-thirds lose their authorisation because they lose their licence. The other third lose their authorisation for a significant breach or a series of minor breaches. Either way, this is a significant disincentive to drivers to mistreat their passengers or to fail to maintain their cab. In fact, it removes the disincentive. There is benefit in placing a greater onus on the booking service to be responsible for the delivery of a quality and timely service, but that should not remove the responsibility placed on drivers through their driver authorisations. Ridesharing service drivers should also be authorised. All this is possible within the training and accreditation regime mentioned in the bill. But the Minister has made it clear in his second reading speech that he does not support maintaining the requirement for drivers to be authorised. Removing the requirement to join a network is a positive step that will particularly benefit people wanting to provide point to point transport in rural areas. There are many tales of new entrants being barred by network operators in rural and regional New South Wales, even those with wheelchair-accessible taxis.

At the same time, we do not want to see the operators of one or two car networks being sent to the wall by weekend warrior ridesharing service providers doing the pub trips on Friday and Saturday nights. Those services cross-subsidise weekday operations, without which many older residents of country towns cannot get around. The taxi industry has been challenged by the market entry of ridesharing services; that much is clear. But that does not mean ridesharing services are inherently better than taxis for customers or drivers. They are just new and trendy. The taxi industry does need to lift its game as far as customer service is concerned. But that is not achieved through industry self-regulation if government regulation has not been effective.

The best thing to do is to have a level playing field by ensuring ridesharing services are not undercutting taxis through their lower cost margins while underpaying drivers and calling them subcontractors, not bailee drivers. It is fair and just to remove the requirement to be a licensed taxi if those who have invested in licences are adequately compensated. It is important to address the disparity in compulsory third party [CTP] insurance, but there is much more to this issue. Unfortunately, all that will be in the regulations, and the Minister seems uninterested in ensuring the wellbeing of drivers and customers by having blind faith in industry self-regulation.

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (10:36):** Many of the facts relating to the Point to Point Transport (Taxis and Hire Vehicles) Bill 2016 have been stated, but it is worthwhile restating the objects of the bill. The purpose of the bill is to establish a new regulatory framework for the point to point transport industry and a new standalone regulator. The bill contains measures to ensure compliance of ridesharing services and other emerging business models as well as provide a mechanism for industry assistance that is funded by a temporary levy on service providers, but it will not set the quantum of any particular assistance. My motivation for participation in this debate is fundamental. Two weeks ago, in conjunction with a couple of my colleagues, I held a community dinner for local constituents as part of the Ramadan celebration.

**Mr John Sidoti:** Iftar, iftar.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** It was an iftar, yes. I am sure my colleague the member for Drummoyne would have attended a few iftars as well. He should have joined us for that one.

**Mr John Sidoti:** Family. It is all about family.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** Maybe next year. It was a great evening. However, towards the latter part of the evening a gentleman, whose name I know, approached me. He knew that I was going to be attending the iftar so he joined my colleagues and me. He looked me in the eye and said, "Mr Dib, I need your help because I will have to sell my house." When he went into matters more deeply, it was revealed that he has to sell his house because he owns a taxi plate. He cannot afford to make his mortgage repayments and simultaneously deal with the expense of owning a taxi plate. I made the commitment to him that when the opportunity presented itself I would speak in

Parliament about his story. All members tell stories about real people, individuals, in our electorates because they are the ones we represent. They are the ones we come here for and for whom we are a voice. That is what they expect from us.

Are taxi reforms needed? Absolutely. But the stories are similar: a family man will have to sell his house because he has been placed in a position he was not expecting to be in when he first bought taxi plates. He bought the plates from the government and they were backed by the government. The expectation was that it was a good and safe investment and that the purchaser would not be duded by the government. A couple of years ago the plates potentially were worth \$400,000 and now some people are saying they are worth \$180,000. Who would buy taxi plates for \$180,000 at the moment? I do not think there are any takers. I will deal with this in more detail later, particularly in the context of the compensation package which has been put on hold. When a member of Parliament looks into the eyes of a person, listens to their story and makes a promise to them, we fulfil our obligation by coming into this House and telling their story.

If we forget that we are here to represent the people and to tell their stories, then we will be making decisions that will worsen people's lives. Another gentleman I know named Basher, who migrated from Bangladesh with his family about 15 years ago, also owns a taxi. I always wondered what he did for a living until one day I saw him driving a taxi. Basher rents a house; he decided to invest in a taxi plate rather than buy a house. He works the taxi when he can and when he cannot he rents it out to try to eke out a living so that his daughter can go to university and have a better life.

All of a sudden, the investment he has put his heart and soul into has crashed in value. He does not have the requisite skills to stand up and make a speech in English nor does he have the finances to hire a lawyer to conduct a legal case. All he can do is tell his story, which he hopes will be retold. I keep talking about these real stories because Basher's story is not dissimilar to that of the other 600-odd owners of taxi plates. These stories are about real people who purchased these plates from the government in the belief that their investment would be safe and that current events would not occur.

As I have said, there is a place in the sharing economy for everyone. If regulation is required, it should be done correctly. Ever since Uber landed on our shores in late 2012, it has continued to grow. A number of constituents in my electorate own taxi plates and a number also have become Uber drivers because they believe it provides a better lifestyle. The taxi industry was in need of reform. Whilst this bill contains many sensible elements, I focus on the provision of adequate compensation. It has been announced that a levy of \$1 per ride will potentially raise \$250 million. More detail about that would be appreciated.

The taxi industry is not just any old industry. For example, some of The Nationals members in this House have said that there may be only one or two taxidrivers in some regional towns. Those drivers rely on that work, especially on the weekend. They made that investment but they are being forced to comply with regulations that others do not have to comply with. I ask the Minister to explain in his reply how he reached the figure of \$250 million. What was the rationale for that figure? How does that figure stack up against other industry compensation schemes such as those applied to, for example, the forestry, fishing and dairy industries? We have been told that there will be \$20,000 compensation for an owner of a plate. For argument sake, let us say a plate is worth \$400,000—

**Mr Andrew Constance:** It is \$20,000.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** I am hoping it will be more than \$20,000; that is 5 per cent of the original investment, or the current cost of the plate. I also ask for details about the hardship package.

**Mr John Sidoti:** They are there.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** They are not there. The member can convince himself of that but they are not clear. Those who put their faith in the government and thought they had made a fairly safe investment will receive \$20,000. What about their long-term investment? They have been duded. That is something that people do not expect from government. I do not normally use that sort of language but these mums and dads who made this huge commitment are losing on their investments and we are saying to them, "You can have \$20,000 for something that was worth \$400,000—but you can keep your plates." That is an absolute joke. A review will be conducted after 12 months. It is important that that review is undertaken in order to see what the market has done.

If this legislation passes, it will be unlikely that those taxi plates will be worth \$400,000 in one year. At the same time, their compulsory third party [CTP] insurance is going up to \$8,000, whereas drivers in the rideshare economy pay the same CTP as you and I pay. That is very unfair. Another issue that may not have been considered is taxidriver training. A gentleman by the name of Mr Ahmed came to see me earlier this year. Mr Ahmed is in some trouble because he entered into a commercial agreement with a private enterprise and now his business is bankrupt because there is no need for a taxidriver training school. I hope that the hardship assistance package will

cover people like Mr Ahmed who, as a result of the Government's decision to pass legislation such as the bill before us, has lost his livelihood. People make investment decisions knowing the risks, but the risks are mitigated when people invest in a business that appears to be a government product. They do not expect to be duded by government, as is happening over and over again.

Reform is important and reform done well is fundamental. Nobody wants to live in a society that does not move forward, but we all want to live in a society where there is justice, fairness and equity. The bill as it currently stands has too many ambiguities. More questions need to be asked about the content of the bill. If the proposed \$20,000 compensation is the first step, what are the following steps? I remind members of the story of the gentleman I met at the iftar. His was a real story. People will suffer as a result of decisions made by a government that does not take into account that people invested in a government product. As I said, people do not expect to be duded by government.

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (10:46):** I speak in debate on the Point to Point Transport (Taxis and Hire Vehicles) Bill 2016. On 11 June 1962 John F. Kennedy, in his commencement address to Yale University, said:

We enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought.

I want members to remember those words because they are relevant to the arguments I want to raise in relation to this bill. I acknowledge the contributions and sentiments of members from both sides on this bill. Labor's shadow Minister for Transport, the member for Strathfield, outlined a detailed and thoughtful analysis of the bill. My Labor colleagues have made and will continue to make strong points about different aspects of the bill, such as safety standards, working conditions for drivers, fair competition, and other regulatory changes. I even note the opinion of the member for Ku-ring-gai as to who can better manage rapid changes in innovation and technology, although I suspect that there are differing opinions on his conclusion. At least I know that Labor's conclusion is based on the truth.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** At least say it like you mean it.

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG:** All harmless banter aside, the pace of change in innovative technology has often left our legislative and/or regulatory framework behind. In seeking changes to this framework, our primary questions should be fundamentally: What are we regulating for? How does it improve economic and social outcomes? What type of regulatory model should we consider? Who is best to manage the regulatory framework? Governments should not necessarily be the first and only port of call. It had always been my view that regulatory changes to the taxi and hire vehicle industry should focus on promoting fairer competition between new and existing participants, protecting safety standards for drivers and passengers and putting in place minimum and fair working conditions for drivers. I note that this bill and future regulatory changes have gone some way to addressing these issues. A number of members have already articulated these points, and I do not want to repeat them.

Today I will focus on the issue of market failure, which is greatly influenced by the lack of market information. This is an important point on the issue of the estimated \$250 million to be raised through the levy and distributed accordingly. As elected representatives, we should be slow in asking the public for money but we should be quick in justifying how this amount was chosen and how it is objectively and transparently going to be distributed. There are arguments for the implementation of compensation regimes to address drastic issues of market change which cause permanent and considerable disadvantage to affected participants in the market. However, on this occasion, there is a lack of market information from the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure and how the proposed \$250 million was chosen is being kept from us. To me, that represents market failure because our proposed outcomes may not achieve the best possible outcomes for the industry, for participants, for taxidriver and, of course, for the consumer and our economy as a whole.

Without market information it is not possible for us to come to an evidence-based conclusion on whether the proposed levy and its allocation plan is adequate. If the amount to be raised is insufficient it could be argued that it is unfair to those most affected. If the amount is too much it could be unfair on consumers and on our economy. But we do not know because of the lack of market information. There is a taxi rank just outside my electorate office. Every day I am reminded of those taxidriver, the families and the small-time investors who have made sacrifices to invest in an industry that is regulated by government and I think of them and their livelihoods.

Markets want clarity and consistency in the decision-making process. That requires the disclosure of market information because we need to substantiate what it is we are trying to do. Market signals are important because those who are affected need support to understand why these decisions are being made. For example, we need to know the value of the market asset of the taxi plates. Are they tradeable? How much are they worth in this secondary market? How much has their value decreased because of these changes or because of the new entrants?

What are the advantages of the asset that young families have invested in? How much are these assets worth now with these changes? Without market information, we cannot substantiate the decisions we have made.

The consequence for the market economy as a whole is that if we are taking money out of the economy then the multiplier effect to our economy is reduced. If we are taking too much out of our economy it means that the ability for people in our communities to spend, which would stimulate jobs and activity, could be reduced. But we do not know that, nobody knows that, because there is a lack of market information. Market assets and market values are important because that is the way trading and economic efficiencies are achieved. We want the best and fairest outcome for everybody who is involved, particularly for those who are greatly disadvantaged. The principle of justifying the things we do in this House is fundamental in our roles. We cannot do our jobs properly if we are lacking the most fundamental ingredient of the decisions that we make, that is, justifying to our communities, the drivers, families, investors and consumers why we are taking this decision.

I urge the Minister to be more transparent in his decision-making process around how this figure was chosen because it has an impact on markets. We do not know what it is going on. The distribution process needs to be objective and transparent because people need to know what is fair, what is harsh and who is going to receive the levy that is raised. In general, I think all Australians believe in fairness; it is a strong part of our ethos. The raising of any levy—whether it is a flood levy or a gun levy—is justified through public policy debate. But that can only be done if the market information is readily available, and then people can have discussions and be able to justify what they are trying to do.

I am concerned that the lack of market information will lead to market failure. We are sending insufficient information and justification to the market and the signals are concerning. They set a precedent. The words I quoted of John F. Kennedy in his commencement address to Yale are relevant. Without market information for all of us to analyse, assess and debate, we are enjoying the comforts of our opinion, whereas as public representatives we should be seeking the discomfort of thought. That discomfort of thought can happen only if we are given the information and detail to debate a fair outcome. We should seek as a goal the discomfort of thought. I ask the Minister to explain how the figure was chosen so that we can justify the outcome to the electorate, to the drivers and to the consumers who use ridesharing platforms. It affects us all. Market consistency and clarity are the way a good market economy works. The absence of the important ingredient of market information represents market failure.

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (10:55):** The Point to Point Transport (Taxis and Hire Vehicles) Bill 2016 is broad and will achieve a number of outcomes. Through the inception of this legislation a new regulatory framework for the point to point industry will be established and a new standalone regulator will be installed. The new measures will be implemented to ensure compliance by ridesharing services and the emerging business models. The legislation will enact a new mechanism for industry assistance which will be funded by a temporary levy on service providers. This mechanism does not set the minimum or maximum threshold for any assistance.

In recent years, many members in this Chamber have met with various community groups regarding point to point industries. I have met with members of the taxi industry and at each meeting I have heard their concerns. They have detailed the hardships faced as the market evolved and they faced unregulated competition. Not a single person failed to mention the onerous costs placed on them to register and to comply with current laws and how such regulations impacted on their business and created an unfair playing field. This was due to the emergence of ridesharing services and the lack of existing regulation.

This legislation aims to give everyone in the point to point industry a fair shake. I note that an industry adjustment package valued at \$200 million has been approved by the Government. This package will provide assistance to taxi licensees who are facing hardships as a result of industry changes. It will provide transition assistance of \$20,000 for perpetual licences. However, this is available for only two licences. This package will facilitate a buyback scheme for hire car licences. The Government has yet to detail the criteria that needs to be met to determine that an individual is going through hardships and is eligible for this assistance. Further, we have no idea how the Government arrived at this miraculous figure, nor is there any guarantee that the available funding will be adequate to assist those in need.

We need to remember the number of individuals and small businesses who have been affected by these changes and the adversity they have had to face in recent times. The cost of this package will be funded through a short-term passenger service levy which may be in place for up to five years. This bill provides for a levy of \$1 to be added to every point to point transport trip. The duration of this levy is at the discretion of the Minister. The Point to Point Transport Commissioner will be given powers to assist the Chief Commissioner of State Revenue with the collection of the levy, including the ability to take compliance and enforcement action in certain circumstances.

The legislation will also establish a transitional assistance panel which will service the taxi and hire vehicle industries. This panel will oversee the distribution of assistance funds, including advising the Minister on eligibility. Further to the transitional assistance panel, the legislation will install a Commissioner for Point to Point Transport as the dedicated regulator. The commissioner will have significant and wideranging powers. The commissioner will have the following functions: Administer the authorisation and licensing schemes established by the Act; manage the enforcement of the Act and the regulations; recommend safety and other standards for passenger services or booking services; assist in the determination of liability for, and enforcement of payment of, the passenger service levy; and advise the Minister on matters relating to passenger services and booking services.

The commissioner is also responsible for the authorisation of any new taxi or booking services. Authorisation will ensure that: directors and managers are nominated; they, or their close associates, have not been convicted of a disqualifying offence; they take responsibility for ensuring compliance with safety standards for drivers and vehicles; and they keep accessible records. As such, mandatory operator affiliation with taxi networks will be abolished. Drivers associated with booking services will be subject to the same licensing and other requirements as taxidivers and their vehicles will be subject to the same roadworthiness standards. That is very important. Hire cars will no longer have a regulatory need for hire car plates.

A \$10 million buyback scheme for perpetual car licences has been set up in this bill. Existing hire car licence holders will be able to keep their current hire car plates for a four-year transition period commencing 1 July 2016. These changes mean that hire car operators will no longer be required to pay the annual fee of \$8,235 in metropolitan Sydney, or around \$3,000 in regional New South Wales. I note that no changes will be made to the existing rank and hail work. Only taxis will be eligible to undertake this work. Anyone providing such services without an appropriate taxi licence will face severe penalties.

As a result of the changes being implemented under this legislation, the requirement for taxis to undergo two annual inspections and for the vehicles to be replaced after five years has been removed. Taxis will now be subject to inspections similar to those for light vehicles more than five years old, removing some regulatory red tape and onerous fees from taxi drivers in New South Wales. The legislation makes no changes to the fares for the point to point industry, however booking service providers, whether they provide taxi or hire vehicle services, will be obliged to provide a fare estimate for a journey before a customer accepts the booking. It is worth noting that the cost of compulsory third party [CTP] insurance is one of the biggest overheads in the taxi industry.

A review of CTP insurance for point to point vehicles was recently commenced by the State Insurance Regulatory Authority [SIRA] which regulates the New South Wales CTP scheme to ensure greater fairness in premium settings for the sector and support ridesharing alongside more traditional point to point providers such as taxis. SIRA is also reviewing its premium system, which includes a review of CTP premiums for taxis and hire vehicles, with the primary aim of allowing insurers to innovate in underwriting and to move towards greater levels of risk-based pricing.

I am pleased to note this legislation has taken this into consideration and a provision has been included for SIRA to compel booking services and taxi service providers to provide them with information to calculate CTP premiums. This should hopefully rebalance the cost of CTP for the point to point industry and create a fairer price for everyone involved. The bill takes a number of appropriate steps towards rectifying the dog's breakfast that is hindering a fair and even playing field in the point to point industry. I support the legislation before the House but I trust that appropriate action will be taken to adequately assist those hardworking taxidivers and their families who are presently suffering hardship as a result of the changes.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (11:04):** I speak today on the Point to Point Taxi Transport (Taxis and Hire Vehicles) Bill 2016. We live in an exciting time where innovation is encouraged and where new technologies are changing the way we live. We know that these disruptive technologies, as they are known, are going to cause changes to the traditional ways of doing things and that will result in disruption to people's lives. The role of government in that environment is to ensure that there is proper regulation that protects our safety but also that there is a smooth transition which prevents the disadvantage the changes may cause to people, through no fault of their own. That is particularly so where people have bought a licence from the government. As other speakers have stated, the government is usually a reliable source of investment and should not make swift changes that may significantly disadvantage people.

Several Central Coast taxi drivers and people from the car hire industry have come to see me in order to make representations. This morning I want to raise two case studies that show where the Government has failed in making a smooth transition to this new system. The first refers to Central Coast Taxis. That company runs a 24/7 service for residents and visitors over a large area of the Central Coast, from the Hawkesbury River to Catherine Hill Bay and out into the hinterland, spanning 1,800 square kilometres. The company has a fleet of 89 taxis, including 21 wheelchair-accessible taxis, which is very important in a regional area. It has a choice of

vehicles, built up over time, and runs a call centre. Central Coast Taxis employs 600 people on the Central Coast. It is a significant business that has been built up by Peter Emery over a number of years.

Peter had decided to go into retirement and was negotiating to sell that business. On the day before Peter was going to sign the contract—after a long negotiation for the sale of his business, one he had built up from scratch, with new technology put in place and employing 600 people—he woke to see a headline in the newspaper referring to the changes that were proposed. The contract was suddenly cancelled and the sale did not go through. That is why I say that the Government needs to ensure an orderly process in these changes. Peter Emery has been disadvantaged, through no fault of his own. He had invested his superannuation into the business and was looking for a return. That was killed because the story was leaked to the media with no details following until now about how the system was going to operate.

That is a significant small business operating on the Central Coast that is massively impacted by these changes. When one looks at things such as compensation packages, one has to take into account not just the value of the plates but also what people do and how they employ other people in local areas. On this side of the House, we ask the Minister to explain how that \$250 million figure was arrived at. For someone in Peter Emery's situation, with 600 employees, how will that \$20,000 compensation make up for the potential loss they will suffer?

The second business I want to talk about is White Knight Limousines. I spoke to Tony, the owner of that company. It is a small business. He owns three cars and a bus and he employs four people on the Central Coast. His main business is picking up people at their homes and taking them to the airport or to cruise terminals. He acknowledged in a conversation I had with him recently that, while he will retain his hire car plates for four years, after that time the plates will be removed and he will no longer be able to access the transit lanes over the Harbour Bridge. One of the advantages for people using his service is that they do not get caught in traffic and can get to the airport or to the cruise terminal on time, with minimal disruption.

Not being able to access those lanes in four years time will have an impact on his business. He has operated that business for 14 years. His company is small, so he does not have any special apps. He has a website where people can make bookings. He is very concerned that with these changes an important part of his business, which operates and employs people in a regional area, will be taken away. They are just two of the stories that I have heard about the impact of these changes on small businesses. The Liberal Party used to be the party of small business, but the lack of consultation undertaken with small business owners seems to indicate that that may no longer be the case.

We understand that with new technologies things will change. Uber and Airbnb are an inevitable consequence of changing technology. People have the right to choose how they engage with and book different businesses. The Government's role is to ensure proper regulation and a smooth transition so that people are not overly disadvantaged by the changes. The Government has not handled this well. I hope that the Government agrees to the amendment that Labor will move in the other place to review compensation arrangements after 12 months. That is essential, particularly in regional New South Wales, where the legislation will affect transport businesses that support a large number of jobs. People rely on those businesses for their income. With little transition time and little information about the reason for the level of compensation, there will be an impact on the value of their assets. That is very unfair. I hope that the Minister is listening and that the Government agrees to the amendments that Labor will move. I know the Minister finds it difficult to change direction sometimes. There was a meeting at the weekend of the residents of Kangy Angy, where the Government wants to build a freight yard in the middle of a swamp.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** Jobs.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** We want the jobs, but the Government is choosing to build on a swamp that floods, that has four metres of water running through it, when two better sites were available that would be cheaper to build on. Instead of having to spend \$250 million to build bridges to access environmental land to build an industrial complex, the Government could have used a better site, particularly the Darkinjung land that was offered. We want the jobs. The Government tries to bulldoze its way through. It does not listen to communities. The Government was offered two better sites on the Central Coast to build that facility and it chose the worst one. I do not have confidence that the Minister will listen to the amendments that Labor proposes. As the member for Lakemba said, we are talking about real people, real situations, and about how the changes brought about by this legislation will affect them, their families and their employees, particularly in regional New South Wales. Unfortunately, the Government does not seem to be listening.

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (11:13):** I contribute to this debate more by way of posing questions and seeking further information rather than by going over ground that has already been covered by my colleague the member for Ballina and other members. It is clear that the taxi industry is going through significant changes. The industry has been weighed down for many years by anti-competitive and predatory pricing from organisations

such as Cabcharge and also by a moribund organisation, the Taxi Council, which has not sought to innovate effectively. In fact, innovation has not come from the highly centralised existing system in the market; it has come from external entrepreneurs. I know that is a challenge for the Government. I am a member of the committee that is inquiring into short-stay accommodation agencies, such as Airbnb and similar organisations. It is a very tricky area to be involved in.

Like many other members, I have been approached by and had meetings with people who drive taxis and who own plates, and by representatives of the Taxi Drivers Association about the concerns they have with the system. I turn first to the issue of ensuring compliance. One of the great challenges in a system like this is ensuring that compliance is rigorously enforced. My question is: How will that be done? What resources and staffing will be dedicated to manage compliance? What sum of money will be allocated? How many people will be required? What will be the strength of that enforcement and compliance regime? That is a legitimate and important question to ask. Drivers say that it is all very well to have rules and regulations, but what actual commitment will the Government make through dollars and bodies on the ground? I ask the Government to identify exactly what the commitment of staff and funds will be to ensure compliance with the significant regulations that are being proposed today.

I raise a question about driver authorisations. Driver authorisations will be phased out and driver authorisation cards will not be required in taxis. That is my understanding of the situation. I ask the Government to explain the logic of that. Like many people here, I have used ridesharing apps to book transport, and 99 per cent of people book transport on their phone. There is a tiny picture, about as big as half a thumbnail, of the driver. There is no real way to identify the driver. If the Government is saying that we do not need driver authorisation cards because people can see the driver on the app then that is disingenuous. It is difficult to tell whether the person driving the car is the person who is registered to drive it. My view, and the view of many, is that it is optimal to display a driver identification card clearly so that passengers can be sure that the person driving the vehicle is the person who is supposed to be driving it. I ask the Government to explain the logic of withdrawing from display of the driver authorisation.

Linked to that is a question of safety. Taxis have a common safety platform. There are cameras and there is retention of data. That is not required in vehicles that are not part of the taxi industry. My question is: What is the threshold? If a taxi driver uses a global positioning system [GPS], as ridesharing services do, will they no longer be required to use a camera or to retain data? Taxi drivers tell me that they have to have a number of security devices in their vehicle, which is a great expense, yet an Uber driver does not have to do that. So if taxi drivers can be tracked by GPS, do they need to install the other safety devices? My view is that the safety of the passenger should be of the utmost importance. Data retention is important. Any member who works with their local area command will know that data from taxi cameras is critical if someone has a problem in a taxi. Uber and other ridesharing services are not required to have that data. I ask the Government to explain the logic behind that.

Other members have spoken about compensation. A review of the compensation arrangements after 12 months is, to my mind, a commonsense amendment to the legislation. In rural and regional areas taxi drivers carry the weight of the transport burden. If licence plate owners receive a big hit to the value of their investment then it is reasonable for the Government to consider a review of the level of compensation, as proposed by the Opposition. This is a difficult area to regulate. One can tell by the size of the bill that a lot of work has been done by the Minister for Transport's office. I acknowledge their goodwill and the effort that they have gone to to try to improve the current situation.

But again I emphasise that this industry is beset by problems of safety and issues around fare structure and disability access. Also the drivers basically live on very low incomes. This area really needs to be untangled to make sure, firstly, that passenger safety is paramount and, secondly, that drivers and investors are supported. There has been a lot of talk about the plate owners but we know that the drivers are the ones who are actually suffering the burden of very low wages, a high risk of assault and working very long, unsociable hours. We really need to focus on them and to make sure that we support them into the future. I thank the House.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (11:19):** I make a contribution to this debate on the Point to Point Transport (Taxis and Hire Vehicles) Bill 2016. I do so on behalf of my local taxidriver and residents. They are facing an uncertain future. I note that in particular this morning a number of regionally based members of Parliament have made contributions on behalf of their communities. I think that is significant. The other important thing to note is the absence of members of The Nationals from this debate. They have failed to come in here in large numbers to make a contribution to this debate. Far and away the most significant impacts of this bill are in danger of being felt in regional communities across New South Wales, where taxis at the moment offer their services in a market that has significant ebbs and flows.

In Cessnock we have the Cessnock Radio Cabs business, which is operated by brothers Mr David Cocking and Mr Robert Cocking. I have met with those gentlemen in the past couple of months and we have



talked about the entire point to point transport industry. Another significant feature of the electorate of Cessnock is our vineyard region. It is quite isolated from a major town and the services provided out there are primarily needed on the weekend rather than during the course of the week. That is significant, and I will come back to that point. I will read directly from one of the emails I received from Robert and David Cocking:

After the approval we now have not so much Uber but every Tom, Dick and Harry in cars/courtesy buses, anything with wheels, working as Taxi's. We have turned a regulated industry (fares/safety) into a 3rd world system.

I mention that because when travelling around the world I have sometimes wondered as I was getting into vehicles in some countries whether any standards or regulations applied to them or whether I was just getting into someone's car to catch a ride somewhere, and negotiating a price as I did that. I come back to the nature of the work that occurs in the vineyard region. There are a couple of places in the vineyards where on a Friday, Saturday and Sunday night people gather for after-dark drinks and festivities. When a person wants to be transported back home from these places they know, and everybody knows, that they are 15 to 20 minutes away from the Cessnock central business district, which is essentially where the taxis are operating from. They know that a phone call to a taxi operator to come out and pick them up will, first of all, be slow because it is going to take them at least 15 to 20 minutes to get out there and, secondly, when the taxi arrives it is going to come at a premium price because of the distance involved.

For the past 12 to 18 months we have had an unregulated industry operating out there with people who are not Uber drivers, not hire car drivers and not regulated in any way, shape or form. They simply wait outside some of these establishments for desperate passengers to walk out the door and then offer them any price for the service of being driven home. Of course the official and regulated local drivers have been working very hard to get rid of those people, and they have had some success in making sure that the authorities are notified and that those people are moved on. The reality is that that is happening at the moment. As we transition into this new industry with players like Uber it is going to be very hard to discern what is a regulated and authorised mode of transport and what is not.

I turn now to the nature of the weekend industry in Cessnock. We are essentially operating with eight cars and the money made over the course of the weekend—on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights—subsidises the operation of the taxi cabs during the week. The money made on Friday, Saturday and Sunday subsidises and ensures the availability of the wheelchair-accessible vehicles that they use. The money that is made on a Friday, Saturday and Sunday night subsidises taxis in Cessnock and allows them to be available 24/7. Clearly, and everybody would realise this, they do not make ends meet on weeknights—that is, Monday to Thursday nights—where taxis are available if a person needs them in the event of an emergency or an unexpected need. They know that they can ring Cessnock Radio Cabs and get a cab.

However, if that weekend market disappears then the opportunity to make a profit, which will subsidise their operations for the rest of the week, disappears. It is likely that Uber drivers will turn up in Cessnock just for weekend trade. They will skim the cream off the top of the industry, so to speak, and then disappear—leaving Radio Cabs Cessnock to operate Monday to Friday. It would mean that Radio Cabs Cessnock simply will not be a profitable business going forward. I return now to the email sent to me by Cessnock Radio Cabs, and I quote:

For many taxi owners/drivers in this country a Taxi plate is his/her superfund and wage into retirement. When they finish their working life they sell and retire on the sale of the taxi plate. With the approval of Uber the plate price has gone to next to nothing. Now keep in mind the government has set the price of taxi plates in different areas and we as tax payers have paid stamp duty on this price.

You may argue that they are still worth the same amount but you try to get someone to pay it when they can use their 20 year old Holden and do the same thing with no insurance or safety standards.

...

Country taxis operate 80% of all jobs through phone booked fares. The report from Uber sponsored professor adviser to government said 80% hails 20% phone. This is not true for country areas. If this situation is not dealt with there will be no taxi service in country areas.

I highlight that important detail. What is being protected for taxidivers going forward works perfectly fine in the Sydney central business district area, where 80 per cent of fares might come from being hailed. Indeed my experience in the Sydney central business district is that I tend to hail a taxi. But the reality is that in communities like Cessnock and other regional communities right across New South Wales most taxi bookings come via a phone call. In the hail scenario the taxi plate does not compete with Uber. But if you are booking via phone then you are indeed competing with Uber. In country and regional areas like Cessnock 80 per cent of the market—whether it is Monday at 10 a.m. or Saturday at 10 p.m.—is being booked by phone. This means they are immediately exposing 80 per cent of their market to an Uber style competitor.

That is not the case here in the central business district of Sydney but it is the case in regional New South Wales. Members of this place need to understand that. Most of the debate in this Chamber on this bill, and the

facts driving this debate, has been focused on the needs of Sydney. Regional needs are different. The way in which regional people use and access taxis is different from the way it happens here in Sydney. We need to acknowledge and understand that. I will conclude with a final quote from Mr Cocking from Cessnock Radio Cabs. Quite simply, and quite scarily, he says:

The first thing to be compromised will be the 24 hour coverage followed by the wheelchair services then lastly Taxi will be gone all together.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Infrastructure) (11:30):** In reply: I thank all members for their contributions to debate on the Point to Point Transport (Taxis and Hire Vehicles) Bill 2016. It is interesting that, all of a sudden, Labor has discovered the taxi industry. I remind the House that in his 2015 budget-in-reply speech the Leader of the Opposition indicated full support for Uber without any reference as to how to make the taxi industry sustainable in light of technological changes. I am pleased that Roy Wakelin-King, who has represented the industry in very challenging circumstances, is in the gallery. The taxi industry is a good one. It is made up of decent, salt-of-the-earth people who want to go to work every day, make a living, support employment growth and ultimately look after their customers.

We know there are challenges, but we made a commitment to ensure that the industry has a viable future. As part of that viability we want to ensure that the industry is innovative and that it is on a level playing field on a number of key components. We must remove much of the regulation that is tying up the industry in red tape, ensure equity in compulsory third party insurance and understand the industrial relations climate in which the point to point market operates. When Labor flagged its support for Uber it did what most jurisdictions around the world have done, that is, simply supported Uber entering the market.

This Government sought to reform the entire point to point transport market, which is unheralded across the world. As a result, this legislation provides the most generous compensation scheme to plate owners who have invested, in some cases, their life savings or to those who are deriving an income to get by every day—mums and dads, again salt-of-the-earth people who want to ensure that they can generate some wealth and look after themselves without necessarily depending on the Government's safety net. I am somewhat surprised that in 2010 Labor rejected an inquiry into the taxi industry sought by both The Greens and the Coalition. Today it is crying crocodile tears over an industry on which it has turned its back for a very long of time.

I do not accept what has gone on in this Chamber in the past 24 hours. I think there are hidden agendas and misrepresentations, which rest entirely with the leadership of the Labor Party and not necessarily with some of its members. Last night the member for Rockdale gave a very passionate response on behalf of his constituents with whom he has been working in recent months. I acknowledge those constituents and the member for Rockdale. He has spoken with me about this issue and it was clear last night that the hardship and difficulties faced by those investors over a long time are what have been driving him.

It must be remembered that for many years the value of the taxi plate has been driven by the market. In 2012 the market peaked and at that time some people had borrowed money to invest in a plate. I know they are the types of people with whom many members of this House have been dealing. I know this is tough, but we must find a way through it. We have to be able to get the industry onto a sustainable footing to ensure that it has a future. We must allow innovation through technology, which has facilitated other enterprises entering the point to point market. However, first and foremost we must ensure that government has customer safety at the forefront when a new regulatory framework is put in place to oversee that market.

The framework that has been governing the industry now is simply broken. The compliance regime did not work and has not worked for a long time, and that is why we are building a new compliance function from the ground up. Members of the Opposition have failed to recognise that a lot of the frustrations that have been driven by operators are not something new. They have gone on for years because they have not felt that the compliance regime has been able to keep pace with industry change, nor have they been able to adequately address some of those concerns. I have seen that for myself firsthand when I met an operator in the Southern Highlands recently. It has been a longstanding challenge for operators and that is what has to be fixed, and that is what this Government is seeking to do.

I find it somewhat bewildering that the Labor Party made a big song and dance in a budget-in-reply speech last year about supporting Uber, only to give notice of a motion for a private member's bill that we are yet to see. Now I learn through debate in this Chamber that Labor will not move amendments to the bill in this place and in my presence so that I can speak to those amendments, but that it will move amendments in the upper House. Why can we not see Labor's amendments in this place? Some very big questions must be asked about some of those amendments.

For instance, last night the shadow Minister and member for Strathfield foreshadowed an amendment that will be moved in the Legislative Council in relation to driver's remuneration. I know that the taxi industry

does not know what Labor means by that, nor does the Government. This Parliament should not be doing anything on the run. The Legislative Council should not accept amendments tonight that could have unintended consequences for innovation in the point to point market and, more importantly, for many of the operators in the taxi industry. Policy on the run could have profound ramifications for operators and could lead to their demise. That is why this Government sensibly established under the leadership of the member for Ku-ring-gai a Standing Committee on Transport inquiry into the industrial relations environment for the point to point market.

I will not accept members of the Labor Party crying crocodile tears and moving amendments in the Legislative Council in relation to drivers' remuneration when nobody has seen the amendments. However, we do know that this has been driven by the Transport Workers Union [TWU], which has claims afoot in the Industrial Relations Commission. Some big questions need to be asked. Is this about trying to drive membership of the TWU amongst Uber drivers and taxi drivers? One claim that was brought in the initial application by the TWU was a requirement that superannuation for taxi drivers be paid into the TWU fund, but it was subsequently amended to include not only the fund but also a nominated fund. What is going on? Yesterday in caucus there was a huge stoush and a misunderstanding between members of the Legislative Council like Searle and Mookhey, who are doing the bidding for the TWU, supported by the member for Strathfield.

**Mr John Robertson:** Didn't something happen in your caucus yesterday to the roads and maritime Minister? Didn't he get told he was a misogynist or something? Something about handbags? How about we talk about your caucus, mate?

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** Come on, Robbo. You'll like this.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Order! The member for Blacktown will come to order.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** The member for Blacktown, Robbo, knows better than anybody—having been transport Minister, particularly a Labor transport Minister—what goes on with Michael Aird and the TWU in terms of agendas. The member for Strathfield and the member for Auburn are overseeing a large division in caucus about a number of key issues such as compensation and the industrial relations environment. I remind every member first and foremost that the compensation package to support plate owners is the most generous in the world. Secondly, we are making an initial \$20,000 payment to recognise the loss in rental income associated with the plates as a result of the regulatory reform. Quite sensibly, an additional approximately \$150 million will then be administered by a hardship panel.

It is incumbent upon the shadow Minister, and member for Strathfield, to come clean about the Opposition amendments. It is obvious that they are being driven by the TWU and not by policy outcomes in interests of the point to point market regardless of whether operators are in the taxi industry or the ridesharing sector as part of Uber and the like. We cannot make policy on the run. It has to be worked through sensibly during the parliamentary inquiry. I send that message to every member of the upper House. As I said, the industry is going through a tough period, but there are some green shoots. The taxi market has grown slightly since December 2015, and that growth has been driven by industry leadership. We are also aware through surveys that about 93 per cent of people who use ridesharing services also used taxis in the preceding six months.

As I said in my second reading speech, the bill represents the second stage of the implementation of reforms arising from the Point to Point Transport Taskforce. The regime is designed to encourage innovation, to remove red tape, to rationalise bureaucracy, and to reduce compliance costs. It will also drive competition and ultimately provide a better customer experience. The bill establishes the \$250 million industry adjustment package, which includes: \$98 million for transition assistance of \$20,000 per perpetual licence, for up to two licences, for taxi licensees who obtained a licence before 1 July 2015; \$142 million for taxi licensees facing hardship as a result of the changes to be distributed by a transition assistance panel with representation including the chief executive officer of the NSW Taxi Council; and a \$10 million buyback scheme for hire car licensees.

We have established a new regulator that will have the power to tackle the companies at the top, not only the drivers who are out on the streets. As the former Minister for Disability Services, I want to ensure that people with disabilities are well supported throughout this transition. We have announced a \$15.5 million annual package to ensure the continued provision of wheelchair accessible taxis [WATs]. That includes increasing the WAT driver incentive payments from \$7.70 to \$15 per trip and doubling the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme cap from \$30 to \$60 per journey.

As the member for Bega, I am well aware of the plight of regional taxi operators and the limited public transport options available to people in the bush. These reforms are designed to reduce costs and red tape for taxi businesses in the bush and to get them onto a more sustainable footing. With a much smaller percentage of work in rural and regional areas being from the unbooked rank and hail market, these reforms allow for existing

operators to move into the booked market where there are significantly lower overheads and much more freedom to tailor services to those required in country towns. In fact, well over 90 per cent of the work of taxi operators in regional New South Wales is in the booked market.

During debate members raised a number of issues and asked a number of questions. In relation to how the Government decided on \$250 million for the industry adjustment package, this package must be recognised worldwide as a leading package. In many jurisdictions little or no assistance has been offered to plate owners. For example in Ireland, the total assistance offered was €16 million. In Western Australia, \$20,000 has been offered to taxi licensees, but there is no hardship fund. In the Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania, and New Zealand no adjustment assistance was offered. The task force recommended transitional assistance to partially offset the expected reduction in income as well as a hardship fund for people especially adversely affected. That is what we are doing.

Questions were also raised about where the \$250 million industry adjustment package appears in the bill, how the Minister's discretion will work regarding the additional adjustment assistance funds, how the panel will operate and whether there will be an appeal process. While the bill does not specify the amount of \$250 million, it states that the Parliament may appropriate an amount for this purpose. The Treasurer's appropriation bill provided for these funds, and they are set out in the budget papers in the Transport for NSW allocation. The bill makes a distinction between the \$20,000 payments and the hardship fund.

In relation to the \$20,000 payment, the panel's role is to determine the procedures for applications and to advise the Minister on how the funds should be distributed. The advice of the panel will inform the development of regulations that govern how the \$20,000 payments scheme will be administered by Transport for NSW on behalf of the Minister. I want these cheques to be issued. It is fair to say that the pressure the industry and members of this place are feeling from operators means we must act as quickly as we can.

We have made it clear that we want the \$20,000 per licence to be paid to all perpetual taxi licensees for up to two licences. As part of that we must ensure that we have the appropriate protections regarding how people apply and prove their eligibility as well as the period during which the application process should be open and any additional information that might be required. Transport for NSW's application and payment process for the \$20,000 payments is being put through an independent quality assurance process by an audit firm to make sure that it is rigorous in terms of minimising fraud risk, and is fair and meets the requirements of the Public Finance and Audit Act. The transition assistance panel will receive a copy of the report on this quality assurance process.

In relation to the \$142 million hardship fund, the panel's functions will be to recommend eligibility criteria for the payment and to set procedures and other matters described in relation to the \$20,000 payments. Any decision of the panel with respect to the hardship fund must be unanimous. The panel's recommendations to the Minister will form the basis of regulations, which, as members are aware, are disallowable instruments that will govern payments from the fund. Again, regulations will cover issues such as applications for funds, the amount payable, proof of eligibility, the period for applications, the provision of additional information and the review of decisions.

We need flexibility and this bill provides it. If members opposite want to tie this up in knots they can try, but we must have absolute flexibility because every investor and individual circumstance is different. The member for Strathfield asked how long the Government expects it will take to recover the \$250 million through the levy and whether the levy will be lifted earlier if the \$250 million is raised more quickly than the full five years. The Government has agreed to the establishment of a short-term passenger service levy for up to five years. If the levy raises the required amount more quickly, the Government will terminate the levy early.

Those opposite have asked a lot of questions, but a lot of the information being sought is spelt out in the bill. The member for Strathfield also asked what happens if the fare demand exceeds the amount agreed in advance. I understand that if a fare has been agreed to in advance with a customer the provider of the service must not demand more than that, otherwise clause 79 of the bill provides they are subject to penalties. Regulations will deal with the detail of fare estimates. The shadow Minister also queried how the bill allows the Point to Point Transport Commissioner to control overseas companies. The bill contains a number of measures to ensure accountability of overseas-based providers.

Clause 30 of the bill provides that applications for authorisation to be a provider of a taxi service or a provider of a booking service must nominate one or more managers. The commissioner will refuse or cancel an authorisation if the nominated managers are not directly involved in the day-to-day management, meaning they must be sufficiently senior. Clause 31 states that at least one nominated manager must be a resident in New South Wales. There is also a requirement for authorised entities to keep accessible records. Clause 43 makes it a condition of authorisation that the entity must keep records required for the purpose of the point to point bill in a form that must be accessible in New South Wales. Clause 154 of the bill provides that the legislation will have

extraterritorial application with respect to enforcement. This means that the Point to Point Transport Commissioner may seek to take enforcement action against a person who resides outside New South Wales in relation to a matter that occurred in New South Wales.

The member for Strathfield also asked about community transport. These services are provided under contract to Transport for NSW. In yesterday's budget, funding of \$69 million for community transport services for frail aged people and \$12 million per year was allocated under the NSW Community Transport Program—in Labor's last year in office it allocated only \$40.1 million. The bill exempts services provided under contract to Transport for NSW from the requirements of the point to point transport legislation. It should not be forgotten that work has been done over many years to ensure that we have the appropriate regulatory regime to protect those who need this assistance. Labor has foreshadowed that it will be moving a number of amendments in the upper House. I do not understand why they are not being moved in this place.

The first flagged amendment is that a driver representative should be included on the Transitional Assistance Panel. I do not know what interest drivers would have in the panel, but the Government will be opposing this amendment. I think it is fair to say that the industry would also oppose it. If Labor wants to put someone on the panel then it should tell us which one of the thousands of taxi drivers out there will be its representative. I would like to hear a name. It is appropriate that the panel include representation from the NSW Taxi Council as the body which represents taxi licensees. This amendment is unnecessary. Safety standards are being maintained and drivers will not need to go through a lengthy and expensive government process to be able to drive. Indeed, this is one of the advantages of improved technology, and I expect, given the way in which the online booking is growing, that the opportunities for drivers will also grow. The growth in population in Sydney alone over the next 15 years will mean a growing point to point transport market, so there will be plenty of opportunities ahead.

The second flagged amendment was for a review of impacts on the industry after 12 months. I am unsure whether the Labor Party has bothered to read the bill, but clause 159 allows for a review of the impacts on industry. The third flagged amendment relates to remuneration of drivers. The Labor Party needs to explain to us and the industry what that amendment means. I remind the Labor Party that its actions could result in unintended consequences. Indeed, the more appropriate course of action is for this matter, with the appropriate terms of reference, to go before the parliamentary inquiry over the next few months to make sure that the Parliament does this well. We need a level playing field in industrial relations and compulsory third party [CTP] reform. The Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation spoke about CTP reform in his contribution to this debate. Importantly, we also have recourse to the industrial relations environment.

The thrust of this legislation is to compensate the many licence plate owners to whom those opposite referred in their contributions and whom Government members have also raised with me. We want to support them. The member for Balmain raised a couple of issues. The task force recommended—recommendation 14—that the regulator should be adequately resourced to support the new regime. We have made it clear that we support that recommendation. We are moving the compliance regime out of Roads and Maritime Services to be a standalone point to point commission. As part of that we have to ensure that the staff have the skillset necessary to keep pace with industry change and that the regulations also keep pace. Indeed, things went awry because our regulatory framework could not keep pace with the technological changes in the market.

I remind the member for Balmain that police officers can also enforce the law and council rangers can enforce taxi zones. Concern has been expressed about ensuring that the requirements in the old hire car licence conditions about plying or standing for hire appear in the regulations in respect of this bill. That concern emanated from some of the briefings with the crossbench in the upper House. The concern is that in addition to the severe penalties, including the possibility of custodial sentence, under clause 47 of the bill there will be a regulation relating to drivers similar to the one in the 2007 regulation, which makes it an offence for a driver of a hire vehicle to stand or ply for hire.

I also make it clear to those upper House members that we want to ensure that the commission is robust and agile, and that it has the confidence of the sector to deliver the best outcomes. We must ensure that industry and government can work together in the interests of customers when it comes to compliance. First and foremost, it is about safety. That underpins the fact that we have a regulatory environment and it has been a priority for both industry and the Government throughout this process. That is why the rank and hail market must remain the 100 per cent purview of the taxi industry, and we would expect the value in the industry to hold as a result. There is a lot of variability in the value of plates, but that will settle down. The passing of this legislation and having the regulations in place will ensure that the industry has a great future.

It is important to make it clear that this has not just been about Uber. Again I recognise the challenges that the industry leadership has had because of the frustration of its members. It is important that the doors remain open between the Government and the industry, as they have been and will continue to be, in order to get the best

outcomes. I recognise and thank the members in this place who support this legislation. I have heard their concerns and this bill is about addressing those concerns. As I said, the Australian Labor Party should be very careful about unintended consequences of its proposed amendments in the upper House. The Government looks forward to the debate in the upper House and we will be looking very closely at the proposed amendments. Again I urge Labor to support this legislation as it is so that there are no unintended consequences for industry.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### **Third Reading**

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Infrastructure) (12:00):** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **TAXATION ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT (COLLECTION AND DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION TO COMMONWEALTH) BILL 2016**

### **Second Reading**

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (12:00):** On behalf of Ms Gladys Berejiklian: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill was introduced in the other place on 11 May 2016 and is in the same form as the bill before the House. The second reading speech appears at pages 6 and 7 of the *Hansard* proof of the Legislative Council for that day. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (12:01):** I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Taxation Administration Amendment (Collection and Disclosure of Information to Commonwealth) Bill 2016 in this House, recognising that it has already been dealt with in the other place. The purpose of the bill is to amend the Taxation Administration Act 1996 to enable the Chief Commissioner of State Revenue to collect and disclose to the Commissioner of Taxation of the Commonwealth information about the transfer of freehold and leasehold interests in real property situated in New South Wales. Essentially, this will allow for a register of foreign ownership, under the guise of taxation accountability. The New South Wales Opposition will not oppose this bill.

In September 2015 the Federal Coalition introduced and passed three bills related to foreign ownership in the Federal Parliament in Canberra. The bill from that time which is most closely related to this bill, and was referred to by the Hon. Rick Colless in the other place in his introductory second reading speech, was the Register of Foreign Ownership of Agricultural Land Bill 2015. When those three bills travelled through the Federal Parliament they were referred to at the time as "discriminatory" and a "dog whistle" and specifically "anti-Asian investment".

The fact is that the Register of Foreign Ownership of Agricultural Land Bill 2015, which was dealt with in the Federal Parliament of this country, allows for \$1 billion worth of investment from United States of America, Chilean or New Zealand investors before scrutiny but allows only \$15 million from other foreign investors, including those from Asia, specifically China, Japan and Korea. That is not sensational or hysterical language on my part; that is the reality of the bill. This matter is dealt with under the heading of "Monetary Thresholds" on the website of the Foreign Investment Review Board. Members can go online to [firb.gov.au](http://firb.gov.au) and see the very facts I have just outlined about the levels of investment that will be scrutinised.

Subsequently, in October 2015, by agreement of Commonwealth, State and Territory Treasurers, a national register of foreign ownership of land titles was agreed to be established. This bill gives effect to that agreement. The Government has proposed that the bill before us today will give greater integrity and strength to the taxation and funding regime at State and Federal levels, such as land tax, first home owner benefits, GST and capital gains tax. The structure of the bill and increased sharing of information between the State and Commonwealth is entirely likely to do exactly that. This is the effect specifically of the land titling and registration element of the bill.

In the second reading speech in the other place and in reply to the debate, interestingly the Government was entirely silent on the other effects of the bill, including the collection and disclosure of reportable information by the head of a public service agency. I will repeat that: the collection and disclosure of reportable information by the head of a—meaning "any"—public service agency. Section 80E of the bill allows for that. Section 80F goes one step further and allows for the Treasurer to "direct the head of a public service agency to disclose

information". That means that the Treasurer will now have the authority and capacity to obtain any information about any resident of New South Wales or any investor within New South Wales if any of that information is registered through any public service or agency, and the Treasurer can do that by direction.

The disclosure by public service agencies could have wide and far-reaching implications, unknowable at first glance and certainly not defined or clarified by the Government in its handling of the bill to date, despite the fact that the debate has already occurred in the other place, the upper House of New South Wales. Yet the Government, ironically, remains silent while the private details of citizens of New South Wales are not afforded the same privacy. As with various other pieces of legislation that have passed through this Parliament in recent years, there seems to be a complete eradication of privacy in this State under this Government. This time, the actions of this Government are in conjunction with its Federal Coalition colleagues, driven by the anti-Asian investment philosophy of The Nationals.

**Mr Damien Tudehope:** That's outrageous.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR:** I acknowledge the interjection and I refer to my comments about the monetary thresholds of international investment in property here in Australia. In another element of irony, it is Labor's belief that any such national register should be a public and transparent document administered by the Australian Taxation Office, yet this invitation to transparency has been refused and denied by the Coalition Government at the Federal level. So while individuals across Australia and New South Wales will lose their rights to privacy, the Federal Coalition will embellish its own right to secrecy, aided in this instance by the New South Wales Coalition. But that should come as no surprise to anyone in this State. In 2011 this Coalition Government campaigned on the platform of open government and transparency but has delivered, emphatically and systematically, a State of complete dictatorial secrecy. While the matter of transparency is not dealt with in this bill and is entirely a matter for the Federal Government, it is worth noting during debate.

The bill also allows for more detail and additional processes during land sales, resulting in related amendments to the Conveyancing (Sale of Land) Regulation 2010. The real and actual result of this bill will be more effort, more work, more forms, more processes and more checking at the point of sale in all negotiations subsequent to a land sale. The sale process will now require additional detail of identity, additional detail of nationality, additional detail of residency and additional detail of both the vendor and the purchaser. How embarrassing and hypocritical of the Government to be introducing all of this new red tape, and to what end? Is it really just for the sake of a dog whistle? Would they really forego their supposed core beliefs because of xenophobia? Is their language about red tape something that they truly believe in or is it just political convenience? Which is it?

**Mr Matt Kean:** Point of order: The member is better than that. He knows that this has nothing to do with xenophobia. He should withdraw that comment and speak to the substantive motion.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Will the member for Cessnock withdraw his comments and return to the leave of the bill?

**Mr CLAYTON BARR:** My comment about xenophobia was in the form of a question, not a statement or an accusation.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** If the member directed his comments through the Chair he might avoid that issue.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR:** If my comments offended those opposite I withdraw them. Obviously, these additional processes will place a burden on real estate agents, conveyancers, financial institutions and, of course, the New South Wales Land and Property Information [LPI]. Buyers, sellers, small business and government departments will pay for these additional processes and regulations. This will hinder the state of business in New South Wales. It will increase the cost burden to all concerned, which will ultimately fall at the feet of the consumer. We should not let this red tape moment go by without at least acknowledging that the ideological rats are deserting their ideological sinking ship on red tape.

The Government's proposed future privatisation of Land and Property Information is diametrically at odds with this bill. Here is the important element of this bill which the Government seeks to overlook. The assumption in this bill is that the Chief Commissioner of the Office of State Revenue will have access to the land and title registration information of New South Wales. But the Government is selling off that very same business unit, the land titling and registration of the Land and Property Information. It is to be privatised, sold off, separated from LPI.

Requiring the chief commissioner to pass on the title information could come at a significant cost to the State because the chief commissioner may have to purchase back that information from the new private entity that

will own the land and property titling information. As a result of this Government's dedication to selling everything, if the legislation is passed it will result in a potential massive on-cost from the Federal Government to the State Government to purchase and provide the details of land title. I have no confidence that the people of New South Wales would agree with the bill. I have even less confidence that they would want to pay for it to be enacted, and they may have to pay many millions of dollars in order to achieve it.

I ask the Minister to answer three key questions in his speech in reply. They were posed in the upper House but received no response. First, how will the Minister address the responsibility of the chief commissioner to pass on titling information once the LPI titling is privatised and will the Minister guarantee that this will not come at the expense of the people of New South Wales? Secondly, how is this bill addressing the Minister's rhetoric about red tape? Thirdly, how will this bill save land and property purchasers from additional cost and expenses in the purchase of land?

**Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (Epping) (12:13):** I speak in support of the Taxation Administration Amendment (Collection and Disclosure of Information to Commonwealth) Bill 2016. In the explanatory note that accompanies this bill, the purpose of the bill is simply, clearly and succinctly put. It states that the Office of State Revenue, through the Chief Commissioner, will be entitled to collect information to disclose to the Commissioner for Taxation of the Commonwealth relating to the transfer of freehold and leasehold interests in real property situated in New South Wales. The information collected is proposed to be used by the Australian Taxation Office [ATO] for the purposes of data matching and ensuring compliance with taxation laws of the Commonwealth.

In addition, the explanatory note provides that it is proposed that the information will be used for a national register of foreign ownership of land titles, which is administered by the Australian Taxation Office. The national register was created by the Commonwealth pursuant to an agreement entered into at a meeting of the Council on Federal Financial Relations on 16 October 2015. It is clear that without the collection of information by State bodies, the population of information within the national register would be almost impossible. The strategy being adopted by the Commonwealth is a component of strengthening Australia's foreign investment framework.

Previously, foreign investors were required to obtain approval from the Foreign Investment Review Board for the purposes of entering into contracts for the purchase of residential real estate. In its memorandum, the Australian Taxation Office announced in February 2015 that it was taking over responsibility for approving foreign investment in residential real estate and for the creation of a new register of foreign investment in agricultural land. This has now been extended to residential property. In May 2015 the Federal Government provided further details of the new functions of the ATO as part of strengthening of the Australian investment framework. These provisions included:

The Australian Taxation Office will immediately commence compliance activities to ensure foreign investors who have invested in Australian residential property are meeting their obligations under the Foreign Acquisition and Takeover Act 1975.

For investors who voluntarily inform the Australian Taxation Office that they have breached the rules about investing in residential property, there was a reduced penalty period from 2 May 2015 to 30 November 2015. This excluded those involved in current ATO Foreign Investment Review Board [FIRB] investigations and those involved in serious crime. From 1 December 2015 the Australian Taxation Office became responsible for administering all aspects of the Foreign Acquisition and Takeover Act 1975 in relation to residential real estate.

Finally, the memorandum from the ATO advised that from 1 July 2016 the Australian Taxation Office will be responsible for a register of foreign ownership of residential real estate. What does this mean? It means that foreign persons must apply for approval prior to purchasing Australian residential land. Applications for approval to purchase land will be processed by the ATO. A penalty regime commenced as a component of the Act and previous criminal and divestment orders will be supplemented by pecuniary penalties and infringement notices for less serious breaches of the real estate rules. Third parties who knowingly assist a foreign investor to breach the rules will be subject to civil and criminal penalties. Advanced off-the-plan certificates will be available. However, the value of the dwelling that can be bought by a single foreign investor in a development will be limited to \$3 million. Investors seeking to purchase properties over \$3 million will require individual approval.

Developers will be required to market buildings in Australia and overseas and if they do not they will be subject to civil and criminal penalties. The ATO will use its data-matching systems to identify possible breaches and ensure that the rules are enforced. It is the last paragraph of the ATO's memorandum that requires the cooperation of State governments to provide data-matching information so as to establish the identity of vendors and purchasers of land. The bill therefore enables New South Wales to collect a full suite of real property transfer data to inform the national register from 1 July 2016. We are all aware of high-profile cases involving the purchase of significant residential properties the value of which exceeded \$10 million where no approval had been sought.



The major remedy available in those circumstances was divestment orders rather than civil and pecuniary penalties. The practical manner in which the scheme will be implemented will have a substantive effect on the practice of conveyancing. A number of important changes have been made to the practice that will be adopted by conveyancers. The changes have necessitated a number of amendments to the current edition for the contract of sale issued by the Law Society of New South Wales. The changes are significant and it is worth reiterating the obligations in reporting that have been addressed by that contract in respect of compliance with the Commonwealth's foreign resident capital gains withholding tax measures. Those measures also begin on 1 July 2016.

Under those measures, where the sale price of a contract is \$2 million or more, a purchaser must withhold 10 per cent of the price and remit to the Australian Taxation Office [ATO] on settlement, unless a clearance certificate confirming that the vendor is not a foreign resident is provided to the purchaser before settlement. This means that Australian residents selling properties for \$2 million or more will need to obtain a clearance certificate from the ATO or the withholding tax will apply. The mechanics of this operate as follows. The vendor must obtain a clearance certificate from the ATO website confirming that they are not a foreign resident for the purposes of the measure. Where there is more than one vendor, a clearance certificate must be provided for each vendor.

Ideally, the clearance certificate should be attached to the contract, though it can be provided any time before settlement. Upon completion, the purchaser must register with the Australian Taxation Office, advising it of the details and the amount of the withholding payment. Under the legislation that we are considering today, a vendor will be required to obtain a land tax certificate and serve it on the purchaser. A land tax certificate is available from the Office of State Revenue. Previously land tax certificates were obtained by purchasers. Now it is the obligation of the vendor to obtain them.

For the information of the previous speaker, I indicate that it is the obtaining of land tax certificates that will trigger notifications from the Office of State Revenue to the Australian Taxation Office of potential sales by foreign investors. It is this certificate that discloses the sale of the land. As vendors are required to apply for the certificate, this will enable the New South Wales chief commissioner to obtain information about the vendor which can then be disclosed to the ATO. This legislation is sensible and appropriate. It complies with the undertaking given by the New South Wales Government to the Commonwealth. I support the bill.

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (12:22):** On behalf of Ms Gladys Berejiklian, in reply: I thank all members who have spoken on the Taxation Administration Amendment (Collection and Disclosure of Information to Commonwealth) Bill 2016. This bill delivers on the commitment of all Australian Treasurers, with the exception of the Northern Territory, to implement a national register of foreign ownership of land titles. This bill will facilitate the collection and provision of additional data to the Australian Taxation Office [ATO], which will maintain the Commonwealth's national register. Commonwealth and State agencies will benefit from having more comprehensive data to improve compliance, including better enforcement of State laws in areas such as land tax, first home owner benefits and improved compliance with goods and services tax and capital gains tax laws.

In New South Wales, the Office of State Revenue [OSR] is the agency best placed to collect the data and provide the data returns to the ATO through existing data exchange channels. Land and Property Information [LPI] data will also be aggregated by the OSR for provision to the ATO. The data collection will be incorporated into existing requirements for property revenue transactions. It requires changes to the OSR systems, including electronic forms used by the conveyancing industry. The Office of State Revenue has designed the collection process with industry, to minimise disruption.

The Office of State Revenue will provide assistance to the conveyancing industry through a targeted education and communication program. The data will be subject to the normal privacy provisions that apply to all individual and business information retained for tax administration purposes. The Commonwealth Government has committed to provide funding support to meet the costs of changing data collection systems in participating States. New South Wales looks forward to finalising the arrangements as soon as possible.

I note the three questions raised by the member for Cessnock while he was trying to score political points. The problem is that the member for Cessnock did not receive the memo from his colleagues in the upper House. They left him off the mail-out list. The memo, which went to all other Labor members, raised four questions. For the benefit of the member for Cessnock I will answer the fourth question, which he forgot to mention. I am sure his colleague in the upper House the Hon. Peter Primrose will be disappointed that the member was sloppy in his homework and was not able to transcribe all four questions that he raised in the other place.

I quite like the member for Cessnock, so I will not pull him up for not doing his homework with due diligence and did not ask the four questions that his colleague raised in the upper House. Question one was: How will the bill work with a possibly privatised land titles and registration service? The answer is: Quite easily. This bill facilitates the OSR as the primary data collection entity in New South Wales. The OSR collects and provides

to the ATO the data required under changes to the Commonwealth Taxation Administration Act. The Office of State Revenue will use stamp duty processes and land tax clearance certificates to collect the new data. Both mechanisms are not administered by LPI. Existing data provided by LPI will continue to be provided to the OSR after privatisation, which should not have an impact on the legislation.

The member for Cessnock lectured Government members about abandoning our ideological principles. It is good to see that he is sticking to his ideological principles. He is the great socialist from Cessnock who wants more government intervention. He wants government to own everything in the State. We will airbrush that period of history when Labor privatised many State services. The member for Cessnock, the great socialist, wants everything back in public ownership.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** Correct.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** I note the interjection by the member for Cessnock acknowledging that he is the great socialist and that he wants government to own everything. There should be no private sector in the State of New South Wales, according to the member for Cessnock. The second question that the member for Cessnock correctly transcribed from the speech of his friend in the upper House the Hon. Peter Primrose was: How will this bill reduce red tape, which is one of the objectives that the Government set for itself? The member is right; the Government did set that objective. This bill will see no significant increase in red tape burden.

There will be benefits from improved data on foreign ownership and improved compliance across Commonwealth and State taxes, including capital gains tax, goods and services tax and land tax, which should outweigh all of the costs. It is a win-win situation. Everyone is happy, except for the member for Cessnock. The Labor Party hates good news. Labor hated the budget yesterday, when the Government delivered a great result for the people of New South Wales. Labor hates the fact that the Government is cutting red tape and lessening the tax burden on the people of New South Wales. This is good news for the people of New South Wales. It is no wonder that the member for Cessnock hates it.

The data collection process has been co-designed with industry. We have worked with industry because we understand that the private sector are stakeholders in this. The member for Cessnock does not believe in industry; he believes in more government. We will continue to work with the people affected by these changes. We will use existing processes and integrate them with the OSR's move towards a fully digitised process. It is very exciting. The member for Tweed is very excited about this.

For the benefit of the member for Cessnock, the third question that Labor raised in the upper House was: How will this bill ultimately save taxpayers money? I am shocked that Labor is interested in saving taxpayers money. We heard it here first: Labor is interested in saving taxpayers money. I am excited that the socialist member for Cessnock is suddenly concerned about taxpayers. I join the member for Cessnock in being concerned about taxpayers. That is why the data collected under this bill will improve tax compliance across a range of taxes, which makes the tax system fairer for all Australians. Who could complain about that?

**Mr Geoff Provest:** You might have to repeat that for the member for Cessnock.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** The member for Tweed wants me to say it again. It will make the system fairer for all Australians. That is a good thing. And we are all up for having a fair tax system. The Australian Taxation Office will also use the data to make tax returns simpler, and to make it easier and less costly for taxpayers to comply with tax legislation. There has never been a more exciting time to live in New South Wales, to paraphrase the Prime Minister. The member for Cessnock has been very sloppy; he could not transcribe the four questions asked of the Government in the upper House. He forgot one. The one that he forgot was about privacy. For the benefit of the member for Cessnock, I note that this bill has been through the Legislation Review Committee of Parliament. It has reviewed the bill to make sure that it does meet privacy requirements. Guess what? The committee has concluded that the bill does not unreasonably intrude on privacy rights given that the transfer of information is intended to improve compliance with tax laws and the foreign investment framework. So listeners have heard it here first.

I am giving the member for Cessnock the task of transcribing the answers to the four questions, not just the three questions, and taking them to the Hon. Peter Primrose. If he has to include some pictures to make it all the more understandable then so be it. The department has been wonderful in helping us get this information today and doing so much work on this bill, and I commend all the staff of the Office of State Revenue who are here today for helping us get to this point. Maybe they could help us find some pictures for the member for Cessnock to take to his colleagues in the upper House to explain in full detail the answers to all four questions that they raised. The Commissioner of Taxation would also be subject to equivalent privacy laws at the Commonwealth level. So it seems to me that there are a lot of protections in place around privacy. The Legislation Review

Committee of the Parliament is happy. Tick. The bill has to meet the equivalent privacy laws at the Commonwealth level. Tick. Everyone is a winner.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** And I have an answer to a question I didn't ask.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** The member for Cessnock did not ask it; he forgot to ask it. I am sure he will be castigated in caucus for not doing his homework properly. Luckily I am here to do his homework for him. I will print a copy of *Hansard* straightaway just so that the member for Cessnock can see all the answers that cover all the questions, all the fearmongering, and all the chest thumping and so that everyone is relaxed and happy that this is a good bill. This is a good piece of legislation that will deliver on our commitment to comply with the Commonwealth Government's national register of foreign ownership in time for the 1 July introduction of the reporting requirements. I commend this bill to the House.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall):** The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### Third Reading

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (12:33):** On behalf of Ms Gladys Berejiklian: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## MARINE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2016

### Second Reading

**Ms LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie—Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education) (12:33):** On behalf of Mr Andrew Constance: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

As this bill was introduced in the other place on 31 May 2016, and is in the same form, the second reading speech appears at pages 3 to 6 in the *Proof Hansard* for that day. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (12:34):** I lead for the Opposition on the Marine Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. This legislation follows the Government's 2014 review of the Marine Safety Act, and aims to do three things: first, to improve the enforcement of maritime rules and regulations; secondly, to align maritime and transport law; and, thirdly, to consolidate existing marine legislation and repeal the Maritime Services Act 1935. These are worthwhile objects, and Labor does not intend to oppose this bill. However, it does have a number of concerns, which I will outline shortly. As I understand it, this bill is specifically designed to target "hoon behaviour", which is the Minister's description, or antisocial behaviour by jet ski owners and riders, following a number of concerning safety incidents in southern Sydney waterways, including on the Georges River, Botany Bay and Port Hacking.

Recreational boating and water sports have become a critical part of the recreational life of many Sydneysiders, and it is disappointing that a small number fail to act appropriately and to respect not just their fellow marine waterway users but also the environment, which they are privileged to use. It is, however, important to note that the vast majority of people are courteous and safe on our waterways. In formulating our response to this bill we have consulted with the Boating Industry Association and the Boat Owners Association. I thank them for their time. The bill's primary objective is to align transport law with maritime law—that means what is acceptable and not acceptable on our roads is now acceptable and not acceptable in the marine environment.

The Opposition does, however, have some concerns about this legislation. I am particularly concerned that the bill is not as prescriptive in sections as it perhaps should be. For example, while schedule 1A of part 6 introduces a camera recording scheme for enforcement purposes, there is very little detail within the legislation that outlines exactly how this section will operate and what regulatory framework will enable these recordings to be used in court proceedings. The bill restricts the use of camera devices to areas of significant non-compliance. I am advised by the Minister's office that this will take the form of closed-circuit television [CCTV] cameras. The scheme is already operating in Perth. Our concerns relate to whether this will be operated by the private sector, how many cameras will be in any given area, whether they will operate 24 hours a day, and, if the situation improves, whether the camera or cameras will be removed after a period of time.

This is a significant and important part of the bill, and it would have been appropriate for the Government to be significantly more prescriptive in regards to the practical application of this new technology. I hope the

Government will provide more clarity before these new laws become operational, including the determinants for an area to be "non-complying" and to warrant CCTV. Schedule 1 part 1 deals with testing for alcohol and drugs, and once again aligns alcohol and drug offences while driving a vessel with equivalent provisions for driving a vehicle. The bill does not change the limits but it will allow officers to conduct random drug testing of vessel operators. Penalties and licence disqualifications are also aligned to transport law. This includes the lowering of some maximum penalties.

In recent times, there has been some criticism of New South Wales drug-driving laws. Specifically I recall a Lismore magistrate in January drawing attention to a lack of information about testing levels. He said, "There is mystery and uncertainty by design of the current testing regime." He made those comments as he dismissed a drug-driving charge against a man who tested positive for cannabis nine days after smoking the drug. I will be interested to see whether these same issues arise for those charged with drug offences on the water. The bill creates a new offence of operating a vessel in a menacing manner. This mirrors an offence contained in road transport law and has a maximum penalty of \$3,300 and imprisonment for 18 months. Police may also seize and impound vessels, including the boat trailer.

A vessel may be impounded for three months on the first offence; a second offence within a five-year period will see the vessel forfeited to the Crown. Forfeited vessels may be offered for sale or disposed of. As well as impounding vessels, police can impound boat trailers. The Boat Owners Association is concerned that it is not clear whether the definition of trailer includes: a trailer that has been used at any time to carry the vessel; any trailer that could be used to carry the vessel; a trailer that is normally used to carry the vessel; or a trailer used to carry the vessel at the time that it was seized, at the time of the offence or at any other time. The association is correct in pointing out this ambiguity.

Another issue raised by the Boat Owners Association concerns the proceeds from impounded and forfeited vessels. It is currently unclear whether the Government will place the funds into Consolidated Revenue. However, I suggest that any proceeds raised should be redirected into safety enhancements for marine users. This also mirrors the Government's approach to the Road Safety Fund. We have a number of issues with that fund, but the intent in having the fund is appropriate. Under the bill, police and Roads and Maritime Services officers can immediately suspend the boat driving licence of a person who has committed a serious offence such as reckless, dangerous or negligent navigation. While the provisions of the bill are mainly aimed at addressing this hoon behaviour, there are a number of other provisions designed to streamline regulation. These changes include: requiring interstate boat licence holders to produce their licence if requested by an authorised officer; enabling marine exclusion zones for special events; and provisions for the management of wharves, moorings and port facilities.

Existing provisions under the Maritime Services Act 1935 will be transferred to the Ports and Maritime Administration Act 1995. The bill provides an updated framework for enforcement and introduces new provisions aligned with existing road safety legislation covering dangerous and menacing hoon behaviour, camera recording and detection of speeding, drug and alcohol testing, and penalties and disqualification periods. As I said, the Opposition does not oppose this bill, but it remains concerned the Government has tried to translate provisions from transport legislation straight into this legislation with little change or no relevant changes. While similar, motorists, jet skiers and boat users are not involved in the same activities, and it is hoped that the Government has undertaken due diligence to ensure operational difficulties do not arise as a result of this literal translation. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) (12:41):** I refer to the Marine Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. In a Queensland legal report, published earlier this year, an 18-year-old was acting as a spotter for a jet ski driver, while towing a friend who was waterskiing behind them. The spotter fell off the back of the jet ski when it performed a hard turn, his foot tangled in the towrope and, as the jet ski shot past, his foot was amputated. The insurer denied liability, arguing it was not liable under the club marine policy on the grounds that the driver did not hold the appropriate Queensland licence to drive the ski. An exclusion clause in the policy said the cover did not apply where the jet ski was controlled by an unlicensed person. In the end, as a result of federal insurance legislation protections, the insurer could not avoid paying out. The issue of training was also raised in this case.

The point, for today, and for this bill, is that marine insurance policies limit the cover they provide. Users and, indeed, members of the public can miss out on compensation or, at the least, have an expensive legal fight on their hands if the driver is not appropriately licensed. As has been the case on our roads, there is always the risk of injury to drivers, passengers and unlucky members of the public where powered and personal watercraft are involved. In June 2013 I was contacted by the Mulwala Yarrawonga Safe Boating Committee, which raised concerns about the use of jet skis in a dangerous manner on Lake Mulwala. It stated:

It has become apparent in recent years that the use of Personal Water Craft (PWC or jet ski) is far more prevalent by water users, a fact we encourage in a tourist town. Lake Mulwala and the Murray River system is only three hours from Melbourne and in the holiday periods our population increases tenfold.

Several problems have arisen with a marked increase in injury related collisions on our waters with persons under the age of 16.

The writer, a police officer who conducted boating duties in the area, went on to express frustration at the lack of power to take action against young offenders or their parents or guardians, or the craft's owner, as supervisors. He noted that during December 2012 and January 2013 the local police were aware of two serious collisions involving young adult riders of personal watercraft [PWC] in the Mulwala area, which resulted in hospital attendances. "In the same time," he wrote, "police stopped about 20 young adult riders of PWCs for offences, all dealt with by cautioning." This is only a snapshot from one summer on one lake with a strong tourist presence. However, it highlights the realities we are dealing with here.

But this bill, finally, deals with the issue of hoon behaviour on the water, addressing it in similar manner to the way society now handles hoon behaviour on the roads. The largest body of water in the Albury region is Hume Weir. It is widely used for recreational water sports, including sailing and jetskiing. On checking with a local volunteer coastguard service I was informed there is little concern over the behaviour of jet skiers. They have established their own culture on Lake Hume and tend to self-regulate. If someone is getting a little rowdy, others are likely to come over and pull the offender into line, telling them to calm down. There is actually a concern that hoon behaviour could lead to harsh regulation of the sport and that Albury's jet skiers take steps to prevent this.

To drive a powered vessel for recreational purposes on New South Wales waterways at a speed of 10 knots—18.5 kilometres per hour—or more, drivers need a boat driver licence. A licence to drive a personal watercraft is required at any time. There is a restricted licence for those aged from 12 to under 16 years and who wish to drive a PWC. The conditions of this licence are the same as those for the young adult general licence. A young adult PWC licence holder must be accompanied by a PWC licence holder on the PWC when driving at a speed of 10 knots or more.

The object of this bill is to amend the Marine Safety Act 1998 and the Ports and Maritime Administration Act 1995 to: introduce new offences into the Marine Act for operating a vessel in a menacing manner; provide for the seizure, impoundment or forfeiture of recreational vessels if an authorised officer reasonably believes certain serious offences have been committed; allow for random drug testing of vessel operators; provide consistency in penalties and disqualification periods for drug and alcohol offences under roads and maritime law; clarify and streamline marine compliance and investigation powers; establish a scheme for camera recorded offences; and further matters.

I note that the use of cameras will initially be limited to well-known trouble spots on the Georges River and in Port Hacking and Botany Bay. An evaluation will follow before this program is extended elsewhere. This is a very real attempt to deal with the issue of bad behaviour returning once police leave the area. In dealing with bad behaviour, it is proposed to introduce a number of new offences. Of particular note is the idea of operating a vessel "in a menacing manner". Turning to section 13A, it becomes an offence to intend to menace others. Schedule 1 to the bill item [13] states:

**[13] Section 13A**

Insert after section 13:

13A Operating vessel in a menacing manner

**(1) Offence—intent to menace**

A person must not operate a vessel in any navigable waters in a manner that menaces another person with the intention of menacing that other person.

Maximum penalty: 30 penalty units or imprisonment for 18 months or both (in the case of a first offence) or 50 penalty units or imprisonment for 2 years or both (in the case of a second or subsequent offence).

**(2) Offence—possibility of menace**

A person must not operate a vessel in any navigable waters in a manner that menaces another person if the person ought to have known that the other person might be menaced.

Maximum penalty: 20 penalty units or imprisonment for 12 months or both (in the case of a first offence) or 30 penalty units or imprisonment for 18 months or both (in the case of a second or subsequent offence).

Here we are talking about the possibility of menace, an intrusion on others and their enjoyment of the waterways. This power will always be subject to interpretation, and should be exercised with due caution. At its core is the issue of what is one person's idea of fun may be an obnoxious intrusion into someone else's enjoyment of the same public space. The largest bodies of water in the electorate of Albury form part of our border with Victoria. This

creates special issues for licensing and enforcement of many activities. I note that changes to the Marine Safety Act will see that holders of interstate boat licences operating in New South Wales must produce their licence if so requested by an authorised officer of this State. It is good to get this matter clear right from the start.

The Marine Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 sets out to deal with a number of issues of behaviour and enforcement on the State's waterways. In so doing, we are perhaps heading into uncharted waters. From my perspective, the bill represents a more sophisticated approach to balancing what are, at times, competing interests. According to the Minister's figures, registrations of jet skis are growing at approximately 10 per cent per annum. The feedback from two major water recreation areas is mixed. The focus should be on getting young riders off to a safe and considerate start, and to protecting all who enjoy the beaches, lakes and rivers of New South Wales. I commend the bill.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (12:49):** I am pleased to support the Marine Legislation Bill 2016, which will strengthen marine safety legislation and make our waterways safer for boaters and local communities. While the majority of boaters take safety requirements seriously, some continue to flout the law and are a danger to others on the water. It is those people that the measures in this bill are intended to target. The bill includes powers to establish a camera recording system for enforcement purposes. A similar system has been in place on the roads for many years.

The bill allows for camera-recorded evidence to be used in areas of serious non-compliance with marine legislation for offences including: using a vessel in a menacing manner; operating a vessel negligently, recklessly or dangerously; exceeding the speed limit; not keeping a safe distance from other vessels, people, land and structures; causing wash that damages or unreasonably impacts other vessels; operating an unregistered vessel; entering a personal watercraft [PWC] exclusion zone; irregular riding and lifejacket offences; and unauthorised wharf access.

This technology is long overdue on our waterways. It will provide a valuable addition to patrols by Roads and Maritime Services and the NSW Police Force, providing an effective deterrent around the clock when enforcement officers cannot be present. The vessel owner will be responsible for the camera-recorded offences. In the first instance penalty notices will be directed to the vessel owner, who may pay the fine or nominate the person driving their vessel at the time of the offence. If the owner nominates another person as committing the offence, a new penalty notice will be sent to that person. The same system operates on the roads. The use of this technology to deter illegal activity and catch offenders is long overdue on our waterways.

Recent changes to the Fines Act 1996 allow owners of vessels who have been issued a penalty notice for an offence committed when another person was in charge of the vessel to nominate that person as the person in charge even though the relevant fine has been paid. The time period within which such a nomination may be made has been extended to 90 days in a case where the fine has been paid. These changes will ensure that those who actually commit offences on the water are held accountable.

The new hoon provisions have been used to great effect on the roads. They will now be able to be used on the water to deter a rogue element from behaving in a dangerous and intimidating manner. New powers will be introduced to seize and impound vessels used in serious offences that cause a real danger to others. This will make vessel owners think twice about who they allow to ride their jet ski or operate their powerboat. No-one wants their vessel to be impounded for three months and be unable to use it. No-one wants to lose their vessel and see it destroyed or sold to a new owner. Vessel owners are now on notice to take care in who they allow to use their vessels and make sure that they obey the law.

Local communities have had enough of jet skiers who ignore safe distance requirements and ride their jet skis close to swimmers and surfers or ignore restrictions on irregular riding within personal watercraft restriction zones. Those kinds of behaviours can have serious ramifications. In August 2015 a jet skier unfortunately hit a tree on the Georges River in my electorate and was seriously injured. Then in September a kayak fisher on the Georges River at Picnic Point opposite my electorate was seriously injured and hospitalised after a jet skier riding in a pack collided with him. That serious matter is before the courts and the kayaker has endured months of rehabilitation. Recent research by Transport for NSW found that 45 per cent of local residents and waterway users surveyed had witnessed antisocial behaviour from jet ski riders.

The Sandy Point Progress Association on behalf of the Sandy Point Dragon Boat Club wrote to me last year to convey its concerns for Georges River. The club utilises the waterway on an almost daily basis. The club competes internationally and its members strive to win for our local community. Obviously they need to train as much as possible to remain competitive. They had noticed some jet ski users on the waterway behaving inappropriately, which was making them feel unsafe and fearful on the water. These concerns come on top of other numerous discussions I have had with residents of Sandy Point, Voyager Point, Pleasure Point and Chipping

Norton who live along the Georges River in my electorate. The amendments in the bill will allow those residents and that wonderful club to have greater peace of mind when using the Georges River.

The amendments follow on from measures that the Minister has already introduced to create safer waterways for our residents. Whether they are boating, swimming, sailing, fishing, waterskiing, wakeboarding, paddling, jetskiing or just relaxing on the beach or riverbank, the amendments will assist in ensuring safety. I applaud the measures included in the bill because they will support the efforts of both Roads and Maritime Services and the police in making our waterways safer and more enjoyable places to spend time with family and friends. I thank the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight and the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, their staff and all additional contributors who have assisted in the creation of this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (12:55):** Last year I was pleased to inform the community about the New South Wales Government's crackdown on dangerous and antisocial riding of jet skis along the Georges River. After numerous incidents and near misses on the river in our area, I was pleased to inform the community that the Government had set aside more than \$1 million to tackle the problem. Many local residents have raised concerns with me about the risks such riders pose to other river users and about the noise pollution created by speeding jet skis. The new measures introduced last year included additional speed restrictions along the Georges River, jet ski exclusion zones, increased high-visibility and covert patrols, and stronger measures to allow authorities to immediately suspend boat licences.

Already daily police patrols are occurring due to dangerous behaviour along the Georges River as police set out to target jet skiers who disobey the law and exhibit intimidating behaviour. From 1 July the 8-knot speed limit area will be extended by two kilometres on the Georges River. The Roads and Maritime Services is also considering the use of GPS and drone technology paired with the installation of more closed-circuit television cameras to combat the problem. That is great news for the community and particularly for residents in my electorate and surrounding areas who will benefit from this Government's tough stance on dangerous and antisocial behaviour on our waterways. The Marine Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 will introduce provisions aligned with existing road safety legislation relating to dangerous and menacing hoon behaviour by some vessel operators, camera detection of certain offences and related provisions to nominate the person actually responsible for the offence, and drug and alcohol testing, penalties and licence disqualification periods.

Jet ski registrations are growing by more than 10 per cent annually. There has been ongoing community concern about non-compliant and antisocial behaviour by some jet ski riders for some time, especially on the Georges River in my electorate and parts of Botany Bay and Port Hacking. Unchecked, that behaviour risks the safety and amenity of other water, beach and foreshore users and will drive calls for wide-scale bans on jet skis that will penalise responsible operators. A targeted summer enforcement campaign found that one in four jet ski riders checked were not complying with safe speed, navigation, irregular riding or licensing laws. Around 45 per cent of local residents and waterway users recently surveyed had witnessed antisocial behaviour by jet skiers. The new offence of operating a vessel in a menacing manner will help to deter dangerous and menacing hoon behaviour on the water once and for all.

The Marine Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 makes welcome changes to enhance safety on the water. While much of the debate has been about the new provisions to deal with hoon behaviour on the water, the bill also includes important changes to the current drug and alcohol provisions. At present marine drug and alcohol legislation lags behind that applying to road transport laws in New South Wales. The Marine Safety Act 1998 only allows for offences of driving a vessel under the influence of alcohol or any other drug, or exceeding the prescribed concentration of alcohol limits. It does not have specific offences for operating a vessel with a prescribed illicit drug in a person's oral fluid, blood or urine or with any morphine or cocaine present, or powers and procedures to conduct drug testing. This bill rectifies that gap and brings drug and alcohol provisions for those operating vessels into line with those that apply to roads. Where an offence has been committed, penalties and disqualification periods will be consistent with those applying on the roads.

The bill includes new powers to allow police to conduct random drug testing of vessel operators on New South Wales waterways. Victoria, Queensland and South Australia already have powers for both alcohol and drug testing of vessel operators. I am advised that research by Transport for NSW shows that excess alcohol was the primary cause of more than 7 per cent of boating incidents involving a fatality between 2002-03 and 2011-12. Drinking alcohol and being under the influence of drugs reduces a person's ability to boat safely. Alcohol and drugs affect judgement, vision, coordination and reflexes, which increases the risk of having a marine incident. Decision-making, reflexes and response times in emergencies are slowed and swimming ability reduces greatly, so if a person does get into difficulty the outcome is likely to be worse if that person is affected by alcohol or drugs. For some time now residents in the St George and Sutherland shires who use the Georges River, Botany

Bay and Port Hacking have been calling for our waterways to be cleaned up once and for all. I thank the Minister for introducing this commonsense bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (13:02):** I make a contribution to debate on the Marine Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. I am particularly pleased to follow the member for Cessnock in this debate who would have a lot of personal watercraft in the creeks in his electorate. I imagine that the Temporary Speaker would also see a lot of this activity in his Northern Tablelands electorate. As the electorates of Swansea, Charlestown and Lake Macquarie are situated predominantly around the largest saltwater lake in Australia, we are well aware of the use and misuse of personal watercraft. This bill is timely, perhaps a little behind community expectations, but the Government is acting and I thank it for doing so.

As with most things, a minority is causing a problem for the law-abiding and more sensible users of our waterways. It cannot be denied that personal watercraft are popular. It is not something that interests me but they are fun. I know lots of people who use them and they generally do so responsibly. Recently I have been making inquiries around the area but over the years I have received many complaints, particularly in my time on council and subsequently as a State member, about the abuse of these vehicles. It might be inadvertent, but we are increasingly seeing them used in a way that is designed to cause impact on people around coastal residential areas and in other boating areas and to intimidate other water users.

Maritime officers have told me that while jetskiing is booming in popularity, the vast majority of people using them on Lake Macquarie do the right thing, behave responsibly and respect other people's rights to enjoy a day on the water. In fact, they tell me the only time we have significant problems is during holiday season when visitors from Sydney arrive—probably from Cessnock as well. That is when we see an increase in jet skis being used at high speeds in and around areas where they should not be, including near swimmers, kayakers and other boats. Thankfully, these are not common occurrences. These hoon elements are a minority, but having powers in place so that the problem can be appropriately dealt with in a timely manner is appropriate. Having said that, it was quite disturbing to see the results of a recent enforcement campaign in Sydney, which found around 25 per cent of jet skiers were not complying with current laws. Even more disturbing was that of all the local residents and other waterway users surveyed, 45 per cent said they had witnessed antisocial behaviour by jet ski riders. Some found that unusual, but I would not think those who live in most of the populated areas on our coastal waterways would find it all that surprising.

Jet skis are increasing in popularity and registrations are up by about 10 per cent on previous years. A retailer in my electorate is reportedly doing good business selling new models, which are now priced much more cheaply than they used to be—this is very similar to what is happening with the cheap imports and the affordability of motorcycles—and there is also more wealth in some of our communities. I see no reason why those operating such vessels on the water are not subject to the laws pertaining to on our roads, particularly when it comes to speed in certain sensitive zones, continual breaches of the law, and drug and alcohol offences. I also see no reason why those who continue to pose dangers to people around them, create unnecessary noise or refuse to comply with reasonable behaviour and the law should not be held to account with a range of sanctions, not just fines. People who continually hoon around in cars on our roads face the prospect of having their cars impounded and other strong penalties. It seems very reasonable that those who continue to flout laws on the water should face similar penalties and sanctions. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) (13:07):** On behalf of the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, in reply: I thank all members for their contributions to this debate. This bill commits the Government to improving marine safety and to ensuring that our beautiful waterways are there for everyone to share and enjoy. Marine legislation is intended to protect those on the water through speed and wash restrictions, safe distance requirements and licensing requirements. The majority of boaters take these requirements seriously and take care to adhere to the safety requirements that apply on the water. However, a minority believe the rules do not apply to them and that they can behave as they like on the water with no thought to the safety or enjoyment of others.

The Roads and Maritime Services and the police receive many reports of jet ski operators using their jet skis to intimidate other boaters by engaging in behaviour such as spraying kayaks, small sailing vessels and recreational vessels with families and young children on board. They ride dangerously close to other vessels, jumping in the wake of other vessels, and are abusive to others out on the water. They are indifferent to receiving penalty notices. This bill will ensure that tough new measures are in place to deal with this rogue element who are diminishing the amenity of many of our waterways and waterside areas. The new offence of operating a vessel in a menacing manner is aimed directly at this hoon element.

If convicted, a person could face a hefty fine of up to \$3,300 for a first offence or up to 18 months imprisonment, or could face both the fine and a prison sentence. Additional action will be able to be taken to impound for three months a vessel used in the commission of a hoon offence. A vessel used in the commission of a second hoon offence will be forfeited to the Crown. Anyone who uses a vessel in a dangerous or menacing



manner is on notice that if they continue with this behaviour they will face a prison sentence and their vessel will be impounded for three months. It is now more likely than ever that people will be caught if they indulge in such dangerous and antisocial behaviour.

We have asked the Marine Area Command of the NSW Police Force and Roads and Maritime Services boating safety officers to conduct more high-visibility and covert patrols. We know that dangerous hoon-like behaviour stops when enforcement is in place, which is why police officers have been tasked daily to patrol the Georges River and other areas where jet skis are causing trouble. To date, this additional compliance activity has resulted in 189 penalty notices in the Georges River and Botany Bay areas alone.

The bill also introduces powers to establish a camera recording scheme for enforcement purposes, similar to the scheme that operates on the roads. These cameras will be used only in certain declared areas where there is significant non-compliance with marine legislation. Camera recordings of certain offences will allow increased and more cost-effective enforcement of marine safety legislation and will provide a strong around-the-clock deterrent to illegal behaviour on the water when enforcement officers cannot be present. The use of this technology is long overdue on our waterways. If people will not or cannot comply with safety requirements they should simply be off the water. We do not accept this sort of behaviour on our roads and we should not accept it on the water.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to congratulate and commend the Minister in the other place, the Hon. Duncan Gay, and all the wonderful staff who have contributed to this bill, in particular Mr Angus Mitchell, Director of NSW Maritime; Detective Superintendent Mark Hutchings, Commander, Marine Area Command, NSW Police Force; and, of course, all the hardworking staff. It would be remiss of me not to mention Adrian Toovey, the Minister's chief of staff, Mr Andrew Hutton, Ramza Martin, Lachlan Mercer and all those great staff in the Minister's office. I congratulate Transport for NSW, particularly the port and maritime policy team, on their work on this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall):** The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### **Third Reading**

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) (13:12):** On behalf of Mr Andrew Constance: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall):** Government business having concluded we will now deal with community recognition statements.

### *Community Recognition Statements*

#### **TRIBUTE TO FRANK ALLEN**

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (13:13):** Today I pay tribute to a man who dedicated most of his 99 years to making the world a better place. Frank Allen, from Toronto, passed away last week just a few months short of his 100th birthday. He was a gentle man, a former miner and a noted cook. Right up until his death, Frank Allen was a tireless volunteer in his community. He was the oldest and most committed Landcare volunteer who would arrive every Wednesday at the Landcare Resource Centre at Teralba with a fresh batch of his renowned Anzac biscuits. After a quick cuppa he would head out to the gardens and get to work. He spent 27 years with Landcare, which he joined after being part of a successful campaign to establish a foreshore reserve at Green Point.

I always enjoyed meeting with Frank and having a chat; indeed, he had a lot that was worth saying. He was a wonderfully kind man who loved his home and the large family around him. Our community has suffered a loss with Frank's passing but, by all measures, we remain much richer for the legacy that Frank Allen left. I offer my condolences, as well as those of the residents of Lake Macquarie, to Frank's family on their loss and I place on the record our collective appreciation of Frank's service. Vale, Frank Allen.

#### **MYALL ELECTORATE SCHOOL LEADERS BREAKFAST**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (13:14):** Recently I hosted a school leaders breakfast, which was fantastic and inspirational. In attendance were students Lucas Mepham, Gabbie Aarons-Bur, Harrison Hillyer and Jamie-Lee Carter from Taree High School; Braidy Chick, Sarah Mayers, Baxter Pattison and Kate Wright from Taree Christian College; Jayden Lilley, Hannah-Rose Riet, Emily Kirkpatrick, Josh Cillons and

Georgina Cunich from Bulahdelah Central School; Thomas Freeman, Venus Fuller, Tim Holohan, Maddison West, Sandra Langford, Faith Hauser and Madelyn Brown from Manning Valley Anglican College; and Ruben Rankin, Haakon Britt, Jemma Attkins, Anita Handono, Heath Turville, Jake Forrest and Paul Rosenbaum from Great Lakes Tuncurry Campus.

Also in attendance were students Jai Harrison and Caitlyn Cameron from Wingham High School; Isabella Blenkin, Thomas Dormor, Casey Griffiths and Declan Moylan from St Clare's High School; Paige Brett, Aiden Morris, Gemma Doran and Merv Presland from Chatham High School; and William Simon, Mia Williams, George Castillo, Grace Camilleri, Henry Woodyard, Katie Gwynne, Ramsey Maberley and Hanna Williams from Great Lakes College Forster Campus. *[Time expired.]*

#### **ORDER OF AUSTRALIA RECIPIENT DR AIDEN FOY**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (13:15):** Wallsend congratulates Dr Aiden Foy, who was honoured by being made a member of the Order of Australia for his significant service to medicine, education and the community. Dr Foy immigrated to Australia in 1962, and graduated from university in 1971. Over the past decade, Dr Foy has worked as part of a team in remote parts of Australia, including Alice Springs, Moree and Mungindi.

Through his vast experience Dr Foy acknowledges that we are living in increasingly difficult times. He has noted that "the resources available for care for people are limited; the burden of disease is actually increasing; the population is ageing; the patients are likely to come to hospital or to a general practice no longer with one condition, but three or four simultaneously". He said, "You need to be agile to deal with that. The public system is under constant strain, just continual strain." We pay homage to Dr Foy.

#### **ST MARYS NATIONAL SERVICEMEN'S MEMORIAL**

**Ms TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (13:16):** This year marked the tenth anniversary of the Memorial and Tribute Laying Ceremony in remembrance of all national servicemen in St Marys. As always, it was a deeply moving and emotional service as I stood and observed the men who put their lives in harms way to ensure that we inherited a safe and prosperous Australia. Penrith City ANSA Incorporated received its charter and flag on 7 April 2002. Members volunteer each year to sell badges for ANZAC, Legacy and Remembrance Day. To date they have raised more than \$143,000. It was a particularly poignant service as it was the first service without Harry Morfoot. Harry Morfoot and Tom Kelly were instrumental in initiating the National Servicemen's Memorial plaque in Victoria Park, St Marys. They are both deeply missed by us all. In closing I quote the National Servicemen's Ode:

Have you forgotten yet, let us all remember those who have served Australia with pride and dedication. Look up and swear by the green of the spring that you will never forget. "We will never Forget".

Vale, Harry Morfoot.

#### **TRIBUTE TO JOHN BEACH**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle) (13:17):** On 1 July the career of an education giant in Newcastle will draw to a close. John Beach, the principal of Newcastle East Public School, has been serving the community as a public school educator for 42 years, and has been principal at Newcastle East Public School for the past 15 years. Recently John has overseen the massive bicentenary celebrations for Newcastle East Public School, the oldest continuing school in Australia. His passion for his school and his community shone throughout the celebrations. The school launched the book entitled *To Climb The Hill, A People's History of Newcastle East Public School 1816-2016*.

The school also revealed a wonderful bronze sculpture commemorating the school's history, designed by Heather Swann. The celebrations culminated with a dinner, with the guest of honour being former Prime Minister Julia Gillard. John worked incredibly hard to help organise this wonderful bicentenary celebration. He even postponed his retirement to make it all happen, so his rest and relaxation in retirement will be well deserved. The community and I, especially those with connections to Newcastle East Public School, thank John for his years of public service and commitment to education.

#### **AUSTRALIAN GYMNASTICS CHAMPIONSHIPS**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (13:18):** Today I congratulate 13 young athletes from Caringbah YMCA who recently represented New South Wales at the Australian Gymnastics Championships in Melbourne. The exceptional team included Valentina Cardenas-Lopez, Jasmine Flanagan, Cheyenne Reardon, Mady Glenn, Tyla Veney, Emily Loe, Roxy and Jessie Langford, Paige Persijn, Summer Grills, Emily and Leah Rampoldi, and team captain Braeden Coffey. All teams performed exceptionally well, finishing in the top five, with all but one team placing in the top three.

I acknowledge in particular Emily Rampoldi, the National Champion in the Level 9 Women's Gymnastics. I also congratulate the winners of Level 7 Acro Gymnastics, Jasmine Flanagan, Emily Loe and Tyla Veney. It would be remiss of me not to mention the hardworking coaches Alanna Wallace, Pip Corbet and Chantelle Blackburn, and also the parents, who support and nurture these talented young athletes on their journey to success. These young athletes have shown incredible commitment and dedication to reach the elite sporting accomplishment of representing our State at the Australian Gymnastics Championships. They are an inspiration to other young athletes in our community.

#### **TRIBUTE TO JAN MARTIN**

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (13:19):** Today I recognise Jan Martin, one of Mount Druitt's longest serving hospital volunteers. Jan has donated 21 years of her time to the Mount Druitt Hospital. She has volunteered in most wards around the hospital and at the moment volunteers in the children's ward. Jan Martin plays with the children before going around and speaking to patients to see whether they need any little jobs done. Volunteers make a real difference in their communities. Their dedication and care for others is greatly valued. I applaud Jan for her compassion and commitment to the Mount Druitt Hospital.

#### **QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOUR LIST AWARD RECIPIENTS**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (13:19):** I am pleased to report that three Ku-ring-gai residents were recently named in the Queen's Birthday Honours List. Marie Ryan from North Turramurra will have "AM" after her name after being recognised for her significant service to music as a classical mezzo-soprano and to music education through her roles as a teacher, mentor and researcher. Her service includes being the chair of vocal and opera studies at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music since 2004.

This month there were also celebrations in the household of Margot Lander, OAM, from Warrawee for receiving an award for her outstanding service to the community, including 40 years with her local Meals on Wheels, more than a decade with Samaritans Purse, 30 years as a flower arranger at St Andrews Anglican Church Wahroonga, and volunteering at Wahroonga Public School and as an esteemed Pink Lady with the Sydney Adventist Hospital, Wahroonga. One wonders where she finds any time in the day for herself. I also pay tribute to the Hon. Ronald Dyer, OAM, from Wahroonga, a member of the Legislative Council from 1979. Congratulations. [*Time expired.*]

#### **TRIBUTE TO GARY BURRELL**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (13:20):** I congratulate Gary Burrell for being awarded his 50 years of service award at today's ceremony to recognise the tremendous efforts of justices of the peace in our community. Gary lives in Valentine in the Swansea electorate with his lovely wife, Crellyn. Gary has dedicated 50 years to providing service to our community, signing his first statutory declaration at just 21 years of age. To be a justice of the peace one must be a person of integrity and honesty and approach one's role with caution and a thorough eye. I thank the Attorney General, the Hon. Gabrielle Upton, for today's recognition ceremony. It is important. The first justice of the peace was sworn in in 1787, appointed by Governor Phillip. It was not until the passing of the Women's Legal Status Act 1918 that the way was paved for the first female justice of the peace in New South Wales in 1921 and for Ella Simon to become the first Aboriginal justice of the peace, appointed in 1962. Today is all about Gary and his providing 50 years of service to our community. On behalf of the New South Wales Parliament, I thank him very much.

#### **TRIBUTE TO CHRIS JOHNSTON**

##### **SCHOOLS SPECTACULAR**

**Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) (13:22):** Teacher and principal Chris Johnston will retire at the end of term two after 37 years in the teaching profession. Chris spent the past 11 years as principal at Corowa High School and has been an inspiration to the entire school community. He has encouraged excellence in all fields and has ensured that teachers and students from Corowa High School have been recognised at the highest levels in the State. All the best in your retirement, Chris, you can be well satisfied with your legacy at Corowa High.

Congratulations to the Oaklands School Choir on being selected for the 2016 Schools Spectacular, to be held at Sydney Olympic Park in November. This is the first time students from this school have been selected to participate in this outstanding showcase of public school talent. What a wonderful achievement from such a small rural school in the Albury electorate. We know that the choir members will enjoy the experience.

##### **DUDLEY COMBINED PENSIONERS AND SENIOR CITIZENS ASSOCIATION**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (13:22):** I congratulate the members of the Dudley Combined Pensioners and Senior Citizens Association Incorporated on reaching its centenary. The association provides a

vital service to our community by offering pensioners and seniors a place to feel connected and socially included. In preparation for this momentous occasion, the association researched what the Hunter political landscape looked like 100 years ago when the electorate of Charlestown did not even exist. It was then called the Kahibah electorate. The member at the time was Labor's Alfred Edden and the Federal member for the Hunter was Sir Edmund Barton, the first Prime Minister of Australia. So much has changed from when the Dudley Combined Pensioners and Senior Citizens Association Incorporated was established and I have no doubt that the next 100 years will bring just as much change. I congratulate the association on reaching this milestone and thank the hardworking volunteers for providing this valuable service to the people of Charlestown.

### **HILLCLIMB CHAMPIONSHIPS**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (13:23):** I congratulate the Grafton Sporting Car Club on hosting the Hillclimb Championships recently at its Mountain View Motor Sport Complex. This wonderful facility has been improved by the covered pit garage structure which received funding from the Community Building Partnership Fund. I had the pleasure of officially opening it during the championships. This new structure now provides for better all-weather servicing of competition vehicles, improves efficiencies and encourages more competitive vehicles. Congratulations to club president and Hillclimb secretary Graham Merry, vice president and Hillclimb publicity officer Bill Norton, secretary Miranda Norton, treasurer Rodger Evans, and assistant Hillclimb secretary Ken Norton on keeping the club going for 60 years and enhancing its reputation for its presentation of outstanding hillclimbs from club level events to State and national championships.

### **AURORA BALL**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (13:24):** I had the pleasure of attending the seventeenth annual Aurora Ball at Sydney Town Hall this past weekend. The ball raised a record \$100,000 for organisations serving the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and questioning [LGBTIQ] community. The Aurora Ball commemorates the Stonewall Riots in New York City, viewed by many as the beginning of the modern LGBTIQ rights movement, and is a pivotal event on the Sydney social calendar. Each year the ball raises money to fund grants to organisations across the State that improve the lives and experiences of LGBTIQ people.

This year, the event sold out in under two weeks, which is a testament to the hard work of the organisers and the backing of the community for this very worthy cause. Mr Tiernan Brady, the campaign director for Australian Marriage Equality, who also led the YES campaign in Ireland, spoke passionately about the importance of marriage equality, not just for LGBTIQ people but for all Australians, and how we can achieve it in Australia. I congratulate the Aurora Group on another successful ball and thank it for the hard work that it does to raise much-needed funds to support the LGBTIQ community.

### **QUEENS BIRTHDAY HONOUR LIST AWARD RECIPIENTS**

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Hawkesbury—Minister for Finance, Services and Property) (13:25):** I congratulate the Commander of Hawkesbury Local Area Command, Stephen Harry Egginton, on receiving the Australian Police Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours List. Superintendent Egginton joined the NSW Police Force in 1988 and was promoted to the rank of sergeant in 1999. He became superintendent as Commander of Education and Training Operational Skills units in 2009 and was appointed to Commander of the Hawkesbury Local Area Command in 2013. I wish Superintendent Egginton the best of luck in the future and thank him on behalf of the Hawkesbury electorate for his years of service and dedication to the protection of life and property in the local community.

I congratulate Michael Pratt, the NSW Customer Service Commissioner and Deputy Chair of Insurance and Care NSW [ICARE], who has been honoured as a Member of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday Honours List 2016. Michael was registered as a role model for Australian society for providing significant service to public administration through reforms in customer service and communication and to the finance and banking industry. As Minister for Finance and Services, I have witnessed firsthand Mike's service and success in his incredible commitment and dedication in substantially improving services for citizens across New South Wales. I commend him for his public service to this State.

### **BLUE MOUNTAINS BUSHFIRE PLAN**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (13:26):** The devastating bushfires of October 2013 not only destroyed homes, precious possessions and memories but also impacted severely on local wildlife and the environment. This event, whilst traumatic, has been a catalyst for resilience and community building. The Blue Mountains Sustainable Approaches to Fire and Emergencies [BSAFE] project was implemented to evaluate our community's response to the emergency. The BSAFE report was launched last week in Katoomba by the Minister. Partner organisations included the Blue Mountains and Lithgow Integrated Neighbourhood Network [BLINN] consortium, the Mountains Community Resource Network and the NSW Rural Fire Service.

The report was authored by Dr Sarah Redshaw and Dr Valerie Ingham of Charles Sturt University, Kath Harrison and Toni Quigley, and photos were by MaryLou Keating and Jenny Bigelow. The project reached almost 700 households across the Blue Mountains. Through BSAFE, a unique partnership emerged between community services and emergency services. Various models to build preparedness and community resilience included Meet Your Street events, More Than a Fire Plan seminars and the Heads Up For Fire workshops. I congratulate all those involved in the project, which will no doubt have long-term benefits for communities across the country.

### **TAREE AND DISTRICT EISTEDDFOD**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (13:28):** I congratulate the students of Bobin Public School who won the Very Very Small School Choir section in the 2016 Taree and District Eisteddfod. They sang *The Ocean* which was written by one of the year 3 students, Mikaela Berry. I congratulate the principal, Diane Myer, local songwriter and teacher Angela Page, teacher Sarah Parker, choir leader Judi Costanzo, and local musician Jeff Orr who accompanied the students on guitar. The students really put their hearts into it. Bobin Public School is a very small school with fewer than 20 students. I congratulate them on their achievement.

### **TEA GARDENS PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (13:28):** It was an honour to be at the official opening of Tea Gardens Public School's twenty-seventh parliament. The wonderful students from years 3 to 6 have a real say in what goes on in their school and carry out their responsibilities with care and respect. I congratulate all the students and staff on their commitment to democracy in our public education system. I particularly acknowledge Prime Minister Sophia Jeffries; Leader of the Opposition Stephen Dungay; Minister for Sport Luke McCarthy and shadow Minister Isaac Mitchell; Minister for Transport Tyleya Dungay and shadow Minister Charli Alchin; Minister for Education and Deputy Prime Minister Lily-Arum Laws and shadow Minister Caitlin Condie; Minister for Building and Health Casey O'Bryan and shadow Minister Alanah Hinitt; Minister for Pupil Welfare Lilliarna Baillie and shadow Minister Jaymii Ray; Minister for Special Events Abbie Smith and shadow Minister Lilly-Ann White; Minister for Environment Toby Avery and shadow Minister Braiven Megallon; Speaker of the House Grace Burke; and Deputy Speaker of the House Jarryd Schmidt. I thank the Governor General, principal Mr Mark Clemson, and Parliamentary Adviser Miss Karina Kerr, for their ongoing leadership. I trust that the Senate will give meaningful consideration to the motion passed by the students not to have to go to school on their birthdays.

I particularly acknowledge: Prime Minister, Sophia Jeffries; Leader of the Opposition, Stephen Dungay; Minister for Sport, Luke McCarthy; shadow Minister for Sport, Isaac Mitchell; Minister for Transport, Tyleya Dungay; shadow Minister for Transport, Charli Alchin; Minister for Education and Deputy Prime Minister, Lily-Arum Laws; shadow Minister for Education, Caitlin Condie; Minister for Building and Health, Casey O'Bryan; shadow Minister for Building and Health, Alanah Hinitt; Minister for Pupil Welfare, Lilliarna Baillie; shadow Minister for Pupil Welfare, Jaymii Ray; Minister for Special Events, Abbie Smith; shadow Minister for Special Events, Lilly-Ann White; Minister for Environment, Toby Avery; shadow Minister for Environment, Braiven Megallon; Speaker of the House, Grace Burke; and Deputy Speaker of the House, Jarryd Schmidt. I thank the Governor General—also known as principal—Mr Mark Clemson, and Parliamentary Advisor, Miss Karina Kerr, for their ongoing leadership and trust that the Senate will give meaningful consideration to the motion passed by the students not to have to go to school on their birthday.

### **CRONULLA SHARKS LEAGUES CLUB**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (13:29):** I congratulate Cronulla Sharks Leagues Club—Sharkies—on winning a prestigious award at the Clubs and Community Awards for its outstanding contribution to our local community in the Emergency Services category. Sharkies acted as a refuge during the days after a tornado hit Kurnell in December last year, providing shelter for local residents. Staff worked around the clock to provide meals and refreshments for the displaced residents and the many hardworking emergency services staff. The club also delivered food and supplies to those residents most affected. At such an incredibly tumultuous time, everyone at Sharkies rallied together to support those in our community who needed their help, and I am delighted that their efforts have been acknowledged with this award.

Sharkies Chief Executive Officer Marcelo Veloz, Operations Manager Ian Muddle and the team that worked through this trying time are great examples of strong community role models. In another coup Sharkies won a highly commended award in the Education category for its "Broaden Your Horizons" Career Expo in collaboration with Capital Bluestone and four local high schools. Congratulations also to the board of directors: Darren McConnell, Dino Mezzatesta, Damian Keogh, Craig Airey, Kevin Dwyer, Dane Sorenson, Paul O'Neile, Paul McCarthy, and Andrew McVeigh.

**PASAMI SAULO, MAITLAND RUGBY LEAGUE PLAYER**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (13:30):** I congratulate Maitland Rugby League player Pasami Saulo, who will be part of the New South Wales Blues under-18s squad to take on Queensland at Suncorp Stadium tonight, before the second State of Origin match—and I hope we win. Pasami starred with the Knights SG Ball team this year, winning the Knights' most prestigious junior prize, the Carlson Club-Andrew Johns Medal. The Maitland junior helped Newcastle's under-18s reach the grand final qualifier and also took out the SG Ball Excalibur Club's players' player, and player of the year awards. It is great to see Maitland continuing to produce such great rugby league talent. Congratulations, Pasami. I also pay tribute to other great sporting organisations in my electorate including the Maitland Blacks, the Maitland Pickers, the Maitland Mustangs and other groups that are coming together this year to fight domestic violence.

**MYALL LAKES ELECTORATE RIFLE SHOOTERS**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (13:31):** I congratulate Peter Thurtell from Wingham Rifle Club, who has won the largest prize meeting in Australia outside the Queens Prize, the Wingham Open Championship. The meeting attracted 110 competitors from all over New South Wales and Victoria. Peter has been in fantastic form, winning the Queens Prize in Canberra and in Brisbane and also winning the prestigious festival of Sydney. Peter's son Lyndon, who is currently in the New South Wales under-25s team, finished in tenth place. Local shooter Declan Heaney finished very well, in eighth place, while 14-year-old Ronan Moon finished tenth. Duncan Robinson finished in seventh place, with Christina Adams in thirteenth place. Peter Thurtell is the Superintendent of Police for the Manning Great Lakes Local Area Command and an outstanding shooter. His wife is a masters champion in surf life saving and other sports. I congratulate Peter and his family on their outstanding achievements.

**ROSEMEADOW SENIORS GROUP**

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (13:32):** I am delighted to acknowledge the Rosemeadow Seniors Group for its service to the Campbelltown community. During my time as the member for Campbelltown, I have been constantly amazed by the amount of effort this group puts into our local community, whether it be helping a senior citizen with a housing issue, or running events for seniors in the Campbelltown region. Recently I had the privilege of attending a meeting of the Rosemeadow Seniors Group at Rosemeadow community hall, where the group meets on a regular basis. While I was there I was able to see more of the great work it does in providing a community atmosphere for older people who may feel isolated from the community due to their age. It always warms my heart to see groups like the Rosemeadow Seniors Group providing a strong and vibrant community feel to our senior citizens. I ask the House to join me in thanking the Rosemeadow Seniors Group, particularly former President Martin Peebles, and Secretary Vicki Puffett for all the work they do for senior citizens in the Campbelltown region and Rosemeadow.

**CRAIG MUHLBOCK, SPECIAL OLYMPICS WORLD WINTER GAMES REPRESENTATIVE**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (13:33):** I congratulate Mr Craig Muhlbock, an inspiring athlete from Oyster Bay, who will represent Australia at the eleventh Special Olympics World Winter Games in Austria next year. Special Olympics Australia provides opportunities for people with an intellectual disability to participate in weekly sports and regular competition. The Special Olympics World Games is the pinnacle of the Special Olympics competition ladder and is run every two years in both summer and winter sports. This is the second time Australian athletes will compete in snow sports at a world winter games.

Craig is the only athlete representing New South Wales and one of only 12 athletes representing Australia. He will compete in Alpine skiing and snowboarding. Representing Australia is not new for Craig, who competed in the last world winter games. He also played for Australia in 2013 at the Asia Pacific Games in his other sporting passion of football. However, this world winter games will be even more memorable for Craig, as his father is Austrian, and he will have family there to cheer him on. His persistence, passion and commitment to sport are truly inspiring, and I wish him the best of luck at the games.

**MYALL UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE**

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (13:34):** I recently had the privilege of presenting the Myall University of the Third Age with the Port Stephens Seniors Local Achievement Award. In its twenty-third year of operation, Myall U3A leveraged the abundant knowledge and expertise of retirees in the area to run programs and events aimed at continuing the learning process, whilst widening community involvement as we get older.

I recognise some of the many contributors to the Myall U3A activities: Barbara Imrie for organising group ticket bookings for Newcastle Civic Theatre productions; John Fitzgerald and Brian Jones for presenting

the "Friday Lecture"; Jan James and Heather Miller for leading the Art Workshop Group; Norma Glenn for growing the Garden Club; Barbara Lyle as Musical Director of the choir, and Margaret Rowden for providing piano accompaniment; Andrew Siliar for commencing the photography group this year; Ann Woods for providing fitness training; Chris Klimek for facilitating the Design Group; Sara James and Mike Forte for delivering Italian Language and Culture program. I extend my warmest congratulations to the current President, Chris Klimek, for the dedication of his time to this inspiring organisation and to the 175 members for their active involvement in the group that makes a significant contribution to the wellbeing of our community.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall):** Community recognition statements having concluded, I will now leave the chair until 2.15 p.m.

#### *Visitors*

#### **VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I extend a very warm welcome to the recipients of the 50 Years of Service as a Justice of the Peace Milestone Award in the gallery today. Along with three justices of the peace from the electorate of South Coast, Kathleen McDonnell, Les Sykes and Laurence McGinty, these volunteers received the award in recognition of the important role they play in our community. They received the award from the Attorney General at a ceremony this morning. We thank her for her input at the wonderful ceremony. We welcome you to the Chamber and thank you for your service.

I welcome Mayor of Temora Shire Council Rick Firman and Deputy Mayor Graham Sinclair, guests of the Parliamentary Secretary for Southern NSW and member for Cootamundra—a beautiful place. I also welcome Tania Skelton, Mike Howard and Amaya Fernandez, a French exchange student currently studying at Bomaderry High School, guests of the Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra and South Coast and member for Kiama. I acknowledge Ramatu, Nyssa, Romy, Taran, Rebecca, Alyssa and Belle, students of the Dunlea Centre who are in the gallery today as guests of the member for Heathcote. I was pleased to meet you all earlier.

I welcome to the Chamber today Glen Crump of Moree, guest of the member for Northern Tablelands. I acknowledge the 46 students and their teachers from Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College in the gallery today, guests of the member for Heffron. I welcome to the Chamber, from the Wyong branch of the Bendigo Bank, manager Kim Rowley, chairman Ray Davidson and junior directors Courtney and Blake, guests of the member for Wyong. I welcome principals in the gallery from schools in the electorate of Coogee, guests of the member for Coogee. I also welcome Mr and Mrs Hartley from Shellharbour, guests of the member for Shellharbour. Welcome, everybody, to question time.

#### *Question Time*

#### **GOODS AND SERVICES TAX**

**Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (14:24):** My question is directed to the Treasurer. Why will the Treasurer not give the people of this State a guarantee that she will not revive her campaign to increase the GST after the Federal election?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Kiama, and other members shouting across the table, will come to order. The Treasurer has the call.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations) (14:24):** I am not sure where the Leader of the Opposition has been for the last few days, but the Premier and I have had this question put to us on a number of occasions and we have said repeatedly that, first of all, we always do what is in the best interests of the people of this State, and, secondly, that debate has been had and we have moved on. What I want to know is why the Leader of the Opposition does not support our cuts to business taxes? Why does he not support tax cuts? Why does he not support a budget which wants to build infrastructure? Why will he not tell us how he intends to fund anything he has talked about since the last election?

**Mr Stephen Kamper:** Point of order: My point of order goes to relevance.

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order at this stage.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Fortunately something has been brought to my attention, that is, the Leader of the Opposition, in a very short period of time, has had six different positions on the GST; not one position but six. I am happy to go through them.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is too much noise in the Chamber. Members will be called to order and removed from the Chamber as occurred yesterday if it continues.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** In fact, not only has he had six different positions, in one instance he had three different positions in three minutes in one interview.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Treasurer is talking about the GST. What is the point of order of the member for Maroubra?

**Mr Michael Daley:** Why doesn't the Treasurer just guarantee not to revisit it? It is that easy. All she needs to say is, "We'll never do it. We'll never go back to it." That is all she needs to say.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Treasurer is being relevant. There is no point of order. The member for Maroubra will resume his seat. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the first time. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the second time.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** On 20 July 2015 the Leader of the Opposition said that raising the GST to 15 per cent is lazy and that the GST should not be extended to food. That is fine.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Rockdale to order for the first time.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** But then on 9 January he said:

If an increase in the GST would do two things—firstly, compensate people on lower incomes hit hardest by such a rise, but secondly, the revenue gains were ploughed purely into health and education provision by the States—well of course I'd look at it.

That is what he said.

**Ms Kate Washington:** Point of order: My point of order goes to Standing Order 129 on relevance. We are asking what the position of this Government is on the GST.

**The SPEAKER:** The Treasurer is being relevant. The member will resume her seat. When I ask members to resume their seat, they should do so immediately, otherwise they will be placed on calls to order. I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the first time.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I find it quite interesting that the Leader of the Opposition would raise this issue when in fact he said earlier this year that of course he would look at it. What is his position? Like most things when it comes to economics and in relation to the budget, those opposite are absolutely clueless. In one interview the Leader of the Opposition changed his position three times.

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** I remind the member that I have ruled that the Treasurer remains relevant to the question. What is the member's point of order?

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** I refer to Standing Order 130. The Treasurer has been asked a simple question. She should not be debating the question; she should just give us yes or no.

**The SPEAKER:** The Treasurer is not debating the question; she is answering the question and she remains relevant at this stage.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** In one interview earlier this year the Leader of the Opposition managed to change his mind three times in about three minutes in front of a very tough interviewer. Who was the tough interviewer on Sky News? It was Kristina Keneally, who asked the Leader of the Opposition:

Why hasn't the New South Wales Labor taken the same approach as Bill Shorten and his Federal counterparts in opposing the GST?

She knows that Luke Foley supports the GST. The Leader of the Opposition replied:

You're putting words in my mouth, Kristina. I do not oppose—

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** I remind the member of my previous ruling on relevancy. What is the member's point of order? Has the member taken offence at the comments?

**Mr Jihad Dib:** The comments may be relevant to the GST but not to the question. The Treasurer is not being relevant to the actual question as opposed to the subject matter. Is it a yes or a no?

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Lakemba will resume his seat. There is no point of order.

**Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) ( 1:43):** I ask a supplementary question. I thank the Treasurer for her answer. I say "No 15 per cent GST." What is the Treasurer's position?



**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations) (14:30):** The Labor Party ruled out 15 per cent and it is going for 20 per cent. We know the Opposition has no bounds in relation to taxation.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I went through the Opposition's list of a whole range of taxes while they were in government. Kristina Keneally noted in her interview when the Leader of the Opposition changed his position three times on the GST:

He's opposed to an increase in the GST of any type.

He does not have a caveat. Of course, we know that we cannot trust what Labor says anyway. Today they say 15 per cent, tomorrow 20 per cent; today they say no tax, tomorrow 10 taxes.

**The SPEAKER:** I ask members, particularly the member for Port Stephens, to stop shouting. It is inappropriate behaviour.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** In relation to reducing the burden on our taxpayers, this Government's position is clear. Yesterday this Government abolished three business taxes, which the Labor Party said at the last election it would continue because it does not support asset recycling, growing the economy or growing jobs. The only thing the Labor Party supports is higher taxes, and this Government will not be a part of that. That is all they do and all they know because they do not appreciate what it takes to grow jobs or grow the economy. Members of the Opposition are clueless in relation to managing the budget or the economy. I only give them credit for knowing how to tax each taxpayer more and more than they should.

If the Labor Party took over the Treasury benches the only way in which it would be able to raise revenue is not through growing the economy and reducing the burden on our taxpayers but by introducing more taxes because that is what the Labor Party does. The people of this State have seen what this Government has done in the past five years not only in relation to taxes but also in reducing the cost of living. Yesterday I slightly misled the House when I said the former Labor Government introduced nine new taxes, which it did, but I failed to mention that it extended more than 31 taxes. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to ask me another question on taxes I will go through the entire list.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Point of order. Standing Order 129, relevance. It was not the Government's position on the GST.

**The SPEAKER:** I have ruled that the Treasurer has been relevant, and her answer remains relevant.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Not to the question.

**The SPEAKER:** The member might not like the answer but the Treasurer remains relevant.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** The Treasurer has not even addressed the question.

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

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Was there an answer?

**The SPEAKER:** Do not argue either with the Treasurer or with me as it will get you in my bad books.

#### STATE BUDGET

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (14:34):** My question is addressed to the Premier. What has been the reaction to the New South Wales budget?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will remove the front page of the *Illawarra Mercury*. If I see them again I will place members on calls to order and possibly have them removed from the Chamber. I call the member for Keira to order for the first time.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD (Manly—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) (14:34):** They have their props and the good news is they can photocopy them.

**The SPEAKER:** I have asked members to remove the front page of the *Illawarra Mercury*. It is a stunt. I remind members of my previous ruling on this matter.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The member for Heathcote is very proud of many things but particularly the expansion of the car park at Sutherland Hospital, which he and other members from the south have fought for. It is great news. Across this State the news has been positive, and it is worth my highlighting to the House some of it. One media commentary said, "With a sensible government in charge, New South Wales will still outperform

the rest of Australia". That is great news. Another stated, "It was a beautiful set of numbers for the Treasurer to present and the budget slogan 'Leading the nation' says it all". I am very proud to be leading the nation. One said, "The Government remains the envy of others. It is the best of State governments".

Other comments were, "The Treasurer has delivered another economically strong and financially competent State budget", "Economic management has bolstered confidence in the State", and "New South Wales has provided a lesson for other State governments", which was very kind. We have heard the comments about health. Professor Brad Frankum, President of the Australian Medical Association, said, "The State Government's infrastructure spend continues an unprecedented hospital building program", under the Minister for Health. The Police Association said that this budget is a win for local communities.

The NSW Council of Social Service chief executive, Tracy Howe, said, "The budget will make a real difference to the lives of people experiencing poverty and disadvantage". We are very proud of that outcome. We have included a number of programs with additional money, such as for out-of-home care, which the Minister will address. We have doubled the money for domestic violence, which will make an incredible difference to the lives of people, and we have addressed youth homelessness and a number of other areas. I also read the comment that New South Wales is booming. I am very appreciative of the shadow Treasurer saying that. It is great to have the endorsement of the shadow Treasurer, who said that New South Wales is booming and on its way.

**Ms Gladys Berejiklian:** Which shadow Treasurer?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The current shadow Treasurer, not the former, and tomorrow the Leader of the Opposition.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Notwithstanding all the good news in the budget, I am concerned that tomorrow the Leader of the Opposition will deliver his budget in-reply speech, an alternative budget. I think everyone in New South Wales knows what it will be. I was on the edge of my seat this morning when I listened to a media interview because the Leader of the Opposition said that he wanted to invest more. He said "Labor would do much, much more than this Government is doing when it comes to investment in new schools." The very fair follow-up question was: How would you fund it? He said, "Ah, ah, ah, ah." It took four seconds. We went one one thousand, two one thousand, three one thousand, waiting, waiting—

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: Standing Order 129. I know the House is very noisy today but I am sure the question was not about the budget in-reply speech of the Leader of the Opposition.

**The SPEAKER:** Those comments are relevant to the question that was asked. There is no point of order. I call the member for Shellharbour to order for the first time.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The Leader of the Opposition then said that there was a surplus. There is a surplus, but what Labor does not understand is that that goes towards our infrastructure program.

**Mr Paul Lynch:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 77. The Premier is clearly speaking in anticipation of something that will happen tomorrow. It is not an appropriate way to spend the time of the House, devoting question time to commentary upon a speech that has not been given but will be given tomorrow.

**The SPEAKER:** I will listen further to the Premier's answer. At this stage the point of order is premature. The Premier has the call. Members will come to order.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I knew yesterday how good the budget was because the member for Liverpool was smiling. It put a smile on his face; he was so happy. The Government is proud of what this budget has delivered. Under this Treasurer, our economic growth is leading the nation and we have the biggest infrastructure program underway in the history of the country.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** We are delivering more frontline services and what every citizen in this State wants, that is, responsible economic management for New South Wales. And that is what we will continue to do.

#### STATE BUDGET AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (14:40):** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. How has the Baird-Grant Government put community safety first in the budget?

**Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Deputy Premier, Minister for Justice and Police, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Racing) (14:41):** I thank the excellent member for Tamworth for his question and

contribution to community safety in his electorate. He is leading an ice task force to work with key providers, service agencies and the community more broadly to tackle the scourge of ice at a local level. I commend him for his initiative and dedication to his community. Yesterday his electorate received a \$1.8 million investment this financial year to upgrade the police station at Gunnedah, which is well past its use-by date.

The Gunnedah troops are delighted to receive the new station. When they brought the issue to their local member he advocated to Government and now the funding is flowing. That is exactly how local representation works. This year we have put our money where our mouth is with a record spend of \$8.1 billion in the Justice cluster to keep the people of New South Wales safe. When we say we put community safety first, we mean it. In regard to our investment in the NSW Police Force, we are improving the ability of police to protect our community, whether the operations occur on land, in the air or at sea.

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

**Mr TROY GRANT:** The Government is spending \$57 million this year on new and upgraded police stations across the State. There will be a new station at Queanbeyan. That building is vital for the deployment of police in the Monaro, particularly through the winter season when many visiting officers are deployed in that area. The Mount Druitt station is also well past its use-by date. The money is starting to flow for a long overdue new police station in that part of Sydney. It adds to our narrative of investment and work is continuing on new and upgraded police stations, including in the bay and basin of the electorate of Madam Speaker, whom I thank for her advocacy on behalf of her local police. They are looking forward to an improved police station.

**The SPEAKER:** Hear, hear!

**Mr TROY GRANT:** Work is also underway at Moss Vale and Deniliquin and in the Independent member's electorate of Lake Macquarie. Not long ago we joined with a number of members from the opposite side, including the member for Swansea, to open the station at Belmont. I thank them for attending that event. They are aware of our other significant investments in the Lake Macquarie Local Area Command at Toronto and Warners Bay. A cracking station is being built at Liverpool. The member for Holsworthy attended that new station with me. I think it is the second biggest police station in New South Wales. What the organisation and the builders have produced for that community is a credit to them. I think the last time the member for Liverpool smiled was when he saw a vision of Vladimir Putin riding bare chested on horseback, but there may be a chance on opening day—

**Mr Paul Lynch:** Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 73. The Deputy Premier ought to get a proper speechwriter.

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order.

**Mr TROY GRANT:** I am hopeful that the member for Liverpool will smile on that day in the near future when the Liverpool station is opened. In addition, Riverstone, Tweed Heads, Walgett and Coffs Harbour will all be beneficiaries of new police stations.

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

**Mr TROY GRANT:** The Government has also focused the police spend on security, given the heightened risk of terrorism and threats to police officers. We have made significant security upgrades to stations to protect our police. We are replacing our ageing police marine vessel fleet and renewing our air wing through significant investments. We are also investing \$15 million for a new dog squad headquarters for the training and breeding of more dogs. [*Extension of time*]

The police dog squad is also a great beneficiary in this budget. It does a wonderful job protecting our community and driving down crime. In this Parliament we have heard a lot about domestic violence. I commend the Minister for her wonderful advocacy on that issue. Our police deal with domestic violence daily. As a parliament, I am sure we are united to tackle this scourge. As part of the Justice budget, we are investing \$44 million to tackle domestic violence through initiatives that include GPS tracking of domestic violence offenders, which is a new and innovative way to try to reduce the level of offending, implementing behavioural change programs, and rolling out Police Domestic Violence High Risk Offender Teams, which is another important measure. As we heard from the Premier earlier, our commitment has been recognised and acknowledged by the Police Association of NSW, which said:

This Budget is a win for local communities and adds an additional layer of protection for police in the current climate of terrorism risk.

It continues our solid relationship with this Government on policing issues and the strong direction of law and order in NSW.

The Government is very happy to receive that endorsement. We have also received endorsements from the Law Society of New South Wales in relation to the significant investment led by the Attorney General to address the backlog in the District Court. While it is unfortunate that we have had to build more prisons, we are aware of the onus on us to also prevent crime. We have made a \$500 million investment in reducing reoffending and making sure that we take every opportunity to divert people away from the criminal justice system whilst still investing in solving crime and protecting the community.

#### **POLITICAL DONATIONS AND SPENDING CAPS**

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) (14:48):** My question is directed to the Premier. On 31 May in this place the Premier committed to members that prior to the winter recess he would legislate caps on political spending to be in place for council elections that will take place this year. He has not done so. Did he mislead the House then or did he mislead the House yesterday when he failed to legislate for those caps?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD (Manly—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) (14:48):** I said we would bring in legislation and we have brought in legislation. Of course, as members opposite will understand, to implement donation reform the Electoral Commission is required to implement, oversee and enforce it. It has said it is impossible to include those caps for this election—

**Mr Michael Daley:** Will you table that document?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the member for Maroubra this is not a debate.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I have just told the House exactly what they said.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier is answering the member's question. The member for Maroubra is debating the issue.

**Mr Michael Daley:** No, I am not.

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

**Mr Michael Daley:** I ask the Premier to table that advice.

**The SPEAKER:** It is up to the Premier whether he tables that advice. The Premier is answering the question.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I have just told the House what is in that advice and it is very clear.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** This Government understands what is required. We are introducing legislation and cleaning up local government—new enforcement, new governance arrangements, new donation arrangements—and we are doing it in consultation with the Electoral Commission to make sure that we get it right. The advice I have is that it will be possible before the following election, and we will work with the commission to ensure that that is the case. But I give those opposite credit; the question in budget week was how long would they stay on the budget, and they have asked seven questions. That is all they have.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Seven miserable questions.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The shadow Treasurer has asked only one question.

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

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** It is just as well the schoolchildren have left the gallery and are no longer here to witness the screaming and shouting. The member for Bankstown will cease interjecting.

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 130. The Premier is debating the question; not answering it.

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. The member will resume her seat.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Just to be clear, so that those opposite know exactly what it is, I am happy to read onto the record the advice I have received from the Electoral Commission: "It is our position that it is impossible to successfully implement expenditure caps at this point. To promote awareness amongst all affected stakeholders and to foster compliance to an acceptable level is extremely unlikely in such a short time."

**The SPEAKER:** I remind the member for Bankstown that she is already on three calls to order.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** We will do everything possible, together with the Electoral Commission, to do that. We have implemented some new measures.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Yet again Opposition members have shown themselves for what they are; in budget week they can get to seven questions. The shadow Treasurer did not ask one question in the lead-up to the budget and has asked only one question in budget week.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 73. The Premier is making imputations about the behaviour of the shadow Treasurer. All he has to do is lean over and table the advice. We do not want his selective quoting.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Maroubra will resume his seat and cease arguing at the microphone. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the third time. The Premier has completed his answer.

### STATE BUDGET AND TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) (14:52):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. How does the budget support the delivery of the Government's transport and infrastructure priorities?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Strathfield will come to order. The member for Drummoyne will not speak in that manner to the member for Strathfield.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** I am okay with that because he is passionate about Concord hospital.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Strathfield might be okay with it, but I do not appreciate that type of behaviour in this Chamber.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Infrastructure) (14:52):** I thank the member for Drummoyne for asking the question that the shadow Minister should have asked. Those opposite looked glum yesterday because of the announcements by the Premier and the Treasurer, particularly in Transport and Infrastructure. Never before in the history of this State have we seen an infrastructure or public transport spend to this level: funding of \$73 billion in the forward estimates, and of that amount \$41.5 billion going to roads and transport. That ongoing investment will continue to grow our State economy in a way the community could only have dreamed about when those opposite were in government. Yesterday's budget was truly remarkable.

Since coming to office, we have delivered some 15,800 new services and over the next 12 months we will see another 3,800 new weekly services added to that list. If one compares the investment in New South Wales to the investment in the Labor States to our north and south it is quite telling. In 2016-17 the roads and public transport budget in New South Wales stands at \$20.2 billion. In the next financial year the Victorian budget stands at \$10.4 billion, and the Queensland budget stands at \$4.39 billion. That is a clear demonstration of what a government can achieve at a State level by managing its finances and investing in the way that it should. The investment in the Metro in this year's budget is also very exciting. Over the next four years some \$12 billion will be invested in the new Metro train, including \$1.3 billion for the Sydney Metro Northwest in the next financial year and \$1.4 billion for the Sydney Metro City and Southwest project. We are investing some \$71 million for the CBD and South East Light Rail, \$64 million for the Parramatta Light Rail, and \$142 million for the Newcastle Light Rail.

The budget also includes \$1.4 billion for bus services across the State, including funds for 218 buses to replace older vehicles and capacity for growth services. Some \$210 million has been allocated over the next 12 months to continue planning and infrastructure development for the B-Line to that part of Sydney on the northern beaches that was neglected so badly under Labor for 16 years. We are investing \$40 million for new ferries and an additional \$17 million for the construction of a dual birth ferry wharf at Barangaroo. Whilst in that part of town, there is \$44 million for the Wynyard Walk, which will be opened later this year. Also very exciting for Sydney train commuters, we are commencing the procurement for new suburban trains. More than \$1 billion has been set aside for that. The market engagement will ultimately determine the size of the order and the timing for delivery. This will support the delivery of the 2018 train timetable.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Maitland will come to order.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** We will also allocate \$130 million for the procurement of the new inner-city fleet to service those great cities of Wollongong and Newcastle as well as support customers from the Blue Mountains.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Kiama will cease inciting members.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** We are also investing \$1.3 billion for rail maintenance, including turnout renewals, re-signalling works, control system upgrades and technology upgrades for the Tangarra fleet. We also are providing \$280 million for the Transport Access Program, which many local members will be pleased about, as we continue to improve access to stations across the network. We have allocated \$142 million to reforms to assist with the taxi industry deregulation, the online booking market and the point to point transport market. We are investing in wheelchair accessible licences, and funding community transport to the tune of \$84 million. *[Extension of time]*

This budget continues to build on the record spending that this Government has been delivering in transport and infrastructure. There is a 16 per cent increase in the public transport budget from \$9 billion in the 2015-16 financial year to \$10.5 billion in the 2016-17 financial year. There is also a 33 per cent increase in capital expenditure in public transport. As I said, this is an extraordinary budget. Public transport is at the heart of this budget as we continue to support the growth that has been delivered by the Minister for Planning across New South Wales, but particularly in Sydney. Those opposite should acknowledge this exciting budget. I know that the Leader of the Opposition will not be mentioning public transport in his budget speech in reply tomorrow, but if he does, he should applaud the efforts of the Baird Government in delivering record public transport infrastructure.

#### MINISTER FOR ROADS, MARITIME AND FREIGHT COMMENTS

**Ms JODI MCKAY (Strathfield) (14:59):** My question is directed to the Premier. Does the Premier agree with the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, and his comments to a female member of Parliament—

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

**Ms JODI MCKAY:** My question is directed to the Premier. Does the Premier agree with the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight and his comments to a female member of Parliament that building a road is not like buying a handbag?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD (Manly—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) (15:00):** The Minister has apologised for those comments and I think we will leave it there.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Do you agree—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier will be allowed to answer the question.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I make this point: I find it incredible that those opposite would raise that issue in this House when on the other side events occurred and questions were asked, including about their leader, and they said nothing.

#### STATE BUDGET AND HOUSING

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) (15:00):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning. How will budget measures help boost housing supply to keep up with demand for new houses in New South Wales?

**Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Planning) (15:00):** It is a great day today and I acknowledge that it was the winter solstice yesterday, so we can look forward to the days getting longer. Isn't that exciting? I thank the member for Camden for his question. The member for Camden represents one of the fastest growing communities in all of Australia, and that is no surprise because everyone I know wants to live as close as possible to the member for Camden—and we cannot blame them. Just near the electorate of Camden is the Greater Macarthur, which is the latest large land release to boost housing supply announced by this Government, extending over 7,700 hectares and providing capacity for up to 35,000 new homes over the next 20 years.

This is a government that is committed to doing all it can to respond to the huge and pent-up demand for housing by boosting housing supply at every level and at every opportunity. The statistics tell a very compelling story. Just before the budget was delivered yesterday an announcement was made about housing approvals over the 12 months to April. In New South Wales there have been 70,127 housing approvals over that 12-month period. That is more than 75 per cent greater than the 10-year average in housing approvals in New South Wales. It is an

incredibly exciting statistic and one that shows that the levers we are pulling to increase housing supply are delivering.

To put that in context, over the five years of the current Liberal Government we have seen a monthly average of 4,252 new housing approvals every month. That compares to the last five years of the former Labor Government, which saw 2,565 dwelling approvals per month, or thereabouts. We have seen an 80 per cent increase in monthly housing approvals over that period. We are getting on with the business of delivering a boost in housing supply. But even more exciting than those statistics are the statistics indicating that this increase in dwelling approvals is translating into dwelling commencements, which is fundamentally what the game is all about. Those approvals are converting into commencements, and we are running at above 58,000 per year in actual commencements. The missing link between approvals and commencements is obviously providing that underlying infrastructure to ensure that those approvals can be converted to homes for our growing community.

That is what the Housing Acceleration Fund—or, as we like to refer to it, the HAF—is delivering. In the great budget that was delivered yesterday we saw an additional \$262 million provided to HAF, bringing the total to \$876 million since we came to government. That will deliver for projects such as the \$140 million Hill Road off ramp, which will enable more housing delivery in places like the Carter Street precinct in Lidcombe. It will also support the growing community of Wentworth Point. We also see \$22 million going into Hambledon Road and Alex Avenue, off Schofields Road. That will help us get on with delivering housing in the north-west sector. About \$40 million is going from the HAF into upgrades to Appin Road and Spring Farm Parkway—again, part of boosting housing supply in the south-west.

But it is not just the HAF that is leading our infrastructure spend; it is also the Hunter Infrastructure and Investment Fund [HIIF]. Not only do we have the HAF but also we have the HIIF. The member for Newcastle will be excited about the fact that we are shortly to make some announcements in relation to the next tranche of infrastructure funds under the HIIF—an additional \$50 million to support the \$396 million that has been invested from the HIIF. [*Extension of time*]

This side of the House is boosting housing supply through mechanisms such as the HAF and the HIIF; the other side of the House has the member for Rockdale, who perhaps is the only member who bears the closest resemblance to the Hoff, who we all know is California's favourite lifesaver. Ever since his elevation to the shadow Planning portfolio, the member for Maroubra is now the Huff, because he has been huffing and puffing around this place.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. I do not know about a HIIF or a Hoff but the Minister is a flop.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! That was not a point of order.

**Mr ROB STOKES:** We are happy to see that he is still in a bit of a huff. This Government is getting on with boosting housing supply through mechanisms like the HAF and the HIIF and those opposite have got the Hoff and the Huff. There is a clear difference in ideology and housing delivery, and also in alliteration.

#### CALLAN PARK

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (15:07):** My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment. Considering the Government was presented with a draft Callan Park master plan almost five years ago, when will the Government act to finally implement a trust and secure the future of Callan Park?

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! It is a serious question, unlike some other questions that are asked. Members will come to order.

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, and Assistant Minister for Planning) (15:09):** I thank the member for Balmain for his question. I also thank him for his tireless and consistent advocacy on Callan Park both before and since he became the member for Balmain and for his advocacy for that magnificent 60-hectare site on the Parramatta River. Since last year Callan Park has been a welcome addition to the Heritage and Environment portfolio where it joins other significant and substantial urban park areas such as the Royal Botanic Gardens, the Domain, the Centennial Parklands, Parramatta Park, Western Sydney Parklands and the Sydney Harbour National Park.

Callan Park's landscaped spaces and landmarked buildings have contributed, visually and socially, to the local area for over 100 years. The foreshore areas have some significant rare open space. Callan Point is an important Aboriginal archaeological site and contains rare examples of pre-European vegetation and unique European rock carvings. The site is listed on the State Heritage Register. Callan Park is now used by the Sydney College of the Arts, the Sydney Local Health District, the Ambulance Service of NSW, various non-government organisations and, for recreation purposes, by the broader community. Callan Park has no formal status as a public

park but NSW Health allows public access to the grounds. Every day thousands of people walk, run or cycle on the Bay Run across the Callan Park waterfront or through the gardens and grassed areas.

Callan Park is valued by its local community for its heritage significance and for the benefits to health and wellbeing from the green space. Last month I was delighted to be shown around Callan Park by the Friends of Callan Park. It was a very informative tour and a highlight, among other things, was the iconic Kirkbride complex which includes buildings of exceptional heritage significance. I also had the opportunity to view the important community and charitable work that takes place on the site, particularly the work of We Help Ourselves [WHOS] and the very impressive Garth Popple, the Chief Executive Officer [CEO] of WHOS. We Help Ourselves is the largest accredited not-for-profit non-government organisation providing residential drug and alcohol treatment services. Of the 205 beds provided by that organisation, 128 are located at Callan Park.

The Government is actively managing Callan Park. It has allocated millions of dollars, this year and next year, in funding for maintenance and security at Callan Park while future options are considered. The member for Balmain moved a motion in this House on 4 June last year, which the Government supported, regarding governance arrangements at Callan Park. The Government is working towards a master plan for Callan Park which will be done in consultation with the community. The plan must secure the conservation of the site's heritage and its green space for use by inner-city communities. It must also be able to fund the long-term management of the site. That is fundamental because securing the heritage items on the site will cost many tens of millions of dollars.

The Government will ensure that Callan Park continues to be a vital urban space in the inner west of Sydney. Yesterday there was a joint announcement by the universities of Sydney and New South Wales to merge their arts schools and to close the Sydney College of the Arts at Callan Park. While I met the Vice Chancellor of Sydney University late in 2015 to discuss Callan Park, I am not aware of any formal request to the Government indicating a date for its departure from Callan Park. The Government will consider possible uses of the Kirkbride complex to ensure that these iconic buildings are maintained. The Government will continue to ensure that Callan Park continues to be a vital urban space in the inner west of Sydney.

#### STATE BUDGET AND REGIONAL JOBS

**Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore) (15:12):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Schools and Minister for Small Business. How does the budget provide greater opportunities for regional communities and young job seekers?

**Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business) (15:13):** The members opposite look lovely with their badges.

**Ms Anna Watson:** We do.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** Yes, you do. I note that the member for Prospect does not have a badge on today. He has worn his fair share of badges and medals, I am sure. Yesterday's budget clearly shows the commitment of the New South Wales Government to the regions. As the Deputy Premier said yesterday, regional New South Wales does not ask for special treatment, it simply wants a fair share. It wants the same service delivery as people in the city receive. The Government has heard the call and we will do what we do best: deliver for regional New South Wales, especially in health, education and infrastructure, that is, enabling infrastructure that allows communities to grow.

Since its establishment by this Government in 2011, Restart NSW has allocated \$1.7 billion to regional New South Wales. We have seen continued growth through a number of key initiatives and programs for regional New South Wales—the Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund, Resources for Regions, Fixing Country Roads and Bridges for the Bush, just to name a few. The Government has changed the way it funds infrastructure projects in regional New South Wales. I have spoken in this place of the success of round one of the Mobile Blackspots Program, where we saw an investment by the Government of \$24 million, which was matched by the Federal Government with \$25 million; the Telco Authority's \$43 million; and a \$92 million investment in regional New South Wales around connectivity. With 144 mobile phone towers and 795 blackspot areas covered, 14,000 square kilometres now has mobile coverage.

Following the success of the first round, yesterday's budget contained a second round commitment from this Government of \$15 million to match the \$50 million the Federal Government has announced for round two. This will provide greater opportunity for communities in regional New South Wales by way of infrastructure that allows the community and businesses to grow and, most importantly, supports those men and women in emergency services. In regional New South Wales, sometimes Mother Nature is unkind. In circumstances of fire and flood, the emergency services need connectivity. The Government has provided but we did not stop there. The Government has announced and budgeted for airport upgrades across regional New South Wales. Connectivity is the key. In order to grow the visitor economy in regional New South Wales, we must ensure that



people can get in and out of the regions. We will build the infrastructure, grow the economy, and create jobs. The job figures for New South Wales show that adult unemployment is again the lowest in the nation. We are creating jobs in regional New South Wales, even faster than in Western Sydney and in many regions of Australia.

**The SPEAKER:** There are too many conversations in the Chamber.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** Youth unemployment is an area we must tackle. In yesterday's budget, the Government announced a \$100 million initiative to tackle youth unemployment in this State under the Smart and Skilled initiative. We will be working with non-government organisations [NGOs], stakeholders and employers to make sure that we remove impediments to young people seeking employment in all parts of this State—in Western Sydney and New England and on the Central Coast and North Coast. The Government recognises that there is an unacceptable level of youth unemployment. Off the back of the \$73.3 billion infrastructure plan of this Government, it is important that we provide an opportunity for young people to gain employment.

The Government has allocated \$100 million to a youth employment initiative for the next two years which will go part of the way towards dealing with youth unemployment in this State. That is on top of the programs we already have in place, such as the pre-apprenticeship program, a \$10 million investment where we have seen 6,000 young people sign up for apprenticeships in this State. Our \$8 million Regional Pathway Program—*[Extension of time]*

I refer also to the Bridging the Gap program and the Regional Vocational Education and Training [VET] Pathways program. Many young people have become disconnected from training and education and have lost their way to employment. Again, we are investing in this area. For example, Zeke, a 19-year-old from Lismore, on his return to Lismore after a year caring for his grandmother in an Aboriginal community found himself homeless and forced to couch surf in homes from Lismore to Casino. The prospect of him being able to turn his situation around was bleak. Yet, through the Regional VET Pathways program, he has qualified for a course that will set him on a path towards fulfilling his ambition to become a chef.

Zeke has completed a six-weeks living skills program. He has been an excellent participant and his attendance has been outstanding. Now he has secured rental accommodation and has obtained his driver licence through the Lismore Adult Community Education Aboriginal Driving Program. This is a clear example of what can be achieved when we focus on dealing with the issue in front of us, that is, those who are disconnected from training. It illustrates how unemployed youth who are struggling can find their way back to employment. This Government is committed to looking after the most disadvantaged in our community, and yesterday's budget underpins that commitment. Resources for Regions is a great infrastructure program designed by this Government to deliver benefits to communities affected by mining.

The program was supported by the Opposition. One motion moved at the Labor Party conference was to implement a program that would mimic Resources for Regions, which is an endorsement by Labor that it is a great program. Today the Government is announcing that 14 projects have been shortlisted for the \$32 million allocated for Resources for Regions. The Government will soon announce the final details of the communities that have secured their share of the \$32 million that has been allocated to regional New South Wales under the expanded program implemented by this Government.

**The SPEAKER:** The time for questions has expired.

#### *Committees*

### **COMMITTEE ON INVESTMENT, INDUSTRY AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Membership**

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with Standing Order 282 (2), I advise the House that on 20 June 2016 Melinda Jane Pavey was elected chair of the Legislative Assembly Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development.

#### *Business of the House*

### **SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS**

#### **Order of Business**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy) (15:20):**  
I move:

That, on Thursday 23 June 2016, standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit:

- (1) Following the speech of the Leader of the Opposition on the Appropriation Bill and cognate bills, the passage through all remaining stages, with the question "That these bills be now read a second time" being put forthwith, without consideration in detail on the bills.
- (2) A member, immediately following the passage of the Appropriation Bill and cognate bills, to move the motion "That this House take note of the Budget Estimates and Related Papers for 2016-2017".
- (3) After the member has moved "That this House take note of the Budget Estimates and Related Papers for 2016-2017":
  - (a) the debate is to be adjourned without motion moved;
  - (b) the resumption of the debate is to be set down as an order of the day for a later time; and
  - (c) the mover may speak to the motion at a later time prior to the right of reply.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Petitions*

**PETITIONS**

**The CLERK:** I announce that the following petitions signed by fewer than 500 persons have been lodged for presentation:

**Powerhouse Museum Ultimo**

Petition requesting the retention of the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo and the expansion of museum services to other parts of New South Wales, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

**South Coast Rail Services**

Petition requesting an hourly service from Kiama to Bomaderry station connecting with trains to Sydney, received from **Mr Gareth Ward**.

**Surry Hills Light Rail Station**

Petition calling on the Government to build a second light rail station in Surry Hills at the Wimbo Park-Olivia Gardens site, using appropriate landscaping to minimise visual and noise impacts and provide a quality park for the local community, received from **Ms Jenny Leong**.

**Inner-city Social Housing**

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

**Anti-bullying Plan**

Petition requesting a comprehensive statewide anti-bullying plan including legislation, policy and programs, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

**Pet Shops**

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

*Business of the House*

**WARRAGAMBA DAM**

**Precedence**

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill) (15:22):** I move:

That the General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice) given by me this day [Warragamba Dam] have precedence on 23 June 2016.

The motion alludes to the very serious risk that the people of Western Sydney face when water breaches Warragamba Dam. No-one knows the risk more than I do, because in 1990, during a 13.5-metre flood, a metre of water went through my family's home. My parents, who were in their seventies, and my grandmother, who was in her nineties, faced the trauma of being evacuated from their home, as so many families have been year after year as a result of floods in the Hawkesbury-Nepean area caused by breaches of Warragamba Dam. In 1993 the Greiner-Fahey Government committed to raising the wall of Warragamba Dam and completed an environmental impact statement. However, in 1995, following the election of Premier Bob Carr, the project was cancelled.

Yesterday the Treasurer included in the \$73 billion State budget a package of no less than \$58 million as a portion of the almost \$700 million that this Government will commit to complete that project and raise the wall of Warragamba Dam, ensuring the safety of the people of Western Sydney. I thank the Treasurer and express my great appreciation to the Premier and Minister for Western Sydney for ensuring that this Government will never

betray the people of Western Sydney and will continue to ensure their safety and protection from flood. I invite members who support the motion to contribute to the debate tomorrow if they truly believe in protecting the safety of the communities of Western Sydney.

**Mr John Robertson:** Why isn't the member for Hawkesbury moving the motion?

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** I will respond to the rude interjection.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Blacktown will cease interjecting.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** I was a proud representative of the Hawkesbury region for two terms. My family have lived there since the beginning of European settlement and have experienced every one of the 120 floods. I remind the member for Blacktown that those floods affect his constituents in Quakers Hill and I encourage him to support those communities by speaking in support of this motion. He should support the protection afforded to communities in his electorate by the Liberal-Nationals Government.

## TAFE NSW

### Precedence

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (15:25):** I move:

That the General Business Notice of Motion (General Notices) given by me this day [TAFE NSW] have precedence on 23 June 2016.

This morning, along with many of my colleagues, I met a young woman named Luce. Luce is a TAFE student and has in the past accessed the transformative assistance of teacher consultants at TAFE. Teacher consultants help to empower students with disabilities, like Luce, to get through their courses. They assist them to obtain the skills they need in the community and in the workforce to, as Luce puts it, reach their full potential. Luce told us today that these consultants are working fewer hours because of this Government's assault on TAFE. Unfortunately, I and my colleagues are not surprised by this because we hear these tragic stories at almost every TAFE college we visit. From yesterday's budget, we know that this is reflected in the Government's figures.

**The SPEAKER:** Members will cease shouting at the member while she is addressing the Chamber. The House will come to order or I will stop the clock. I will allow the member to have her allotted time.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Forecast enrolments in TAFE are down 126,000 compared to enrolments in 2012. Of that enormous number, 14,500 are students with disabilities. In addition, teaching and support staff numbers have been reduced by 5,200 in that time. That includes the teacher consultants of whom Luce speaks. As revealed in the *Sydney Morning Herald* recently, it includes teachers of core trades like building and construction, and that is amid a skills shortage and a building boom. Does that make sense to anyone?

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Amazingly, while the Government is sacking teachers, slashing courses and driving down enrolments, the budget shows us that last year the Government spent \$314 million less on TAFE than it promised.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The Government will be hell-bent on trying to spin its way out of this, but the numbers do not lie. They are in black and white in the budget papers. If the cuts do not stop, this Government will go down in history as the government that dismantled the century-old institution of TAFE. At some point this Government has to start listening to students like Luce. I cannot say it better than she did: "Shove these TAFE cuts out the window."

**The SPEAKER:** The question is that the motion of the member for Castle Hill have precedence on 23 June 2016.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....47  
Noes .....32  
Majority.....15

AYES

Dr Lee  
Mr Baird

Mr Anderson  
Mr Barilaro

Mr Aplin  
Mr Bromhead (teller)

## AYES

Mr Brookes	Mr Conolly	Mr Constance
Mr Coure	Mr Crouch	Mr Dominello
Mr Elliott	Mr Evans	Mr Fraser
Mr Grant	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Hazzard
Mr Henskens	Mr Humphries	Mr Johnsen
Mr Kean	Mr Maguire	Mr Marshall
Mr Notley-Smith	Mr O'Dea	Mr Patterson (teller)
Mr Perrottet	Mr Piccoli	Mr Provest
Mr Rowell	Mr Sidoti	Mr Speakman
Mr Stokes	Mr Taylor	Mr Toole
Mr Tudehope	Mr Ward	Mr Williams
Ms Berejiklian	Ms Davies	Ms Goward
Ms Hodgkinson	Ms Petinos	Ms Skinner
Ms Upton	Ms Williams	

## NOES

Dr McDermott	Mr Atalla	Mr Barr
Mr Chanthivong	Mr Crakanthorp	Mr Daley
Mr Greenwich	Mr Harris	Mr Hoenig
Mr Kamper	Mr Lalich (teller)	Mr Lynch
Mr Mehan	Mr Park	Mr Parker
Mr Piper	Mr Robertson	Mr Warren (teller)
Mr Zangari	Ms Aitchison	Ms Car
Ms Catley	Ms Doyle	Ms Finn
Ms Harrison	Ms Haylen	Ms Hornery
Ms McKay	Ms Mihailuk	Ms T. F. Smith
Ms Washington	Ms Watson	

## PAIRS

Mr Ayres	Mr Foley	Mr Roberts
Ms Hay	Ms Gibbons	Mr Minns
Ms Hancock	Mr Dib	Ms Pavey
Ms K. Smith		

**Motion agreed to.***Motions Accorded Priority***STATE BUDGET AND REGIONAL NEW SOUTH WALES****Consideration**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) (15:34):** Priority is given in this House to motions and issues of supreme significance to this Parliament and the State. Today I respectfully posit that nothing, and I mean nothing, can be more significant to the State and this Parliament than a debate about the fortunes of country New South Wales. The bush is the heartland and the lifeblood of this State. The country has been the driving force, as Mr Deputy Speaker knows all too well, behind the dramatic turnaround in the economic fortunes of this State in the past five years, after having been too long in the wilderness when it was neglected and left orphaned by those opposite when in government. Therefore, my motion deserves to be given priority today.

The bush is now enjoying renewed prominence, and it was again rewarded yesterday with a veritable feast of projects in the State budget. Hard-fought community battles for key projects have been won. While many in the bush are rightfully celebrating success, on this side we are already looking ahead to the next challenges. Rural communities put out the call for attention, for more investment and for delivery of projects. And we answered the call with a record spend on rural health, roads and bridges, and education, and, to top it all off, another injection of \$15 million to remove mobile phone blackspots in country areas. Mobile phone blackspots are an inhibitor for many rural areas that prevents them from reaching their growth potential.

This record investment over the last few years is already showing results. Country New South Wales is growing again, and jobs are being created there at a rate faster than in Sydney for the very first time. Of course, country New South Wales is growing faster and stronger than any other country area in Australia. I have wonderful story to tell about the bush. The sweet scent of freshly laid bitumen gently recommends itself to the nostrils wherever one travels throughout country New South Wales. It is a key indicator of the success of this Government's delivery of projects. We need to talk about the bush, and this motion deserves to be accorded priority.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I place the member for Shellharbour on three calls to order.

## GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

### Consideration

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (15:38):** It is critical that my motion is given priority. I note that the member for Northern Tablelands talked about impacts on rural and regional New South Wales, which is very important. But the subject of my motion will affect every community in New South Wales. On the other side of the House are a treasurer and a premier who refuse to cease their campaign to increase the GST by 50 per cent, that is, to a total of 15 per cent. This is despite the fact that their own internal Treasury briefing states:

The Commonwealth Government has released Treasury modelling suggesting:

1. There would be negligible benefits from increasing the GST to 15 per cent and using the revenue to lower income taxes

The Premier was out there advocating for an increase in the GST whilst his own Treasury was telling him that the idea was bad. It gets worse. Another document from the Government's own department has a fully redacted section, and heaven knows what was there. This document is not a picture so members of The Nationals will not understand it. The document states:

Increasing the rate of GST from 10 per cent to 15 per cent would be expected to increase new homes by 4.5 per cent. An increase in new homes would put upward pressure on all home prices.

The Premier and the Treasurer talk about housing affordability while at the same time advocating for a tax that would see the price of houses increase by tens of thousands of dollars. It is absolute hypocrisy given the fact that the Government's own Treasury advice is that there is zero benefit from doing so. The Treasury advice says it will hurt people trying to enter the property market. The Premier and the Treasurer are hell-bent on making it harder for working families to ever buy a home in Sydney. It is a disgrace.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The question is that the motion of the member for Northern Tablelands be accorded priority.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....47  
 Noes .....31  
 Majority.....16

### AYES

Dr Lee  
 Mr Baird  
 Mr Conolly  
 Mr Crouch  
 Mr Evans  
 Mr Grant  
 Mr Henskens  
 Mr Kean  
 Mr Notley-Smith  
 Mr Perrottet  
 Mr Rowell  
 Mr Stokes  
 Mr Tudehope  
 Ms Berejikian  
 Ms Hodgkinson  
 Ms Upton

Mr Anderson  
 Mr Barilaro  
 Mr Constance  
 Mr Dominello  
 Mr Fraser  
 Mr Gulaptis  
 Mr Humphries  
 Mr Maguire  
 Mr O'Dea  
 Mr Piccoli  
 Mr Sidoti  
 Mr Taylor  
 Mr Ward  
 Ms Davies  
 Ms Petinos  
 Ms Williams

Mr Aplin  
 Mr Bromhead (teller)  
 Mr Coure  
 Mr Elliott  
 Mr George  
 Mr Hazzard  
 Mr Johnsen  
 Mr Marshall  
 Mr Patterson (teller)  
 Mr Provest  
 Mr Speakman  
 Mr Toole  
 Mr Williams  
 Ms Goward  
 Ms Skinner

## NOES

Dr McDermott	Mr Atalla	Mr Barr
Mr Chanthivong	Mr Crakanthorp	Mr Daley
Mr Harris	Mr Hoenig	Mr Kamper
Mr Lalich (teller)	Mr Lynch	Mr Mehan
Mr Park	Mr Parker	Mr Piper
Mr Robertson	Mr Warren (teller)	Mr Zangari
Ms Aitchison	Ms Car	Ms Catley
Ms Doyle	Ms Finn	Ms Harrison
Ms Haylen	Ms Hornery	Ms McKay
Ms Mihailuk	Ms T. F. Smith	Ms Washington
Ms Watson		

## PAIRS

Mr Ayres	Mr Dib	Mr Roberts
Ms K. Smith	Ms Gibbons	Mr Foley
Ms Hancock	Ms Hay	Ms Pavey
Mr Minns		

**Motion agreed to.****STATE BUDGET AND REGIONAL NEW SOUTH WALES****Priority****Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) (15:4):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the current Government has regional New South Wales at its heart.
- (2) Welcomes yesterday's budget which continues to make a record investment in the infrastructure and services that drive confidence and jobs growth.
- (3) Notes that jobs growth in regional New South Wales is growing at a faster rate than in Greater Sydney and is stronger than in any other regional part of the nation.
- (4) Calls on the Opposition to stop talking down regional New South Wales and get behind the Government's efforts to ensure regional communities thrive.

I acknowledge the mayor and deputy mayor of Temora Shire Council, Councillor Rick Firman, OAM, and Councillor Graham Sinclair. The Temora regions, in the beautiful electorate of Cootamundra, have been the beneficiary of this budget and previous budgets. I also acknowledge Glen Crump, a lifetime Moree resident, a very strong advocate for the Aboriginal community, and a very proud Aboriginal. Moree is in the heart of north-western New South Wales. Like all parts of country New South Wales, Moree is at the heart of this Government and received its fair share in yesterday's budget. That includes \$4.8 million to finish the \$15 million rebuilding of Moree East Public School, in which Glen has had a strong interest.

Moree will also receive \$2.7 million to upgrade the Carnarvon Highway between Moree and Mungindi, which is a critical freight route for cotton and grain stock. We are also spending \$11 million in this budget to upgrade the Newell Highway in the Moree Plains shire. That road is a veritable spine running through country New South Wales. Along it, millions of dollars worth of produce is delivered north and south throughout country New South Wales.

The budget yesterday reconfirmed the prominence this Government gives to country New South Wales. We have not only provided funding for new projects, such as the \$500 million pipeline to secure the Broken Hill water supply, we have spent money on many projects. We have allocated \$1.5 billion to the Pacific Highway duplication program and \$10 million to the Scone bypass on the New England Highway, which is an important project lobbied for by the member for Upper Hunter. We have allocated \$14.1 million to continue work on the \$70 million upgrade to Gocup Road between Gundagai and Tumut and \$20 million to continue the upgrade of the Great Western Highway at Kelso. We will also continue the Trewilga realignment on the Newell Highway through the additional \$14 million we have allocated in the budget.

Those roads projects did not appear yesterday, in the last year or five years ago; they were neglected when members opposite were in office. Freight needed to feed mouths in the city was rattling along those roads but it could not get to the city efficiently because of bottlenecks. This Government is alleviating those freight bottlenecks through its strong commitments to increasing safety on our roads and improving freight productivity. We will work to ensure that our produce can get from farm gate to plate as efficiently as possible, thereby returning a better share to the producer as well as reducing costs to the important trucking and freight industries in country New South Wales.

The figures I rattled off from this budget are just the beginning. Our \$500 million Fixing Country Roads program is the centrepiece of our efforts to overcome the neglect that infrastructure in country New South Wales suffered for far too long. We talk about jobs growth and population growth. As every regional member knows, those things are vital but they cannot be achieved without the basic infrastructure such as good roads and the work to remove pinch points on old timber bridges and provide magnificent health facilities. I note the Deputy Premier is in the Chamber. I do not think there is a hospital in his electorate, or anywhere in the Central West, that has not been rebuilt or upgraded.

By the time this Government concludes its second term, more than 70 hospital projects will have been commenced or finished. There will have been a huge number of hospital rebuilds and redevelopments in country New South Wales. Members opposite completed fewer than five hospital projects in 16 years. We will have completed or started more than 70 in eight years. That is the level of our commitment. I commend the motion to the House.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (15:53):** I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out paragraph (4) with a view to inserting instead:

- (4) Calls on The Nationals to cease their obsequiousness to the Liberal Party and stand up for regional and rural New South Wales.

The Nationals talk a lot, but on meeting with regional mayors across the State, as I have, they often say—

**Mr Adam Marshall:** What did Katrina Humphries tell you?

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** She said she quite likes you but she also said what many mayors have said: they do not like the Liberals and they think they are leading The Nationals down the wrong path. As my colleague the member for Cessnock said to me, in regional New South Wales The Nationals are becoming known as "Libs in tan pants". Regional New South Wales thinks that The Nationals are losing their roots and kowtowing too much to the Liberal Party in Sydney. Government members crow about the successful jobs figures in regional New South Wales, but let us take those figures apart bit by bit. In the past 12 months approximately 60,000 jobs were created in regional New South Wales. Out of those jobs only 17,135 were full-time jobs and 42,611 were part-time jobs.

If we drill down further—and this is what people west of the ranges know—and take the Illawarra and Newcastle out of the figures it is not a good picture. In that, the total number of jobs created in the past 12 months was 37,954. Of those jobs, 33,061 were part-time. That means in 12 months only 4,896 full-time jobs were created in regional New South Wales west of the mountains. Clearly, that is not good enough. We know that in regional areas part-time jobs do not cut the mustard. Part-time jobs mean that people cannot get loans and they find it more difficult to pay their rent. It is more difficult for them to take a holiday because they are only working part-time. We know that because the full-time jobs are being replaced by part-time jobs people are underemployed. They are not able to work the amount of time that they need to.

As I travelled throughout western New South Wales, mayors asked me to advocate on their behalf on some important issues. Let us see how we are going. In Wagga Wagga they told me they needed money for levees and Bomen Road. I note there is money for Bomen Road in the budget. I wonder if that money would have been there if I had not stood up for regional New South Wales. When I was on television, the mayor walked behind me with his thumbs up, saying, "Thank you for advocating on our behalf." In Orange I spoke to the mayor who said, "Mr Harris, our local member, Andrew Gee, has never sat in the seat you're sitting in now. He has never come to talk to the council in Orange." He also said that the last infrastructure project they had—

**Mr Kevin Anderson:** Point of order: I remind the member for Wyong that the Wagga Wagga electorate is held by a Liberal member, in case he was not aware.

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

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** I was aware. The mayor said he could not tell the difference between The Nationals and the Liberals. That is my point. The mayor of Orange said the last big infrastructure project there was Orange Hospital—which was built by whom? The Labor Party. When I travelled to Parkes the people told

me they wanted \$1 million for their airport. The local member, Andrew Gee, gave them a letter in December saying that they would get their million dollars in the new year. On the day I was there they received a letter saying that they were not getting the money. That is how The Nationals advocate on behalf of their communities. That is how they work

**Mr Troy Grant:** Point of order: Did he complain about the \$65 million hospital we built that Labor promised for 10 years and did not give them? Did he complain about the \$14 million police station we delivered that Labor promised but did not deliver?

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member's time has expired.

**Ms MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley) (15:58):** It is my great privilege to support the motion moved by the member for Northern Tableland. Yesterday's budget was an absolute victory for country New South Wales—for infrastructure, the services, police, teachers, nurses, doctors and everybody who works and lives in country New South Wales. We have increased front-line services and it is a record spend on infrastructure in regional New South Wales. This Government is changing the landscape and giving hope and prosperity to the people of country New South Wales. The member for Wyong took a little road trip to country New South Wales but he would have gone on his own because the Leader of the Opposition does not know where country New South Wales is. I doubt he would have even bothered to look at the new stretch of road at Clybucca on the Pacific Highway.

**Mr David Harris:** Because he would not have got an invitation. You guys do not invite any of us.

**Ms MELINDA PAVEY:** He needs an invitation to travel the Pacific Highway? What a shame. He does not understand the transformation that is happening before our very eyes. On Friday I was privileged to be part of an historic announcement, together with David Gillespie, the Federal member for Lyne, namely, an investment of \$1.6 million to replace the Bulli Creek Bridge on Comboyne Road. This project came about as a result of cooperation and communication between two excellent governments. Comboyne Road leads to Comboyne Mountain, one of the most beautiful paradises on this planet and home to an incredible dairy industry. That dairy industry, which is probably one of the biggest in New South Wales and certainly the biggest on the North Coast, continues to survive despite facing challenges.

There is also an avocado industry that sustains all the groovy little shops and cafes in Sydney and beyond with the most delicious avocados. This community, which makes a huge contribution to the State's gross domestic product, has had to use a single-lane bridge on the Comboyne Road to get their product to market. This investment would not have happened under Labor. Labor said that the State Government would have to find 50 per cent of the funding for the Pacific Highway because the Federal Government was only ever going to give 50 per cent. That would have left our Roads budget bare. Other than the Pacific Highway, no other country road would have received a single cent and it would have put pressure on the Comboyne Road project for another 10 years. I am proud to be part of a government that is transforming New South Wales.

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (16:02):** The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government does not have regional New South Wales at its heart. If the Government was serious about the regions, it would not be manufacturing light rail carriages in Spain when we have regional manufacturers such as UGL and Downer EDI crying out for work. If the Government was serious about the regions, it would not be closing offices in the Hunter such as Multicultural Affairs, Financial Services and Innovation and CountryLink booking offices. Shame on you! What about the link between the country and the city? The Government's attitude is, "We do not need that in the regions; we will just cut them." If the Government was serious about the regions and there was record infrastructure spending, why would the *Newcastle Herald* be saying, "Record infrastructure spend fails to reach the Hunter." If the Government was serious about the regions, it would not be flogging the Port of Newcastle, privatising the public transport system, flogging the poles and wires and sending all the money down to Sydney.

Those opposite talk about record investment and jobs growth but one only has to look at the unemployment figures—for example, 6.3 per cent in the Central West now, 4.9 per cent in March 2011; 7.9 per cent in the Hunter Valley now, 4 per cent in March 2011; and 7.5 per cent in the Murray now, 5.1 per cent in 2011. In the budget the Department of Primary Industries is being cut from \$1.048 billion in 2015-16 to \$940 million in 2016-17; 3,097 full-time equivalents in 2015-16 are down to 3,047 full-time equivalents in 2016-17; and an underspend of \$150 million in Primary Industries this year. Is that what the Government calls looking after the regions? The allocations for roads are being cut—for example, \$14.6 million less for Blue Mountains roads; \$11.3 million less for Bridges for the Bush; and \$92.2 million less for the Princes Highway. What about education and skills? The Nationals have earmarked sites for sale, including those at Scone, Dubbo, Maclean, Murwillumbah—

**Mr Troy Grant:** Point of order—



**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP:** —Corowa, Quirindi, Narrandera and Grenfell. This is particularly devastating for country New South Wales where youth unemployment sits at a staggering 13.8 per cent.

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

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP:** I am just doing what the Deputy Premier did before. That is more than double the regular unemployment rate. What a disgrace.

**Mr Troy Grant:** The member should refer to towns by their correct name.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member's time has expired.

**Mr Tim Crakanthorp:** Get a grip.

**Mr Troy Grant:** It just shows your lack of knowledge and understanding of the regions. You are a joke, a façade and a fraud.

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

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) (16:05):** In reply: It will come as no surprise that those on this side of the House do not support the amendment moved by the member for Wyong. I really like the member for Wyong; he is a nice bloke. I love the fact that he went to Moree and I am happy to have him in Moree any time. Interestingly, the member for Wyong picked up the ball in this debate, not the good member for Cessnock.

**Mr David Harris:** I am the shadow Minister.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** The good member for Cessnock is usually chirpy when he talks about the bush. I have often seen him in a pair of R. M. Williams and tan pants, so he may be coming across to join the fold.

**Mr David Harris:** He is Country Labor.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** He is part of that faction. The Opposition members need to have another look at the budget papers and the funding allocated for country New South Wales. In amongst the contribution of the member for Newcastle—

**Mr Troy Grant:** Which was not much.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** I acknowledge the interjection of the Deputy Premier. He might very well say that but I could not possibly comment. What I did distil from the contribution of the member for Newcastle was that he was talking about jobs. I will give a few examples of what Jobs for NSW or the former Regional Industries Investment Fund has already generated in just one part of the State, the New England north-west. In January last year Thomas Foods, which is in Tamworth, received support for its expansion to meet a new supply chain requirement in the marketplace. It will create 204 new full-time jobs—not part-time, the member for Wyong should note—and will facilitate a \$27.8 million investment in expansion.

In August the previous year the Government's assistance to the Guyra Tomato Exchange helped with the construction of a 20-hectare expansion of its hydroponic glasshouse facilities—the largest hydroponic tomato farm under glass in the Southern Hemisphere—a \$48 million capital expenditure. It has created an extra 171 full-time jobs in Guyra, which is a community of 2,500 people. That company now employs more than 500 people in Guyra. In fact, Guyra is outpacing the growth of Armidale, a city of 25,000 some 41 kilometres to the south. Tamworth, Armidale and Moree airports all received more than \$10 million of upgrades under the Regional Tourism Investment Fund, again making it easier for people to access our region, in Dubbo, Mudgee and everywhere else. The Government opposes the amendment because, as genuine as the member for Wyong is, the member's amendment is ill-founded. I commend the motion.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The question is that the words proposed to be left out stand.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....49  
Noes .....28  
Majority.....21

AYES

Dr Lee  
Mr Barilaro  
Mr Constance  
Mr Dominello

Mr Anderson  
Mr Bromhead (teller)  
Mr Coure  
Mr Elliott

Mr Aplin  
Mr Conolly  
Mr Crouch  
Mr Evans

## AYES

Mr Fraser  
Mr Gulaptis  
Mr Humphries  
Mr Maguire  
Mr O'Dea  
Mr Perrottet  
Mr Provest  
Mr Speakman  
Mr Toole  
Mr Williams  
Ms Gibbons  
Ms Petinos  
Ms Williams

Mr Grant  
Mr Hazzard  
Mr Johnsen  
Mr Marshall  
Mr Parker  
Mr Piccoli  
Mr Rowell  
Mr Stokes  
Mr Tudehope  
Ms Berejiklian  
Ms Goward  
Ms T. F. Smith

Mr Greenwich  
Mr Henskens  
Mr Kean  
Mr Notley-Smith  
Mr Patterson (teller)  
Mr Piper  
Mr Sidoti  
Mr Taylor  
Mr Ward  
Ms Davies  
Ms Pavey  
Ms Upton

## NOES

Dr McDermott  
Mr Chanthivong  
Mr Harris  
Mr Lulich (teller)  
Mr Park  
Mr Zangari  
Ms Catley  
Ms Harrison  
Ms McKay  
Ms Watson

Mr Atalla  
Mr Crakanthorp  
Mr Hoenig  
Mr Lynch  
Mr Robertson  
Ms Aitchison  
Ms Doyle  
Ms Haylen  
Ms Mihailuk

Mr Barr  
Mr Daley  
Mr Kamper  
Mr Mehan  
Mr Warren (teller)  
Ms Car  
Ms Finn  
Ms Hornery  
Ms Washington

## PAIRS

Mr Ayres  
Ms Hay  
Ms Hancock  
Mr Dib

Mr Foley  
Mr Roberts  
Mr Minns

Mr Baird  
Ms K. Smith  
Ms Skinner

**Motion agreed to.**

**Amendment negatived.**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The question is that the original motion as moved by the member for Northern Tablelands be agreed to.

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....49  
Noes .....28  
Majority.....21

## AYES

Dr Lee  
Mr Barilaro  
Mr Constance  
Mr Dominello  
Mr Fraser  
Mr Gulaptis  
Mr Humphries  
Mr Maguire  
Mr O'Dea

Mr Anderson  
Mr Bromhead (teller)  
Mr Coure  
Mr Elliott  
Mr Grant  
Mr Hazzard  
Mr Johnsen  
Mr Marshall  
Mr Parker

Mr Aplin  
Mr Conolly  
Mr Crouch  
Mr Evans  
Mr Greenwich  
Mr Henskens  
Mr Kean  
Mr Notley-Smith  
Mr Patterson (teller)

**AYES**

Mr Perrottet  
Mr Provost  
Mr Speakman  
Mr Toole  
Mr Williams  
Ms Gibbons  
Ms Petinos  
Ms Williams

Mr Piccoli  
Mr Rowell  
Mr Stokes  
Mr Tudehope  
Ms Berejiklian  
Ms Goward  
Ms T. F. Smith

Mr Piper  
Mr Sidoti  
Mr Taylor  
Mr Ward  
Ms Davies  
Ms Pavey  
Ms Upton

**NOES**

Dr McDermott  
Mr Chanthivong  
Mr Harris  
Mr Lalich (teller)  
Mr Park  
Mr Zangari  
Ms Catley  
Ms Harrison  
Ms McKay  
Ms Watson

Mr Atalla  
Mr Crakanthorp  
Mr Hoenig  
Mr Lynch  
Mr Robertson  
Ms Aitchison  
Ms Doyle  
Ms Haylen  
Ms Mihailuk

Mr Barr  
Mr Daley  
Mr Kamper  
Mr Mehan  
Mr Warren (teller)  
Ms Car  
Ms Finn  
Ms Hornery  
Ms Washington

**PAIRS**

Mr Ayres  
Ms Hay  
Ms Hancock  
Mr Dib

Mr Foley  
Mr Roberts  
Mr Minns

Mr Baird  
Ms K. Smith  
Ms Skinner

**Motion agreed to.**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** The motion accorded priority having concluded, Government business will be proceeded with.

*Bills***LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (GOVERNANCE AND PLANNING) BILL 2016****First Reading**

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

**Second Reading**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Local Government) (16:19):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Local Government Amendment (Governance and Planning) Bill. The bill is phase one of the Government's broader reform of the Local Government Act 1993. The bill begins modernising and streamlining the legislative framework for local government in New South Wales. The Government is committed to an updated legislative framework that will meet the needs of councils and their communities in 2016 and for many years to come. It is important to remember, however, that this is not a mere redrafting exercise. These phase one amendments introduce subtle but profound changes that will enable and encourage local government to reimagine itself and its purpose in our community.

The bill starts the journey away from process-focused local governance towards principle-focused governance. As our councils develop proficiency in using the tools this bill offers them, communities across New South Wales stand to benefit from local representation and governance that better reflects their values, their concerns and their priorities. The bill will assist councils to apply their resources more effectively for the benefit of the communities they serve. The system of local government in New South Wales has seen enormous change

in 2016. What has been lost in the debate about boundaries, however, is the steady progress that is continuously being made by both the State and local government sectors towards improving the system that crosses these boundary lines.

New South Wales deserves a local government system that works well for everyone, not just a select few or select areas. How do we know it will be better? In part, because the proposals in the bill have been the subject of extensive consultation. Starting in late 2011, councils came together at Destination 2036 to discuss their long-term future. This forum led to the appointment by the Government of the Independent Local Government Review Panel and the Local Government Act Taskforce. Both the panel and task force reports recommended legislative change to support the work of councils and to ensure they could be fit for the future. The Government's 2014 response to those reports supported the development of modern, principles-based local government legislation.

In January this year the Government released an explanatory paper that outlined the specific amendments to be included in this phase one bill. At the same time, for more than 10 weeks an online survey inviting public comment on each amendment was open on the website of the Office of Local Government, and more than 160 submissions were received. I thank those who participated. An information webcast was also held in March, which I am advised was well attended by more than 120 separate site registrations. The Government has made sure that councils and their communities have had a chance to have their say on these amendments which will help to shape the new local government sector.

The phase one bill focuses on achieving the following major policy objectives: to embed strategic business planning principles across the broad range of council functions and practices; to promote independent and sustainable councils engaged with and accountable to their local communities; and to support a culture of continuous improvement in councils so they are able to deliver on the strategic goals agreed with their local communities. Schedule 1 [2] to the bill introduces new principles for local government, which will build a common understanding of what local government should and can achieve. These new principles bring up to date some of the ideas covered by the Councils Charter and introduce new concepts that better reflect the role of local government in the twenty-first century.

These principles are both guiding and aspirational. They are not intended as binding rules, but they set down in writing what we expect from local government. It is useful to have such principles in the laws that govern the way we govern ourselves at a local level. It is even more important as we find ourselves at a point of renewal across the sector. Turning to the particular provisions of the bill that will enhance the way councils are governed, items [6], [8] and [25] of schedule 1 will establish distinct roles for mayors, general managers and councillors. The lack of clarity about these roles has been identified as an area requiring change. Better role definition will reduce confusion and help people to get on with their jobs and to make things happen for their communities.

The bill contains other important measures to improve the governance of councils. Schedule 1 [7] increases the term of office for mayors elected by councillors from one to two years. This change was recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel to enhance political leadership and support stable governance of councils. The Government agrees that this apparently small change will generate significant returns in good governance. Under schedule 1 [9], councillors will also be required to take an oath or affirmation of office to reinforce the serious nature of their role. Councillors will also be encouraged to obtain and maintain the skills necessary to do the job. The bill will introduce a new regulation-making power for the induction and ongoing professional development of councillors. The Government anticipates making regulations that will provide guidance for such programs, including requirements for public reporting of councillor participation in these programs. The bill also specifies, in new section 232 (1), that it is part of the role of every councillor to make all reasonable efforts to acquire and maintain the skills necessary to perform the role.

The bill also facilitates the drafting and adoption of a new model meeting code, which will address existing procedural ambiguities and modernise procedural requirements. This change is effected primarily in schedule 1 [2] to the bill. The issue of integrity in local government administration has been a significant concern in recent times. While this bill does not change the substantive ethical obligations of councillors, it puts in place amendments that will, over time, improve councillor understanding about what is expected and required of them. In particular, under items [52] to [76] of schedule 1 to the bill and the consequential amendments, the pecuniary interest obligations of councillors will be consolidated with other ethical obligations in the model code of conduct.

The Local Government Act currently contains two parallel schemes for ethical obligations: those found in the code of conduct and those found in standalone pecuniary interest provisions. This is confusing. The amendments in the bill will move the pecuniary interest obligations out of the Act and into the model code of conduct, which is imposed on councils through regulation. This consolidation will help to lift councillor awareness of these responsibilities by keeping all ethical obligations together in a single statutory instrument. The transition to the new arrangements should be done in stages, however, to take into account the concurrent development of a

new model code of conduct. The Government's intention is that the amendments in the bill should commence after stakeholder consultation and the finalisation of a new model code.

However, the bill prudently ensures that there is no risk of the ethical obligations of councillors being reduced if the amendments commence earlier for any reason. The bill provides that the current pecuniary interest obligations in the Act are deemed to be part of the model code from commencement. This will ensure that all current ethical obligations on councillors continue until a consolidated new code of conduct is ready for publication. I turn to strategic governance. This bill refocuses the existing framework for strategic business planning and reporting, making it central to all council activities. This will ensure council services are planned and delivered fairly and sustainably. Strategic planning and reporting has proven to be a very successful tool for councils to use to support their communities and to carry out their functions. The panel and the task force endorsed it becoming the primary governance tool for councils into the future. The bill achieves this in three ways.

First, new section 8C introduces new principles of integrated planning and reporting that apply to all councils, ensuring the pivotal role of integrated planning and reporting for local governance is established. These principles synthesise the fundamental elements of integrated planning and reporting to establish clear policy guidance for councils and communities. It is noteworthy that new section 8C (a) provides that regional priorities, such as may be developed between adjoining councils in conjunction with the Government, are to be considered in a council's strategic business planning. This does not mean, however, that regional priorities should outrank council consideration of local priorities.

Second, the bill makes some specific refinements to the operational provisions in the Local Government Act to increase its coverage. For example, amended section 404 will provide that all council activities, not only those mentioned in the community strategic plan, come under the umbrella of the integrated planning and reporting framework and so are covered by a council's delivery program. Councils will also be required under new section 402A to adopt a community engagement strategy for all of their activities other than business-as-usual operations, not just the activities referred to in the community strategic plan, as is currently the case. This reform will ensure that communities have a genuine opportunity to be heard on all the important work that councils do. Third, the bill puts a clear responsibility on mayors and councillors to engage productively in a council's integrated planning and reporting processes. These new, explicit expectations are contained in new section 226 (g) and new section 232 (1) (c).

The bill also contains important new measures to support the financial transparency of councils in the future. Councils will be required to establish an internal audit function as a driver for improved council performance. Some councils already have audit and risk committees, but item [43] of schedule 1 to the bill will ensure that in the future an audit, risk and improvement committee is a mandatory good governance practice for all. The bill also introduces a principles-based approach to the regulation of councils' financial governance practices that reflects the principles of sound financial management set out in the Fiscal Responsibility Act.

Most importantly, under the amendments introduced by the bill, councils will become subject to oversight by the Auditor-General for their general audits and those of their subsidiary entities from this financial year. This is a major reform that brings New South Wales into line with most other Australian jurisdictions and New Zealand, and that will provide greater consistency and certainty across the sector. It will also ensure that reliable financial information is available that can be used to assess councils' performance and for benchmarking.

The Auditor-General is independent of the Government. She is accountable directly to the Parliament in relation to the exercise of her functions. The Auditor-General will be free to engage private sector auditors to assist her with her new responsibilities. The Audit Office anticipates that such contractors would be engaged after a competitive tender process. This is also similar to other jurisdictions. I am advised that the expectation of the Audit Office is that the majority of council audits will be delivered through contracted auditors who are accredited by the Auditor-General, with the Auditor-General conducting a small number in house. The Audit Office has committed to working with councils' current audit firms, where they are accredited, over the transition period.

While it is important that the bill makes it clear when the current arrangements end, every effort will be made to ensure that there is a smooth transition to the new arrangements. The Auditor-General will also be empowered to conduct sector-wide performance audits to identify trends and opportunities for improvement across the sector. This is similar to her powers in relation to State Government agencies and will be a very important new source of guidance for both councils and the State Government.

Item [47] of schedule 1 to the bill establishes the option for the Minister to appoint a financial controller to councils at financial risk. This is broadly similar to the position in Queensland. The new power is able to be used only in circumstances where the Minister is also empowered to issue a performance improvement order. The bill also provides scope for further regulations to be made to prescribe specific financial criteria that the Minister must consider, should that be necessary or desirable. The purpose of this new power is to broaden the suite of

options available to the Minister to improve council performance in cases of real financial sustainability risk without resorting to the step of appointing an administrator.

The bill also includes a process for prescribed councils to voluntarily streamline some governance structures. Although supporting regulations are yet to be considered by the Government, this would be a mechanism to permit rural and remote councils with small populations to reduce the number of councillors, abolish wards and/or reduce the number of meetings below the current thresholds in the Act. These were measures that some councils proposed in their Fit for the Future submissions to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] in June 2015. The bill provides an avenue for the Government to give these proposals careful consideration.

The bill also contains measures to reduce some of the regulatory burden on councils. For example, the bill integrates State of the Environment reports into strategic business planning so that there is no requirement for councils to prepare a separate State of the Environment report. Instead, the environment is to be considered holistically when councils are planning to deliver their functions. Councils will also be able to delegate the provision of financial assistance to community groups, as well as delegate more routine tendering functions to general managers, while ensuring that any major decision on outsourcing that might affect current council staff remains a decision for the councillors.

The bill also removes the requirement that general managers report annually to council on senior staff contract conditions, since all such staff are now employed on standard contracts. Another red-tape reduction measure is to remove the requirement for an annual council expenses policy and to replace it with a requirement to adopt a policy in the first 12 months of a new council term. These policies are published online and rarely varied, so there is no utility in an annual process. The bill also provides all councils with an option to use universal postal voting for elections. At present, this may be done only via regulation.

The bill also contains some housekeeping elements to address legislative ambiguities, such as clarifying that the civic office of councillor will become vacant if the councillor is elected as mayor; aligning the role of administrators with the newly defined roles of mayor and councillors to address a further legislative ambiguity; clarifying that the countback provisions of the Local Government Act do not commence until a prescribed future time, to allow the supporting regulations to be finalised; and clarifying the status of a determination of a council's category by the Local Government Remuneration Tribunal.

My thanks go to the members of my ministerial advisory group: the United Services Union, Local Government NSW and the Local Government Professionals' Association. They provided extremely constructive feedback on the phase one proposed amendments. Their feedback has greatly informed the development of this bill. I welcome similar positive stakeholder engagement as the Government develops future phases of reform to the Local Government Act. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **ADOPTION AMENDMENT (INSTITUTE OF OPEN ADOPTION STUDIES) BILL 2016**

### **First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Brad Hazzard, read a first time and printed.**

### **Second Reading**

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing) (16:41):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am very pleased to bring before the House the Adoption Amendment (Institute of Open Adoption Studies) Bill 2016. This bill delivers on the New South Wales Government's commitment to lead the way in developing evidence-based research on achieving permanency and security for children in out-of-home care through open adoption. The New South Wales Government devoted \$2.85 million over three years to the Institute of Open Adoption Studies to improve our evidence base and practice for open adoption.

On 16 March 2016, the Premier and I announced that, following a competitive tender, the University of Sydney's Faculty of Education and Social Work, in partnership with Barnados, would establish and run the Institute of Open Adoption Studies. This is the first independent, government-funded adoption research body of its kind in Australia. The institute's strategic priority is to provide an evidence base for open adoption, in support of the best interests of children in out-of-home care in New South Wales. This bill before the Parliament provides the foundation for the institute to access qualitative and quantitative data from past, present and future adoption and permanent care applications and orders so it can undertake its research functions.

As members of the House would be aware, the New South Wales Government is committed to helping more vulnerable children in out-of-home care into permanent and loving families. New South Wales has the highest number of children adopted from out-of-home care in Australia. In 2014-15 there were 87 open adoptions from out-of-home care in New South Wales. This compares to just 45 out-of-home care adoptions under Labor in 2010-11. New South Wales outperforms every other State in the country when it comes to open adoption whether it be from out-of-home care, local or international adoption. In 2013-14 New South Wales completed in total 141 open adoptions, and of these 82 were from out-of-home care. The total number of adoptions from Victoria in 2013-14 was 48. In the same year, Queensland completed 34 adoptions and Tasmania completed 12 adoptions. Adoptions from out-of-home care in these States are far less common than in New South Wales.

Making open adoption for children quicker and easier is a key part of the New South Wales Government's Safe Home for Life child protection reform package. Open adoption is very different to what happened in the past. Open adoption promotes a child's need to know where they came from, to know their birth family, and to maintain links and contact with them. International research and learning from past practice has helped us understand the importance for children of having a strong sense of identity and knowledge of where they come from.

Around 20,000 children and young people are in out-of-home care in New South Wales. While we acknowledge that open adoption is not a viable approach for all these children, it is in a substantial number of cases the best option, and it is important that we consider this option when children cannot be reunited with their families. Whilst we move forward to increase adoption rates, we must acknowledge past practice of forced adoption and the impact it has had on children and families. We must also acknowledge that for Aboriginal children adoption is not the priority. This Government continues to be committed to working with Aboriginal children and families to promote their identity and culture. We understand and respect that for the Aboriginal community open adoption of Aboriginal children is generally the least preferred placement type.

The institute has the challenge and responsibility to pursue much-needed research into open adoption and its impact on children, birth families, adoptive applicants and those working in this essential field. At the heart of the institute's endeavours is our society's shared duty to provide a greater number of children with a safe and loving home for life. The institute will lead the way in research by building the knowledge base for open adoption, providing a focus for expertise and increased understanding of open adoption. A key goal of the institute will be the development of new knowledge through research and expertise to inform practice and influence cultural change within the child protection sector around permanency planning and adoption.

The institute will also research children's experiences of adoption; develop resources, training and education programs to help the sector; and provide expert reports to support decision-making around permanency planning. The institute will take us to a new place of understanding. It will allow us to reality test the learning from adoption assumptions of the past and inform our approaches to determining what we must really mean by "the best interests" of these children. By building an evidence base on out-of-home care and local adoption, the institute will support a growing sector to make decisions that are in the best interests of the child. It will also inform how we as a government develop adoption policy and practice.

I turn now to explaining the bill in more detail. A number of legislative changes are needed to establish the institute as a research leader in the sector. Information is the key to sound decision-making, policy development, and producing world-leading research and statistics. The institute will require access to adoption and out-of-home care information and data for it to be a leading academic institute for evidence-based research in open adoption. The proposals in this bill help simplify a complex legal landscape. There are presently a number of legislative impediments on research organisations accessing adoption information. The current regulatory controls on the disclosure of information prevent the institute from being able to access adoption and out-of-home care information, even in circumstances where the information has been de-identified.

The bill allows the Department of Family and Community Services to enter into arrangements with the institute as a prescribed research organisation for the purposes of permitting the disclosure of adoption and out-of-home care information held by the department or an accredited adoption service provider, the Children's Guardian or a designated out-of-home care agency. The type of information that the institute will be able to access includes available adoption applications as well as adoption and care orders from the last 50 years. This is the most significant repository of adoption information available in New South Wales and none of it is held in any aggregated database. Access to this quality data will help to create an improved evidence base for research, enabling a better informed analysis and a deeper understanding of establishing permanency and a safe home for life for children and young people in out-of-home care.

The legislative amendments proposed by this bill are pivotal for the institute to undertake research on the impact of past and current adoption and out-of-home care practices in New South Wales. While facilitating access to the best adoption and out-of-home care information in New South Wales for research purposes, safeguards to protect personal information are also a central feature of the bill. Given the sensitivities around information sharing

issues, the bill puts in place a suite of safeguards to protect personal information. The safeguards provided by the bill to maintain individuals' privacy include that the institute will be subject to the privacy protection provisions of the New South Wales Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 and the New South Wales Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002.

This includes safeguards to protect against loss, unauthorised access and use, modification, disclosure and misuse of information. Information disclosed to the institute must be treated as confidential and steps must be taken to de-identify the information. The institute cannot publicly release any information that identifies people involved with an adoption of a child or young person in out-of-home care. Regulations may also be made to provide further guidance on data security and the criteria for release of information.

In addition to the safeguards to protect personal information provided by the bill, the institute will operate within the processes and procedures of a university and, as such, will be subject to stringent ethics approval arrangements. The institute will be required to obtain ethics approval from a university ethics committee for each research proposal to ensure it is a legitimate investigation that protects the welfare, safety and dignity of research participants. Any perceived or actual bias in research proposals will be managed through this independent process.

Another key feature of the bill is that it will enable organisations such as the institute to provide expert reports to the court to support decision-making around permanency planning. One of the most significant arenas where a decision is made about a child's right to belong in a family is in a court of law. Yet in some of these decisions, the courts have spoken about their frustration in not having before them adequate, reliable or robust objective expert evidence on which to determine whether adoption is the best option for the child.

Under section 91 of the Adoption Act 2000, the court can request an expert report to help with its decision on whether adoption is in the best interests of a child. At present, only a designated agency or approved assessor can provide this type of report. This has meant the courts have not had before them expertise from a leading research body on adoption. The bill overcomes this limitation by allowing a suitably qualified person employed or nominated by a research organisation, such as the institute, to offer an expert report in relation to individual matters.

Last but not least, the bill makes a minor, but relevant, change to the explanatory note to part 6 of the Adoption Act 2000. The current reference to "temporary care" in the Adoption Act is not aligned to language used in the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998. The change in terminology to "authorised carer" will ensure that people approved to adopt are consistently classified, which in turn will help to improve the quality of adoption data and reduce time and cost associated with accessing it.

Prior to launching the institute, the department undertook extensive consultation on the role and function of the institute. I am pleased to advise the House there is broad support for the institute. Adoption service providers and advocacy groups recognise the benefits of an institute that can efficiently access a broad range of adoption information for use in its applied research functions. I also note that both the Office of the Information Commissioner and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner have been consulted and support the bill. The Government trusts and hopes this bill will receive the full support of all members of Parliament. As the University of Sydney Chancellor, Belinda Hutchinson, said:

The Institute has the promise and responsibility of delivering research with the impact to enable lasting positive change. We want the Institute to be one of the leading academic institutions in the world for evidenced-based research in this area.

This bill provides the foundations for the institute to be the leader in the development of best practice in open adoption in Australia. I commend this bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Government business having concluded, private members' statements will now be proceeded with.

*Private Members' Statements*

**LEICHHARDT STREETSCAPE**

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (16:53):** I advise the House that early last week I was alerted by local residents to the destruction of street trees in Leichhardt by Ausgrid contractors. These beautiful mature trees, some decades old, were reduced to little more than stumps by the contractors. Hundreds of residents have joined me to call on the energy Minister to rein in this destruction and to make sure that Ausgrid abides by its own policies so that these trees are not damaged forever and our beautiful streetscapes are not lined with mere stumps.

Frank Lloyd Wright, a former local resident, once said that the best friend of man on the earth is a tree, and that is very true. More recently, multiple international studies have found that trees are not simply decorative



ornaments but also form part of a city's critical infrastructure. Trees improve our air, soil and water quality; they improve mental health and wellbeing; they help to reduce anger and aggression; they provide a sense of place; and they enhance property values. Tree canopy cover over paved surfaces mitigates the build-up of urban heat islands, reduces carbon emissions and controls stormwater run-off.

The overzealous cutting of trees in Leichhardt seems to be just the latest instalment in what is being called a war on trees being waged by this Government. Where once New South Wales had the strongest conservation laws in the country, we now seem determined to usher in an era of threatened species extinction, biodiversity loss and vegetation destruction. Many members of this House know of the widespread loss of urban trees and bushland due to the unpopular 10/50 vegetation clearing rule that was introduced last year and was followed recently by the destruction of heritage trees in Randwick for the light rail. The ill-conceived WestConnex motorway project has also seen many trees cut down and will also see rare and threatened vegetation destroyed.

The Government plans to abolish the Native Vegetation Act, the Threatened Species Conservation Act and several other hard-won pieces of environmental legislation and to introduce a new biodiversity conservation bill into this Parliament. Of course, The Greens are strongly opposing it because it will allow developers to destroy trees and vegetation if they offset the destruction by paying for the protection of vegetation in another location or by contributing money to a fund for future conservation efforts. We do not consider that course of action to be a substitute for protecting endangered vegetation. The vegetation that is so protected does not have to be similar in area or type to the vegetation destroyed. I acknowledge the work of the Nature Conservation Council and all the other organisations that are fighting so hard to protect our vegetation across New South Wales.

We have a responsibility to be custodians of our natural environment and to prevent species extinction by any means possible. I ask the Premier and the Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy to stand up to the extreme positions of those who oppose protecting our green spaces and to ensure real funding and real action. I conclude by calling on the Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy to engage with Ausgrid to ensure that its contractors, who have removed street trees over many decades and have trimmed street trees near electricity cables, in the future are accompanied by a qualified arborist so that we do not have the overzealous tree cutting that breaks the hearts of many people.

In our cities and in many rural and regional areas, the beautiful boulevards and avenues that are lined with trees, such as the beautiful Carlisle Street in Leichhardt—where its crepe myrtle trees have now been reduced to mere stumps—have a significant impact on our communities. I call on the Minister to work with the community to ensure that the destruction will never happen again and that our beautiful and mature trees will be protected. The Minister should ensure that Ausgrid contractors in particular are supported by a qualified arborist so that our streets are not reduced to the sorry situation we see across Leichhardt and in other areas in my local community. I commend this statement to the House. I look forward to working with the Minister to make sure this never happens again.

### CENTRAL COAST TRAIN MAINTENANCE FACILITY

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (16:57):** In September 2015, Transport for NSW announced that a parcel of flood-prone residential rural land at Kangy Angy on the Central Coast would be purchased from the then Wyong Shire Council and would become the site of a \$300 million maintenance facility to service the forthcoming new intercity train fleet. Let me say at the outset that Central Coast Labor members of this House want this facility to be built on the Central Coast. However, for reasons I will soon relate, the preferred site of Transport for NSW is far from ideal.

The announced location came as a great shock not only to local residents but also to the Local Aboriginal Land Council, which at that time had been working for three years with Transport for NSW on the siting of rail stabling and also the proposed intercity maintenance facility on Darkinjung land at Bushell's Ridge. Residents have organised themselves to oppose the announcement. I acknowledge the huge work being done by Michelle Nicholson in administering this group. As one of the Kangy Angy Residents Action Group writes:

We all have small acreages, many of us have farm animals, and we are very concerned at the impact this facility will have in our community ... we all rely on bore water for animals, vegetables and our own personal household use. What guarantee will we have that no contamination from the diesel and train cleaning run-off will not seep into our land and creek systems?

When the land floods, it can be covered by over 2 metres of water. How is this going to be addressed without creating greater flooding and water flow issues along the creek system? During any flood event there will be no access, as the area gets completely cut off."

I think the announcement also came as a bit of a shock to many in Transport for NSW who had been involved in the site selection process. That is because Kangy Angy was considered only after the council signalled its opposition to that organisation's preferred site, being a parcel of flood-free, council-owned industrial land at Warnervale. Council had other plans for Warnervale. Even though independent assessment suggests the plans

were not viable and they formed no part of the State Government's plan for the Central Coast, council prevailed and Transport for NSW agreed to consider another parcel of council land that it was keen to offload. That was the Kangy Angy site. In a letter from the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure dated 19 April 2016, which was drafted in response to the petition of more than 500 people opposed to the Kangy Angy site, the Baird Government claimed:

The Kangy Angy site performed well against the multi-criteria assessment that considered environmental planning and engineering constraints, including ecology, heritage, noise, contamination, flooding, planning approvals, construction access and enabling works.

I do not think that has been the case. The recently released review of environmental factors [REF] clearly indicates that the preferred Warnervale site was assessed against Kangy Angy using different criteria from that used for the other sites. At page 21 the REF states:

The assessment was based on a like for like comparison of the existing concept design at the new site.

The existing concept design did not include a bridge. A bridge is needed if this is to be built at Kangy Angy because there is no flood-free access. The main north railway line through Kangy Angy is on an elevated track built three to four metres above the surrounding ground. The railway forms the eastern side of the site. The western side of the site is defined by the Ourimbah Creek and its tributaries. Access tracks to the site have been impassable on three occasions this year due to flood. Warnervale does not need a bridge for access. The bridge needed for Kangy Angy cannot be just any bridge but a great big bridge that will reach over the elevated railway line, allow for future widening of the rail corridor, be above the flood level, and support heavy vehicles. I have asked the Minister to detail its cost, and I await his response. The Warnervale site does not have those constraints, and nor does the Darkinjung site, for that matter.

The Warnervale site is located in the vicinity of the proposed Warnervale Link Road. The State Government allocated \$500,000 last year and \$1 million this year for the planning of that site. Warnervale is also located near the Wyong employment zone. We need to rethink the location of this project. The opportunity exists to combine the resources being allocated to road and rail to build a better project at Warnervale or even the Darkinjung site to get the Wyong employment zone moving. I encourage the Minister to carefully reconsider this matter. As a start, the community needs more time to comment on the REF. I believe if we have a considered reassessment of this matter we will find a better site on the coast and get a better outcome for everyone.

### **TRIBUTE TO JUDITH HELEN JAKINS, AM**

**Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Deputy Premier, Minister for Justice and Police, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Racing) (17:02):** I honour a new member of the general division of the Order of Australia, Mrs Judith "Judy" Helen Jakins of Dubbo. In this nation and State we are blessed to have people who serve with distinction in the Armed Forces, parliament, local government, service groups, volunteer organisations and many other avenues. I am very much of the view that service before self is one of the greatest attributes a person can have. There are people in our community who go above and beyond the call of duty. It is only right to bestow on those people the high honour of the Order of Australia.

In my time on this earth I have not seen a person make more of a contribution to the success of regional New South Wales than Mrs Judy Helen Jakins. She has received her award for significant service to the community of New South Wales, particularly through local and State government roles from aeromedical organisations to the education of isolated children. Mrs Judy Jakins's contribution to Dubbo and the communities of New South Wales is simply stunning. Her service includes being a 1971 founding member, past treasurer and inaugural treasurer of the Bourke branch of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association, which is dedicated to increasing the access of people in isolated and remote communities to education and health services. From 1994 to 2003 she was a board member of the Returned Services League of Australia Aged Care Association and she was a member of the Zoological Parks Board of New South Wales from 1992 to 1995. Judy was also a member of the Guide Dog Association of New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory.

Judy is a Rotarian and was awarded Rotarian of the Year in 2006 and 2009. She also received the highest recognition for service to Rotary, the Paul Harris Fellowship, in 2000. Judy was a supporter of the Rotary Foundation, the bulletin editor for 12 years and the president of the Rotary Club of Dubbo Macquarie between 2003 and 2004. Judy is probably most renowned for her work with the Royal Flying Doctor Service. She was founding chair of the Royal Flying Doctor Service Dubbo Support Group in 1993, she has held the office of vice-president and has been a life member of this most iconic of Australian organisations since 2003. Judy Jakins continues to volunteer at the Royal Flying Doctor Service Visitor Education Centre at the Dubbo base. She was a board member of the South Eastern section from 1993 to 2002 and has been a member overall since 1985.

In addition, Judy was a Dubbo City Council alderman from 1991 to 1995. In the Parliament of New South Wales she served as the first female National Party member of the Legislative Council between 1984 and

1991. As testament to her service to others above self, during the Greiner Government the Legislative Council voted to reconfigure the amount of members of that House. Judy Jakins voted in favour of a reduction of members, thereby voting herself out of a job. She did that because she knew it was the right decision for the Government. She showed no fear or favour and considered no self-interest. She acted for the betterment of the State. That is testament to her character. Judy's service to New South Wales has been astronomical. The Hon. Barry O'Farrell awarded her a Premier's Award for her contribution to the community and she has been an outstanding advocate for the Dubbo city and region for decades. She is the greatest advocate for rural and regional areas. I do not think anyone is more deserving of being included in the Australian Queen's Birthday honours. I commend Judy Jakins to the Parliament.

### **ROYAL NORTH SHORE HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING**

**Ms JILLIAN SKINNER (North Shore—Minister for Health) (17:08):** Soon after becoming Minister for Health in 2011 it was my great pleasure and privilege to officially open the new acute services building at Royal North Shore Hospital, which was the centrepiece of a \$1.1 billion redevelopment. My longstanding relationship with clinicians as the shadow Minister for Health enabled me to fight for aspects of that redevelopment in which we strongly believed. I helped to raise concerns about the configuration of vital wards and theatres as well as the poor placement of the helipad. I promised that once in government I would halt plans to sell off 30 per cent of the site and address a shortfall in beds and several clinical services. That is exactly what I did.

In 2011 when I became the Minister for Health I responded to their needs by providing an additional \$160 million in funding to build the Clinical Services Building, which houses maternity, women's health, burns, paediatrics, orthopaedics and mental health services. All of those facilities are operating superbly and I often receive many letters of thanks and congratulations for the wonderful care provided by the staff. It is with this background that I raise another important development for the Royal North Shore Hospital. On 15 March, after extensive discussion with senior clinicians and other staff, it was announced that the southern campus of Royal North Shore Hospital, comprising 8 per cent of the total hospital site, would be retained by the Government. The area known as 4A will be used to construct an administrative building to accommodate the New South Wales Ministry of Health and other NSW Health State-level organisations. Childcare services will also be provided in this new building. Construction will commence early next year and it is expected to be completed in 2019. This is a topic of great interest to my constituency, who are very pleased with this outcome.

The Douglas Building, which accommodated the old emergency department and maternity unit, has been refurbished during my time as Minister to include the Pain Management Research Centre and is a very appropriate home for a centre of such State significance. The old maternity unit was also refurbished to become an accommodation service for the family of patients at the hospital. When I visited it again recently I bumped into a mum whose son is a regular visitor to the hospital from country New South Wales. This facility enables her to stay very close to her son whilst he is receiving treatment. I also bumped into Barbara Lewis, the carer support manager at the facility, and she told me how grateful the families are who use this facility. It not only has 18 beautifully refurbished single and double bedrooms but also kitchenettes and sitting rooms and is a very short walk to the hospital wards.

Royal North Shore Hospital is a State centre for burns and spinal injury, and as such many people from across New South Wales and elsewhere come to the hospital for treatment. This accommodation facility for families of patients at the hospital is very valuable. As I have said, the building on the Pacific Highway end of the campus will accommodate the Ministry of Health, including the pillars, the Clinical Excellence Commission and the Agency for Clinical Innovation, and create an incredible health campus for the people of New South Wales. I have a very deep affection for this site. I and my children have been patients at this hospital and the staff there are marvellous. I am very pleased to inform the Parliament about this wonderful development, which will take this hospital to the next level.

### **CURRAN PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (17:13):** To sow the seeds of education is to plant a life full of possibilities. Those seeds have already started sprouting branches for a group of young students from Curran Public School at Macquarie Fields who have achieved success beyond their wildest dreams. Recently 12 year 5 and year 6 students returned home after representing their school and our community in a trip of a lifetime to the United States of America where they earned third place at the international finals of the Future Problem Solving [FPS] championships. What a wonderful achievement, with the kids from Macquarie Fields showing the world their intelligence, hard work and ability to achieve.

Curran Public School is the only New South Wales public school to win at this level of the FPS program. This amazing result was the culmination of more than a year's hard work by the students and teachers, some gritty

determination, a generous community spirit and the resolute belief of principal Michael Strahan. Michael has always maintained that the students' postcode would be no barrier to success nor define them—indeed, it was not and did not. Time has shown that nothing was going to get in the way of these students and their dream of helping others. The journey to success started around 12 months ago when the school decided to enter a team in the FPS championships, an international educational program for students of all ages that encourages critical, creative and futuristic thinking skills among young people.

With the slogan "Kids Helping Kids", the students developed an innovative care package for incoming kindergarten students at the school. Each package contains educational resources such as alphabet and number charts, stationery and worksheets to support early learning. The packages were developed after the students found that the academic skill level of children entering kindergarten at their school was below average. From that moment on the students decided to make a difference. The care packages help kindergarten students at Curran Public School start in an academically better place than has existed before, and foster a wonderful partnership in learning between the school and home environment. The students and teachers could not have imagined the journey ahead of them when they decided to enter the competition.

Travelling to Brisbane last October to compete at the national finals and claiming victory was only the beginning. The win provided the impetus for the students to start fundraising to compete at the international finals, which were held in June in Michigan in the United States. The students captured the hearts and minds of the local community; a fundraising website was established and a ball was held to help the students achieve their dream of competing at the international finals. Thanks to the community's generous support, the school exceeded its fundraising goal. Not only were the students able to enjoy the trip of a lifetime thanks to the community's amazing generosity but the additional funds that were raised will ensure the continuation of the program and care packages for future students. The champions from Curran Public School have been on a life-changing journey from Macquarie Fields to Michigan; it was the first international trip for many of them. The project has transformed the lives of these young students on many levels. They have gained new skills, enhanced their self-belief and gained greater confidence. Importantly, it has inspired them to dream.

The Curran Public School students are champions of our public education system, where lifelong skills and opportunity go hand in hand to empower local communities to produce future leaders. The legacy of our young champions from Curran Public School will be the seeds of knowledge they have sowed for future generations—but they will not know many of them because they will move on to higher education. As the member for Macquarie Fields, I am particularly proud that students from our local community have produced such amazing achievements. I congratulate all of those involved in this wonderful celebration of success, excellence and community spirit. I end with the words of our high achieving students: "Together we can make a change." Together our students have made a tremendous change for the betterment of our community.

### **IKEW VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE**

**Ms LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie—Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education) (17:18):** Today I proudly recognise and inform the House about a recent milestone in the Port Macquarie electorate for the iKew Visitor Information Centre. On 21 May this thriving centre celebrated its third year of operation. The centre provides a popular stopover for not only locals but also visitors travelling to the Port Macquarie-Hastings area, particularly to Camden Haven. The iKew Visitor Information centre is located just past the roundabout in the centre of Kew and is a space that is continually utilised by thousands of people.

Several years ago, a committee that consists of local community members came together and over several months managed to negotiate with the council to create a community centre that greets and informs tourists visiting the local area. These members did not stop at establishing the centre; they continually keep the place running. The committee has now developed into a management group with a loyal and devoted team behind them. This team has its volunteers rotating through shifts on a seven-days-a-week roster, from 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. They are passionate about sharing the beauty of the local area with anyone who stops by.

This popular centre includes a multitude of services, such as picnic areas, a local produce store, restrooms and a spot to dispose of recreational vehicle waste. Many local areas host a big landmark and in the iKew we have the very iconic giant axe, where tourists love to stop and take photos. The iKew Visitor Information Centre has a wonderful mix of local produce and crafts and caters for a variety of needs for travellers and tourists who are passing through. The local produce and crafts provide snacks for the long drives ahead and little mementoes for visitors to remember their visit and the time they spent there.

The iKew Visitor Information Centre also has an exhibition room, which displays an array and a variety of local artists' works. The management group is always changing the displays and keeping them up to date; so there is always something new to look at when people stop by. These showcases include the latest paintings,

displays and photographic art of locals. The iKew also operates a driver reviver service during peak holiday times. These revivers are essential when it comes to lowering the road toll, especially over holiday periods. Members of the management group are not the only ones who volunteer; a wide range of service organisations and community groups volunteer their time to help run this important service. These stations are a wonderful place to revive in the middle of a long journey. They supply travellers with a free cup of tea or coffee and a biscuit or a place just for travellers to stop and chat with these wonderful volunteers before resuming their travels. The driver reviver service runs during all school holidays and the iKew centre is available during opening hours.

This centre is one of the many reasons I am so proud of and love the Port Macquarie electorate. My local area is not only a beautiful place physically, it is also the home of a generous community who work like this to provide such important services to visitors and locals alike. These people who love this area as much as I do are willing and want to volunteer their time to keep this flourishing centre operating. I extend my sincere thanks to each and every one of those who volunteer at the centre, and to their outstanding management group, who has just celebrated a very successful three years. I thank them for their commitment and desire to serve the community and tourists to our local area and for spreading the message of the hidden beauties of the Port Macquarie electorate. No doubt this is only the beginning of the centre's celebrations and I eagerly wait to see the future endeavours of the centre and to have the opportunity to acknowledge many more milestones in years to come.

### **MARIST CATHOLIC COLLEGE PENSURST**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (17:22):** Today I speak about the recent blessing and opening of the La Valla Centre and administration building at Marist Catholic College Penshurst. I had the pleasure of attending the blessing and opening on 13 May and was impressed by the scope and diversity of the buildings. I am a proud former student of Marist Catholic College Penshurst. I am and always will be grateful to the teachers, the staff and the school community for the care my brothers and I received whilst students there, and I am particularly grateful for the quality education and strong values instilled by the school and the Marist traditions.

The La Valla Centre has a variety of spaces including 12 classrooms, a library, tuition rooms and a multipurpose room for science and technical and applied studies. At the heart of the building is the ministry space and the Mary Mackillop Chapel. It is fitting and appropriate that Marist Catholic College Penshurst decided to honour Mary Mackillop by naming the chapel after her. Mary Mackillop dedicated her life to educating some of the most disadvantaged Australians. Many were children in terrible need and living in extreme poverty. As a teacher and as a nun she helped those who could not dream of accessing or participating in education.

I am proud and delighted that the school recognised the contribution of Mary Mackillop to the early education system in Australia, and the chapel named after her will serve as a reminder to staff and students at Marist Catholic College Penshurst and the wider community of her tireless and selfless work. Australians and Catholics everywhere were delighted when Mary Mackillop was canonised as Saint Mary of the Cross in 2010. She holds a special place in the Catholic Church in Australia and now a very special place in the school community I was part of, that is, Marist Catholic College Penshurst.

Another important part of the new build is the administration building, which includes a reception, student services, meeting rooms, a boardroom, print services and office space. The administration building and those who work in it provide valuable technical and administrative support. The administrative staff at Marist Catholic College Penshurst work hard and provide encouragement for students, staff and parents and are responsible for much of the day-to-day operations and functions of the school. The La Valla Centre and administration building would not have been possible without the vision and hard work of the Marist Penshurst school community. It is a community under the leadership of many, but I would like to acknowledge the following people who have made such amazing contributions: the current college principal, Mr Ray Martin; founding college principal, Mr John Finneran; Father John Crothers, the parish priest at St Declan's Penshurst; Dr Dan White, the Executive Director of Sydney Catholic Schools; and my good friend Brother Tony Butler, a Marist Brother and the college chaplain, who was a brother at the school when I and my brothers were students at the school.

I thank the school leadership team for guiding the community through the building process and ensuring state-of-the-art facilities for the students and staff at Marist Catholic College Penshurst. The college first opened its doors in 1953 with 160 primary school boys. Since that time the school has changed dramatically and has adapted to the educational and spiritual needs of the local Catholic community whilst still upholding the Marist values. In 2014 Marist Catholic College Penshurst underwent its most significant change in the college's history: the enrolment of girls in year 7 and the enrolment of boys and girls in years 11 and 12 for the first time.

The tradition and values of a Marist education provided me with a strong faith, an understanding of public service and the importance of caring and standing up for our community—values I have always tried to demonstrate as a member of Parliament. Marist Catholic College Penshurst is a member of Marist Schools Australia. Marist Schools Australia draws together Catholic schools which shape their identity and mission

through the spirituality and educational approaches developed by the Marist Brothers. These are principles that we should all try to live by and I hope members of this Chamber will embrace these principles as the students, staff and community do at Marist Catholic College Penshurst.

### WORKERS COMPENSATION LEGISLATION

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (17:27):** Today I commemorate the four-year anniversary of the workers compensation legislation changes that were made in this place on 19 June 2012. In the space of the four years since, the lives of thousands and thousands of people have become so much harder. As the local member of Parliament, I had the unenviable task of sitting with people as they poured out their hearts, minds, spirits and souls in a final effort to seek justice. In this place it is easy to see our decisions as abstract manoeuvres in a political game, divorced from the real-life consequences for the people we represent. I want to disrupt that comfort by sharing some of the stories of people in the Cessnock electorate who have come to me in the past four years since the Government's workers compensation changes.

People on workers compensation have already been punished once by circumstances. They do not choose to be injured at work. Why would anyone choose that? Four years ago, the Government decided to punish them again with changes to the legislation. The safety net that had been provided to injured workers to give them some certainty and security for the future was pulled out from under them. As one example, it is rare for me to have a meeting with Gary and Kaye that does not involve tears. Kaye, who suffered a disability after a workplace injury, originally came to me because she needed a new wheelchair and was having difficulty getting her insurer, the Government Insurance Office [GIO], to supply one. In truth, "difficulty" is a massive understatement. The tactics used by the GIO in stalling, obfuscating and avoiding its responsibility to provide a wheelchair for Kaye bordered upon sadistic. Members will know that I am not prone to hyperbole on issues as sensitive as this.

For having the temerity to pursue what she was entitled to, Kaye and her husband suffered one indecency after another from the GIO, each seemingly more petty and vindictive than the last. Due to her injuries, Kaye now spends 22 hours a day in bed. Three occupational therapists have been sent to assess the suitability of her bedding. The first one recommended a specialised suitable bed, and that occupational therapist was dismissed. The second recommended the same bed, but that occupational therapist was also dismissed. The third occupational therapist was instructed that when making an assessment they should only assess the topper on the bed. A topper would be less than 10 per cent of the expense of a bed to the insurer. These are the appalling conditions being thrust upon Gary and Kaye. Gary now has a mantra at the bottom of every fax he sends about his and his wife's ordeal. It reads:

You should never underestimate what one's enemies are capable of doing to win in a battle.

Gary and Kaye are people I try to stay in touch with but I fear that one day I will ring them and they will not answer. I know what that will mean: they have done what they have discussed with me, that is, to commit suicide. This is not an isolated story confined to one person or to one insurance company. I could speak about many more—for example, Julie, who was underpaid for several years and had a request for back pay refused. In an obvious error, her doctor had written the wrong date on her form but the insurer capitalised on the error by refusing payment after that date but never informing her of its intention to do so. I can tell the story of a security guard who wrote to me as shadow Minister. He is from the Riverina and saved a woman's life by intervening in a nightclub brawl. In return he was called a liar and denied treatment which, despite the severity of his injuries, meant he could have returned to work within nine months. I can speak about Geoffrey, who has had his impairment repeatedly disputed and information withheld from him. His location—800 kilometres from Sydney—has been exploited as a means of delaying his claim and making it nearly impossible for him to access treatment.

Were it not for the time limit on private members' statements, I could go on telling these tragic stories of injured people and the treatment they receive from insurers. After hearing so many of these tales since the Government introduced the Act, when an injured worker enters my office I am now able to describe to them the experiences they have had before they even open their mouths. It boils down to three words: delay, misplaced and avoid. The time limits imposed now make it a war of attrition where the insurance companies win by delaying, knowing that the time will eventually come when they can move the injured worker off the scheme.

The result is broken people. They have been ground down time and again. Some write to me to continue their fight; others give up. Some contemplate suicide. Unfortunately, people with whom I have sat are no longer with us because they have committed suicide as a result of their workers compensation journey. Take a moment to consider one victim, a migrant who came through a tour in Afghanistan unscathed only to sustain a spinal injury whilst working in a nursing home. He speaks of suicide, not because of his war experience but because of his experience of the workers compensation system. The situation is appalling; it needs to be addressed and fixed.

## NORTHERN TABLELANDS REGIONALISATION OPPORTUNITIES

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) (17:32):** I speak tonight about the opportunities in the electorate of Northern Tablelands for decentralisation, or what I like to call regionalisation. In the Northern Tablelands in country New South Wales we have huge latent potential for our communities to grow. There is no better example of this than Armidale, the largest centre in the Northern Tablelands, a city of around 24,000 people. It has the enviable reputation of being the only mainland centre in Australia that is fully National Broadband Network [NBN] fibre connected. All business premises are fibre connected to the NBN. Armidale also has a beautiful transport service, with two airlines running 16 flights a day between Armidale and Sydney and in August we will start daily return flights to Brisbane. Armidale has a beautiful climate and an almost endless water supply from the Malpas Dam. The dam can service a population in excess of 70,000 people, yet at the moment only 23,000 or 24,000 people reside in the city.

Armidale is situated right on the New England Highway, one of the major highways in this State. It has a proud tradition of tertiary education with the University of New England, which brings with it job opportunities and makes Armidale a huge centre of research, particularly in rural sciences and agriculture. But for the last few decades Armidale has not grasped the nettle and taken advantage of those huge economic opportunities. There is enormous opportunity for the New South Wales Government to relocate sections of government departments or whole government departments to regional centres such as Armidale, a city that is fully fibre connected. Such relocation will help grow that community but will also bring alive the concept of regionalisation. Government does not need to be run only from Sydney. One can often do it just as well, if not better and cheaper, from a regional centre. That brings growth opportunities and investment and helps rural communities to reach their potential.

A few weeks ago I had the opportunity to stand next to the Deputy Prime Minister and Federal member for New England, Barnaby Joyce, when he made an exciting announcement at the University of New England in Armidale about the relocation of the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority. Moving that agency from Canberra to Armidale will bring 175 full-time jobs to the area. They will work closely with world-leading researchers and academics in the rural science and agriculture area to create a centre of agricultural excellence right in the heart of northern New South Wales—where it should be. That is a great example of governments being smart, of relocating departments or sections of departments to country areas in order to create or support industry clusters or to create synergies between research, the delivery of services or the provision of online and digital services, particularly from a regional location.

I respectfully submit that there is no better place than Armidale because of its transport links and the presence of the university, TAFE, and private, public and Catholic schools to house whole government departments or sections thereof. The communications are second to none. In fact, in many cases, the internet speeds and the bandwidth in Armidale are far greater than those that can be achieved in the centre of Sydney. I ask the Government and the many Ministers I meet to think seriously about relocating some of those agencies to country areas. On behalf of my community, I parochially and unashamedly submit that Armidale is a prime location, right in the heart of the Northern Tablelands, with the ability to deliver those services. Armidale has huge potential and a great lifestyle. It is a wonderful place to bring up children and a wonderful place to live. Armidale would be a great place for Sydney public servants to call home. I appeal to the Government to give serious consideration to regionalisation, particularly with Armidale in mind.

## PEACE SYMPOSIUM

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (17:37):** I inform the House about the Peace Symposium hosted by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association on Saturday 4 June this year. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Association is based at the Baital Huda Mosque on Richmond Road in Marsden Park. Since the redistribution, it is no longer in my electorate but many of my constituents are members of the congregation at that mosque and I still retain a link from a longstanding association with the leadership of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association.

The Peace Symposium is an annual event hosted by that organisation. Speakers at this year's symposium included a wide range of community leaders, including the Hon. Philip Ruddock and Michelle Rowland, the Federal member for Greenway. Members from this House who were in attendance included Prue Car, the member for Londonderry; the energetic member for Oatley, Mark Coure; the member for Seven Hills, Mark Taylor; and Mr Mark Pearson from the other place. Also present were Mohit Kumar, the Liberal candidate for Chifley; Jacqueline Donaldson, the Deputy Mayor of Blacktown, and other councillors; representatives of the Mount Druitt Police; and a number of other significant community leaders.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Association issued an open invitation to the event. In attendance were religious leaders of various faiths, community group leaders, educational leaders, local organisations, members of the Ahmadiyya congregation and members of the public. Some 900 people attended the symposium. The host of the

event was the Imam of Baitul Huda Mosque, Imam Inam-ul-Haq Kauser. The master of ceremonies was Mirza Ramzan Sharif, the external affairs officer of the association. The theme of the symposium was "How justice, love and harmony lead to peace in a society". The speakers gave inspirational addresses on that theme. They were encouraged by the consistent example of the Ahmadiyya as a group committed to peace. The Ahmadiyya are committed to finding ways to bring peace not only to this community but also to wherever they can be found in the world.

One of the mottoes of the Australian Ahmadiyya Muslim Association is "Love for all; hatred for none". They reinforce that at every opportunity. A significant motto of theirs is "Love of one's country is part of faith". The Ahmadiyya teach that, wherever they find themselves around the world, they should be good, loyal citizens of the country that has given them a home. They have been active participants in our community in a number of ways. They win prizes year after year for their involvement in Clean Up Australia Day. They have raised funds for bushfire victims in the Blue Mountains and people affected by floods in Brisbane. They also support people overseas who have been affected by calamity. The Ahmadiyya certainly contribute for the good of their local communities and the community more broadly.

Many people may not be familiar with the Ahmadiyya. Islam is not unlike Christianity in having many variants and subgroups. The Ahmadiyya Muslim community describes itself as an international revival movement within Islam. Established in 1889, it is found in more than 200 countries and its membership numbers in the tens of millions. Its current headquarters are in the United Kingdom. The Ahmadiyya Muslim community believes that the long-awaited Messiah has come, in the person of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who was born in 1835 in Pakistan. Ahmad claimed to be the metaphorical second coming of Jesus of Nazareth and the divine guide whose advent was foretold by the prophet of Islam, Muhammad. The community believes that God sent Ahmad, like Jesus, to end religious wars, condemn bloodshed and reinstitute morality, justice and peace.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim community categorically rejects terrorism in any form. More than a century ago, Ahmad emphatically declared that an aggressive "jihad by the sword" had no place in Islam. In its place, he taught his followers to wage a bloodless, intellectual "jihad of the pen" to defend Islam. The Ahmadiyya endorse a separation of mosque and State. Ahmad taught his followers to protect the sanctity of both religion and government by becoming righteous souls as well as loyal citizens. Five spiritual leaders have succeeded Ahmad since his death in 1908. His fifth successor, and the current spiritual head, His Holiness the Khalifa Mirza Masroor Ahmad, resides in the United Kingdom. He has visited Australia twice. On the second occasion, in 2013, it was my privilege to greet him upon his arrival at Sydney airport. I commend the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association for its commitment to peace.

#### **PETERSHAM TAFE WEST STREET CAMPUS**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (17:42):** Petersham TAFE West Street campus is the latest victim of the Baird Government's ideological war on TAFE. Staff and students have been told the campus will close by the end of 2016. Some were told to pack their bags by the end of the week. The campus has a long history as a public education facility and is home to the Media and Radio School, to childcare courses and language studies, and to crucial services, including the library and security. The campus is also home to the important events and programs run by the Sydney Institute's Outreach program. This program targets vulnerable and marginalised people outside the traditional education system, including migrant women, homeless and transient youth and the unemployed—essentially, the people who will benefit most from the vocational education and training best provided by TAFE. While it appears in the short term that courses, students and staff will be relocated to other TAFE campuses, I am concerned about what will happen in the long term and that staff be given firm guarantees that they will keep their jobs.

The loss of West Street campus also represents something much larger. West Street campus is the canary in the coalmine for TAFE services across New South Wales. Under its Smart and Skilled program, this Government has cut \$1.7 billion from education and training. It has sacked 5,200 TAFE teachers and support staff. It has increased student fees dramatically, putting vocational training out of reach for many who want and need it most. Enrolments have fallen by 126,000 students. Twenty-seven TAFE sites had been previously flagged for sale, and Petersham TAFE West Street campus makes it 28. Meanwhile, the Government has held on to \$267 million that should otherwise have gone to TAFE.

The Government will claim that it needs to close the campus because demand for TAFE courses in the inner west has fallen. Yes, we know that under Smart and Skilled enrolments at Sydney TAFE have fallen by 20 per cent. But if the Government raises student fees, cuts courses and strips TAFE of the resources it requires to deliver the highest standard of vocational training, of course demand will fall. At the same time, rather than protecting the interests of students, this Government has turned a blind eye while private colleges fleece young people to line the pockets of dodgy operators.



It does not have to be this way. Labor has a plan to fix it. Labor has a bill before the Parliament to cap funding for private colleges and to guarantee that 70 per cent of all funding for vocational training is reserved for TAFE. This will restore TAFE as the primary provider of vocational training and restore students' faith and confidence in TAFE. It will support the amazing staff who work in TAFE colleges across the State and it will put an end to the fire sale of TAFE assets and campuses that we are seeing under this Government.

The truth is that this Government refuses to make the proper investments in TAFE because it stands opposed to public education and is addicted to the sugar hit that comes from selling off public assets. The last thing the inner-west community wants to see is Petersham TAFE West Street campus sold to developers. It is an important inner-west landmark with a storied and valued history as a public education facility. It was once Petersham Girls' High School. It should be kept, if not as a TAFE campus then as a public education facility. The schools in the inner west are some of the best in the country, but any parent or teacher will confirm that they are bursting at the seams.

On top of the demand that exists already, the Baird Government plans thousands of extra dwellings as part of the new Parramatta Road plan and the mass rezonings along the Sydenham to Bankstown line. These plans have been light on detail about the provision of essential community services that make our cities liveable. We have seen no information about hospitals, childcare centres or precious open space for children to play in. We have not heard a single thing about public education.

I call on the Government to maintain Petersham TAFE West Street campus as a public education facility. The inner west does not need yet more blocks of apartments; it needs more public education facilities. I also call on the Government to reverse the cuts and to reinvest in our TAFE system. TAFE futureproofs our economy. It provides opportunities for young people who want to learn a trade and to obtain the skills they need for employment. TAFE also provides a crucial second chance to the many students who fall through the cracks of our education system or our society more broadly. They rely on TAFE to get back on their feet and to move forward with their lives. The loss of Petersham TAFE West Street campus is a tragedy for the inner west. TAFE is too important to lose. We must fight to ensure that it continues to serve the people of New South Wales.

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (17:48):** I note the private member's statement made by the member for Summer Hill and her passion for and commitment to vocational education and training. I am at a loss to understand where that passion and commitment was when the Gillard Government, to which she was an adviser, introduced Smart and Skilled. The Gillard Government announced Smart and Skilled as a reform delivering an expansion of "high-quality training funded more equitably". That is a quote from the media release at the time. Smart and Skilled has had bipartisan support. It gives students choice and opportunities to obtain important vocational education and training more equitably. That is what this is all about. The Government will continue to support vocational education and training.

### **CAMDEN FIRE STATION CENTENARY**

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) (17:49):** Recently I had the privilege of attending the centenary of the Camden Fire Station on behalf of the Minister for Emergency Services, David Elliott. I will endeavour to give a brief summary of the remarkable 100-year history of this station. In 1878, after a major fire in the building of the general store, still known as Whiteman's and still in its original glory, the Camden community realised that there was a need to establish a fire brigade. In 1897 the Camden Municipal Council moved a motion calling for the erection of a building.

By the turn of the century, a government grant of £50 was made to form a volunteer fire brigade. The council of the day contributed £14 for the purchase of a fire hydrant and hose, and later another £18 was used for the purchase of extra equipment. Locals paid £1 to become honorary members. Financing the brigade was always an issue and in 1902 a donation of £50 by the then member for Camden, the Hon. John Kidd, enabled the project to proceed. Finally, in 1916 the Camden Fire Brigade was established. A building was purchased for £350, which was considered a bargain, and a tender for £329 was accepted to refit the old temperance hall. I am pleased to say that the building still stands today and, thanks to the very supportive Camden Council, it is now occupied by the Camden Library, meeting rooms and the Camden Historical Society.

The station opened with 10 members. Over the years, as the surrounding areas were built up, other suburbs in the Camden district were added to the region of the Camden Fire Brigade. By 1992 the brigade had outgrown the original building. A new building, which was built and opened in 1993, is still occupied by the brigade. At the hundredth anniversary celebration Commissioner Greg Mullins, AFSM, presented a commendation to Eschol Park resident Craig Sawyers for entering a smoke-filled house to rescue an elderly man whose home had caught fire. I am sure there are many other locals who, like Mr Sawyers, have selflessly put their lives on the line to assist others who find themselves in difficulty.

The Camden Fire Brigade was presented with a new \$310,000 Mercedes fire truck, which will increase the capacity of the Camden fire brigade. It is a little different to the horse-drawn cart of the 1900s. Under the outstanding leadership of Captain Daniel Coles, the Camden Fire Brigade—now with its state-of-the-art equipment—and the Camden community are in very good hands. I thank Captain Daniel Coles, Deputy Captain Joel Kursawe and all the members, who do such an outstanding job. I thank them for putting their lives on the line for the Camden community on a daily basis. We appreciate all their efforts. I also thank the Camden Historical Society, in particular Robert Lester and Rene Ram, for its assistance in recording the history of the brigade.

The centenary celebration was held on a very wet Saturday morning. It was a wonderful celebration. The event was attended by the commissioner and a number of young people from the Camden Public School choir, who helped to make the day such a special event. The choir did such a wonderful job, venturing out in the rain in uniform and on a Saturday. I thank each member of the Camden Public School choir for their efforts: Meghan White, Emily-Jane Davison, Libby Marnell, Thalia Sawka, Matilda Schell, Holly McDonald, Chelsea McDonald, Grace Turkington, Eloise Turkington, Arianna King, Kequilah O'Brien, Naomi Lalor, Tilly Dennett, Ava Lewis, Evelyn Miller, Kayla Barrass, Mia Sierra, Violet Hallam, Ella Ashton and Laura Bray. They helped make the day a wonderful success and I thank them all for their efforts.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** I welcome to the gallery this evening students from the University of Sydney. They are participating in a bridging course that will assist them to enrol in law studies. I welcome them to the Parliament.

### CONCORD HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (17:54):** I had high hopes for yesterday's budget. I had high hopes that this Government would finally listen to communities across the inner west and I had high hopes that the Government would finally see sense and realise that our community has been waiting too long for a twenty-first century, state-of-the-art local hospital. I had high hopes the Government would finally take the advice of one of its own members and make the upgrades that are vital to Concord hospital a reality. Unfortunately, I was wrong. Once again the Premier, the Treasurer and the Minister for Health have sent a strong signal to our community—that even a possum invasion cannot shame them into keeping their election promises.

Let us look at the facts when it comes to Concord hospital, one of the oldest and most dilapidated hospitals in the State. Just last year, figures reveal that 33 per cent of patients at the hospital wait longer than four hours in the emergency department. The figures also show that in just 12 months the waiting time for elective surgery has ballooned. The hospital is completing fewer surgeries than it did the same time last year. There is a plethora of required maintenance—a backlog including leaking roofs and asbestos removal. And that does not even touch upon the hospital's latest tenant: a possum, or two or three. Yes, that is right; even the fact that possums are now finding their way into Concord hospital is not enough to make this Government think the local community deserves better.

At the last election this Government told the community that they could trust a re-elected Liberal-Nationals Government to turn around the trend and invest in this local hospital. It promised \$150 million. Of course, the total amount needed is more than \$370 million, which is what we committed at the last election. What happened to that money in the last budget? It went missing; it was nowhere to be found. What happened again yesterday? The Treasurer had the perfect opportunity to finally deliver on the Government's promise. But what did we see instead? We saw \$11 million for future capital works at Campbelltown, Coffs Harbour, Inverell, Hornsby, Mudgee, Nepean and Concord hospitals. Since then, reports have suggested that Concord will receive only \$700,000 for the planning of a future upgrade—not for the bricks and mortar, not for the tradespeople, not for the work and not for the upgrades this hospital so desperately needs. We will not see a building; instead we will just see drawings on a page.

The Government keeps telling us how great it is at managing the books, but everyone knows that \$700,000 is a long way off \$150 million. I understand that the Treasurer and the Minister for Health are probably not too keen to take my advice on this issue. But they do not have to; they have only to turn around from the frontbench and look behind them to find the member for Drummoyne on the backbench. To give credit where credit is due, and I have said this before in this place, the member for Drummoyne has been a strong and consistent advocate for the redevelopment of Concord hospital. For the benefit of the Treasurer and the Minister for Health, I will let them know exactly what he has said in this House, and I quote:

Despite repeated patch work and an expensive maintenance regime, the buildings continue to leak in wet weather. There is poor line of sight for safe and quality clinical care, undersized rooms, no central nurses' station, no family facilities and the inability to adapt any of the spaces to new functions.

He also said:

It's personal for me now and they've got to do it ...

And there we have it: the state of Concord hospital is laid bare in this place, in the community and in the media by a Government member of Parliament. Yet there has still been an abysmal failure to act by this Treasurer and the Minister for Health. Let us not forget that this monumental failure coincides with the Government's plan to increase density and radically increase the number of people living in our local community. I do not know if the Government has realised this, but these tens of thousands of people, primarily coming from the renewal of Parramatta Road, will require adequate government services, including access to schools and hospitals.

The State Government is very keen to see thousands of additional people living in our local community, but its complete failure to include vital upgrades to Concord hospital proves yet again this is development by stealth. The community, represented in this place by the member for Drummoyne and I, has spoken very loudly on this issue. They want an upgrade to Concord hospital and they want it now and they are tired of this Government making excuses. The lack of commitment this Government has to Concord hospital is not just disappointing, it is dangerous and utterly irresponsible.

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (17:59):** Members in the gallery were shocked to hear the Labor member for Strathfield is disappointed with yesterday's budget. Apparently she is the only one because many other people are excited about the budget. The *Daily Telegraph* described it as "back on the right track". The *Australian* described it as "Gladys on a roll as the State sets the pace." Even Fairfax liked it—next the ABC will like it—saying "NSW delivers a budget lesson." The lesson is there are surpluses as far as the eye can see. There is record expenditure in infrastructure of \$73.3 billion. The electorate of the member for Strathfield is getting a new road called WestConnex, a congestion-busting road that will fix her electorate, but she will not take a position on it. The reality is that yesterday's budget is good news for New South Wales and the only people who do not like it are members of the Labor Party: They hate good news.

#### **RYDE ROTARIANS**

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation) (18:00):** I admit that I love the budget and the announcement that a new school will be delivered in my electorate of Ryde, which is a great win for the community. It will be the first school built in my electorate since 2005. I thank the Treasurer; may she continue along this golden path. I recognise today some of the heavy lifters in Ryde—the Rotarians in the electorate who continually get the job done, whether it be fundraising for a local event or helping children from the Pacific with life-saving and life-changing operations. My electorate has a number of Rotary clubs, including Ryde, North Ryde, Eastwood, and Macquarie Park.

I recognise the presidents of the past year: Julie Gouel, David Martin, Narelle Barker and Margaret Lee. Their leadership has seen the clubs continue to help our community with events, like the Eastwood Primary School Leadership Program, Macquarie Park Carols on the Common, North Ryde's commitment to hosting overseas families whose children are receiving medical attention, and Ryde's Circus Quirus fundraising for disabled children. The opportunity to serve the community is one that is taken and appreciated within our community. Everybody does something, helping their neighbour, family and friends, but I want to recognise two individuals from Ryde, Peter Graham and Les Whitcroft, whose lifelong commitment of giving is being recognised.

Today Peter Graham was recognised for his service to our community as a justice of the peace. Peter has carried out his duties as a justice of the peace for the past 50 years. He and other community-minded people were recognised today in Parliament by the Attorney General. The role of justices of the peace has continually evolved from its original law enforcement role. However the usefulness of the role is no less important. Peter informed me that the variety of opportunities in the role has been significant. He was called to act as a local magistrate in the early 1960s. I commend Peter for his longstanding commitment to our community, for making himself available to help others.

Peter was a councillor for many years in Ryde, including when I was on the council, and was also a mayor for some time. He has been an absolute stalwart of the community and has shown real leadership over many years of service. I acknowledge and thank Pete on behalf of the community. The Rotary Club of Ryde is set to honour one of its members, Les Whitcroft, this Saturday. Les has been an active Rotarian, business manager, mentor and philanthropist within the Ryde and Western Sydney area during his lifetime. Les moved to Sydney in 1961 to manage a small can-making business in premises made available by a client company. After 18, the fledgling company moved to new premises in Meadowbank where it continued to expand and successfully compete in the international arena.

At the Meadowbank National Can Company, Les was able to involve teenagers from Crowle House, a nearby sheltered workshop for handicapped children, in assembling and packaging small Dalsonware parts. Les Whitcroft has served as a member on the board of the Meadowbank campus of the Northern Sydney Institute of TAFE. He has also been instrumental in a number of projects to assist underprivileged youth in Western Sydney to break their cycle of disadvantage and move forward to lead productive lives. Les has also supported a range of

philanthropic endeavours that have seen many people and organisations benefit from his generosity. Because of his strong involvement in the local area, Ryde Rotary is pleased to be able to name a waterfront reserve, currently under construction, in honour of Les, to be named the Les Whitcroft Reserve

I conclude by acknowledging the heavy lifters in Ryde. They are the saints and angels in our community who are not ordinarily acknowledged. They do their work, they are not in the paper and they do not seek recognition. As members of Parliament, the least we can do is to honour those heroes on a day-to-day basis as far as is humanly possible by putting their names in *Hansard*. What is great about *Hansard* is that it is a record that lasts forever. Long after we leave this place these names will remain recorded in perpetuity, and appropriately so. To all those great Rotarians and other great heavy lifters of Ryde who do not seek recognition, I recognise them today.

### ROCK FISHERS LIFE JACKETS

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (18:05):** I bring to the attention of the House the tragedy of rock fishing deaths in New South Wales and call on the Government to act as a matter of priority. As most in this place would be aware, New South Wales is in the grip of a crisis in the sport of rock fishing. The Swansea electorate in particular is home to one of the most deadly places for rock fishers in Australia. It is an understatement to say the statistics surrounding the inherent danger of rock fishing in New South Wales are alarming. During the past five years, at least 68 people have died in Australia while rock fishing. In 2014 in New South Wales, it accounted for the most coastal drownings. In all but one case, the victims were not wearing life jackets.

This year we saw the fifteenth person in as many years drown in the Swansea electorate while rock fishing along a notorious three-kilometre stretch of beautiful but treacherous coastline near Snapper Point. That is 15 deaths that may have been preventable, and it is an absolute tragedy. My deepest sympathies go to the victims, their families and friends. But as a volunteer surf lifesaver, I am also very concerned about the impact these deaths have on the workers and volunteers on the front line, the people we entrust to ensure our harsh coastline is as safe as possible—the surf savers, the emergency services personnel and the NSW Police Force.

I recently met with the chief executive officer of Surf Life Saving Central Coast, the organisation in charge of protecting people along this part of our coastline. I take my cap off to them for handling these situations with professionalism, empathy and compassion. However, these workers are indeed people, and it takes a terrible toll on them when their job goes from rescue to recovery. It is the most horrific work imaginable, salvaging the body of a rock fisher who has tragically been killed participating in the sport he or she loves.

Following the death of a rock fisherman at Catherine Hill Bay on 8 January 2016, I wrote to the Minister for Emergency Services to advise him of my concerns about the high number of rock fishing deaths in the Swansea electorate. Unfortunately, I had to write to the Minister again in March following yet another tragic rock fisher death along the coast of my Swansea electorate. The Minister provided me with a response in April, following an acknowledgement of my concerns in March. In this correspondence both the Minister and his Parliamentary Secretary assured me that the Government will legislate this year to introduce the compulsory wearing of life jackets for rock fishers at high-risk locations. I welcome this assurance.

I also welcome the news that the Government is developing new education and public awareness material to complement the new legislation. While I understand that the Minister has convened a high-level working group to identify these high-risk locations, I believe it is necessary to impress upon the Minister, the Parliamentary Secretary and the Government how important it is to act quickly. Unfortunately, since receiving the Minister's response and the establishing of the working group, further rock fishing deaths have occurred in New South Wales.

We needed this legislation a decade ago. We need it not tomorrow nor in a week's time, we need it now so we can prevent more rock fishers from losing their lives along our rugged coast. We have had coronial inquiries, parliamentary inquiries and countless testimonies from those who have lost loved ones and from organisations charged with recovering the bodies from the ocean. They all say we must act now and make life jackets compulsory for rock fishers so that lives may be spared. The statistics surrounding the sport show why it is so important to move this legislation through Parliament as soon as possible. It has been estimated that one million residents in New South Wales apply for a fishing licence each year and around 15 per cent of those engage in rock fishing.

That means somewhere around 150,000 people engage in rock fishing in New South Wales every year. As I said earlier, during the past five years at least 68 people have died while rock fishing. The morbid reality is that each death costs the economy \$4.2 million. That is \$285 million in the past five years spent on what could have been preventable deaths. Ultimately though, the loss of a life is immeasurable. We cannot measure the grief of family and friends who have lost a loved one. We cannot measure the trauma inflicted on those tasked with the

recovery. The price we are paying is too high. I say to the Government again, let us speed up this legislation and get it through Parliament so that we can prevent more rock fishing deaths in New South Wales.

### **ADOBE DIGITAL SCHOOL WORKSHOP**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (18:10):** Student learning in New South Wales schools is becoming increasingly reliant on utilising new technologies in creative ways. Yesterday I visited an Adobe digital school workshop session in the Sydney CBD with a group of year 9 students from Davidson High School in my electorate. The students were participating in an Adobe Day workshop, in association with the Bully Project. Adobe President for the Asia Pacific, Paul Robson, attended primary schools in my electorate some years ago. He welcomed me to this session, along with Adobe Regional Head of Government Relations Julie Inman-Grant and Adobe Regional Head of Education Wayne Weisse. The Davidson High School students were accompanied by Ms Jessica Peade, who teaches the school's multimedia course.

The workshop was conducted by Adobe Education Specialist Dr Tim Kitchen and Katie Barry, who works for the Bully Project. The students learned how to become upstanders rather than bystanders in the face of bullying. They also learned how to use cutting edge multimedia tools such as Adobe Spark to create videos, posters and web pages which can be added to the international online Bully Project Mural. The mural demonstrates genuine digital solidarity across the world and lets victims of bullying know they are not alone.

Through a statewide agreement overseen by Minister for Education Adrian Piccoli, New South Wales school students can access the latest Adobe Creative Cloud applications. This opportunity enhances their creative potential and helps them to learn twenty-first century communication skills. The agreement with Adobe allows students at New South Wales Department of Education schools to download and install Adobe Creative Suite 6, or CS6, for free on one personally owned device. Adobe CS6 is a set of software applications that empower students to work with digital media such as photos, movies and websites. These are professional tools used widely in industry.

The students from Davidson High School told me they enjoy using mobile apps such as Adobe Spark. They are apparently easy to work with and help students to learn in creative ways. However, while technology engages students, what and how they learn using that technology is still dependent on the guidance and skills of their teachers. Davidson High School is a comprehensive, coeducational high school in spacious grounds surrounded by natural bushland on the northern peninsula of Sydney. It is an academic, creative, innovative and sustainable school. Under the leadership of Principal Jann Pattinson, Davidson High School's educational programs strongly encourage creativity and thinking skills.

The New South Wales Government likewise encourages development of those skills. Its relationship with Adobe, through the Department of Education, highlights that support. The Adobe sessions are part of a broader contribution the company makes to the educational community. Adobe also conducts regular workshops for educators and students on how to use its creative digital tools. Through the Adobe Education Exchange—a free education portal involving about 300,000 teachers worldwide—it provides more than 10,000 teaching resources and a wide range of professional learning opportunities.

Education needs to adapt to a rapidly changing world environment. The New South Wales Government is constantly developing new and innovative ideas about how schools work, how teachers teach and how students learn best. Today's students need research, problem-solving and critical-thinking skills to succeed. They need to work both independently and together in groups in classrooms and other settings that provide flexibility to successfully integrate new technologies. The Department of Education understands these ongoing challenges and is constantly responding.

I enjoyed learning about how innovative technology tools, creativity and learning opportunities help students like those at Davidson High School to create positive social impacts. It was also rewarding to observe the students in action, combining their empathy and understanding of important social issues with their technological skills in order to make a difference at their school and in the broader community. I thank Adobe for inviting me to the workshop and Davidson High School students for allowing me to be part of an exciting learning experience in this new digital age. It is an age that we will need to increasingly embrace and understand in the future.

### **KIAMA STUDENT LEADERS FORUM**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (18:15):** I am pleased to inform the House that on Thursday 12 May 2016 I held the sixth annual Kiama Student Leaders Forum at the Parliament of New South Wales. Students from five schools across the region participated in the forum. They were Nowra Anglican College, Kiama High School, Bomaderry High School, Nowra Christian School and Albion Park High School. I acknowledge each of the 20 student leaders who participated and represented their schools with such great pride and distinction.

Starting with my old school, Bomaderry High School, I acknowledge Gabrielle Sheils, Jessica Conley, Claire Honeywood and Jade Flint. I also thank Jack Hinde, the student representative council [SRC] coordinator, for attending. Jack is a veteran of the forum who has participated many times. I always appreciate his being there. From Nowra Anglican College I acknowledge Eva McLellan, Callum Mackay, Emily Grundy-Hyam and Thomas King. I also thank Student Leader Coordinator Wayne Pearce from the college.

From Kiama High School I acknowledge Grace Allen, Emma Douglas, Bryce Humphries, Hannah Lawrance and Sharnie Heffernan. I also thank Sarah Meppem, the SRC coordinator. Sarah is also a veteran of the forum. From Nowra Christian School I acknowledge Samantha Davie, Chloe Dickinson, Sarah Donovan, Sam Ellery and Bailey Skewes. I also thank their teacher Michele Dallimore. Finally, from Albion Park High School I acknowledge Nicholas Davies and Georgia Moore and thank their teacher Renay Grant.

I thank Premier Mike Baird, who took time out of his hectic schedule to talk to the students on the day that council amalgamation announcements were being made. I am sure members are aware that as a local member I was under a considerable degree of pressure in relation to those matters. It was wonderful to talk to the students about what was happening on such an important day for our area. They were all aware of the situation. I know they appreciated being able to see the role I played in the process as the local member. I also thank the Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Medical Research, Assistant Minister for Health, Minister for Women, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, Pru Goward. I thank our Speaker, Shelley Hancock, who, as a former high school teacher, was a keen participant.

I also thank the President of the Legislative Council, the Hon. Don Harwin, for addressing the students about their respective roles and responsibilities. The student leaders received a tour of Parliament and had the opportunity to enjoy question time in the bearpit to see democracy in action and just one of the many ways in which the Government is held to account. My favourite part of the forum is hearing from the student leaders about the issues that matter to them. At the forum issues were raised such as youth mental health, tertiary education and skills, obesity, local public transport, hospitals, disability support and reducing homelessness. In my inaugural speech in this place I said, "The challenge of the leaders is to create more leaders, not more followers."

It may not be the easiest objective to achieve but it is one that all members of this place must strive for. That is why I have held this forum every year since being elected in 2011, and I will continue to do so into the future. The young people of our communities need to know that their representatives care about their views and opinions. Whilst these young leaders may not be able to vote, they are the custodians of our future communities. Indeed, if this group of young people is what we have to look forward to, then our future is in very capable and safe hands.

The youth of our communities far too often are under-recognised for their great work and achievements. It is important that they have a chance to have their say. I profoundly understand the importance of listening to our young people, giving them a voice in government and developing the next generation of leaders. This is something in which all responsible members of Parliament must be engaged. Members of Parliament are here to represent our communities. I was also pleased to hear the topics raised in the student leaders' debate, which related to what they would do if they were Premier for a day. I thank Mr Sam Tedeschi and Mr Zachary Fitzpatrick from my office, as well as Mr Ben Blackburn, my longest-serving staff member, for liaising with each of the schools and organising yet another successful event.

I take this opportunity to commend all the student leaders who participated; they certainly are the leaders of tomorrow. I was thoroughly impressed by the depth of ideas and talent displayed by each of the student leaders, who proudly represented their schools. I commend the idea of a student leaders forum to all members of this place. It is important that we listen to young people and give them a voice. This platform is one that they can share with us, and I look forward to hosting the seventh annual Kiama Student Leaders Forum next year. Whilst talking of young leaders, I recently presented Morgan Blakeney with the 2016 Kiama Electorate Aboriginal Student of the Year Award. Morgan is a year 9 Indigenous student at Bomaderry High School and he is doing wonderful things at his school with his local Aboriginal community. I was pleased to present this award to him and discuss his hopes and aspirations.

#### **RAMADAN 2016**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (18:21):** Today I want to acknowledge the holy month of Ramadan and thank the many people from the Muslim community who have invited me to break their fast with them at iftar dinners in the past fortnight and the coming weeks. Ramadan is the month of sacrifice and personal reflection for the Muslim community, where they participate in a challenging fast as well as consider the suffering of others and contribute to charities to help those less fortunate. A major theme this year has been the enormous suffering of the Syrian people and Syrian refugees, but also the ongoing displacement of Palestinian people and the persecution

of the Rohingya people in Burma. Ramadan is also a time of coming together to break the fast at the end of the day.

In recent years, as our Muslim communities have grown, iftar dinners have become larger and more frequent. Also, there has been a great emphasis on interfaith dialogue and the promotion of mutual respect and understanding. Iftar dinners are held by large corporations, political leaders, community associations, schools, mosques and churches and in people's homes. The Granville electorate is characterised by both cultural and religious diversity. It has a large Muslim community, which includes people born in Australia as well as those who have migrated from the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Europe. Their country of origin is as diverse as Lebanon and Sierra Leone, Iran and Egypt, Turkey and Afghanistan, and Bosnia and Bangladesh.

The Leader of the Opposition, Luke Foley, and I hosted a community iftar dinner last Friday in Guildford. Around 160 people from different ethnic communities in the Auburn and Granville electorates, including Christian and Muslim religious leaders such as His Eminence the Grand Mufti of Australia, Dr Ibrahim Abu Mohamed, joined local school, business and community leaders, representatives of community associations and good friends to break the fast, renew acquaintances and make new friends. We did not harangue or lecture our guests about terrorism. There is a time and place to discuss effective strategies to deter radicalisation and prevent terrorism and that time and place is not when we have hosted a dinner to break the fast with community members. To do so, as other political leaders have done at their iftar dinners, would be just plain rude. You do not invite people to dinner to insult them.

Every time a terrorist attack is committed in the name of Islam, there is an expectation that the entire Muslim community should apologise for it. Until now, many in the Muslim community have proudly stood with the wider Australian community to condemn terrorist attacks and point out that such attacks are un-Islamic, that those who preach hate and terrorist attacks have misinterpreted their religion. After the terrorist attack in Parramatta last year and the subsequent arrests in my electorate, the local Muslim community was horrified and reached out to the police to thank them for supporting the community and making them safe. But that sentiment is changing. Many in the community whom I have spoken to are getting sick of being blamed for actions that have nothing to do with them and that they do not support. The wider Australian community cannot afford to lose the support of mainstream Muslims in the fight against terrorism. We need to acknowledge that they are not our enemy; they are our partners in promoting peace.

The Islamic State has succeeded in recruiting unstable people to commit terrorist acts, often on their own and at their own expense. The incitement of a mentally unstable gunman is not something that ordinary law-abiding Muslim members of my community should have to apologise for. While it is going too far to attribute the terrorist attacks at Martin Place and Parramatta and more recently at Orlando to the mental instability of the gunmen and ignore their professions of faith, it is notable that the United Kingdom's Far Right racists have not been called upon to collectively apologise for the murder of Jo Cox.

Similarly, resentment is created by singling out sheiks who make homophobic comments, when we do not have to look very hard to find homophobic sentiment in other major religions. It is fair criticism but it is unfair to limit it only to Islam. It is entirely possible to oppose both homophobia and Islamaphobia or to engage in both Islamaphobia and homophobia as some in the media do, or to alternate demonisation of the Safe Schools program one day with demonisation of Islam the next.

We need to work collaboratively and effectively with the Muslim community to deter radicalisation and terrorism. This means not constantly demeaning people or demanding their apologies for actions beyond their control. It also means working with religious leaders both moderate and conservative. It is about more than acceptance; it is about actively engaging with, learning about and valuing other cultures. It means working constructively with people who can influence young people in the community in a positive and peaceful way, who value what Australia has to offer and who can counteract the influence of ISIS and other groups preaching via the internet. It is also about working on the causal factors that lead to radicalisation, alienation and disengagement from the wider society.

The problems of long-term unemployment, poverty, disrupted schooling and poor access to training and careers, mental health problems, and negative interactions with the police are obviously not unique to the Muslim community and need to be addressed more broadly. Engagement should continue throughout the year and include tackling more difficult issues. Iftar dinners are for sharing and promoting mutual respect and understanding, in addition to reflecting on the suffering of others. Joining the Muslim community to break their fast at iftar dinners is an important part of this engagement, but it is also a great honour and one I have always appreciated.

## UNGARIE FLOODS

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Cootamundra) (18:26):** Substantial rain has fallen in my electorate over the past few weeks, flooding Ungarie and the surrounding district. The Humbug Creek has an extensive and complex flood plain and tributaries which have inundated the streets of Ungarie, resulting in the evacuation of 23 residents and the closure of many roads. Planning in preparation for the breaching of Humbug Creek started last Sunday. Local State Emergency Service, Rural Fire Service, NSW Police and Bland Shire Council staff undertook property protection, including sandbagging and furniture lifting in the lead-up to the flooding. The water rose quickly and peaked at 1.6 metres yesterday afternoon.

An evacuation centre has been established at the West Wyalong Home and Community Care Centre for those residents without friends and family nearby to take them in. Many evacuees are residing with family and friends. Yesterday a flood evacuation warning was issued for a further 12 streets to prepare for evacuation as a precaution. The town's sewerage system has failed, affecting 25 per cent of properties. Ungarie Central School closed on Monday and remains closed. I have been regularly briefed by Lachlan Region Acting Incident Controller Nichole Richardson and General Manager Ray Smith of Bland Shire Council. I thank them both.

The floodwater has now started to recede, but with rain forecast for tomorrow and the weekend all are on standby. Significant infrastructure damage to roads, causeways, culverts, kerbs, guttering and sewerage is expected. Council has incurred costs associated with flood evacuation facilities, such as temporary accommodation for residents, portaloos and sandbagging. Expenses will escalate. Private infrastructure has been damaged, with floodwaters running through homes and business. Graziers, who have been forced to move and handfeed stock, are unable to access pastures and crops and will need to replace and repair fencing. Significant economic loss will no doubt follow. Assistance from all levels of government will be needed to help families and businesses get back on their feet. Sadly, significant stock losses are expected.

This is Ungarie's third flood in six years. In March 2012 the Humbug Creek broke its banks and flooded Ungarie. Bland Shire Council has since received funding for a flood study, with the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage allocating \$78,000 for stage one to investigate the establishment of an early flood warning system and installation of automated depth gauges. This study is well underway. In the past, residents have relied on people upstream on the Humbug Creek alerting those downstream of imminent flooding. The current warning system—"The water has now risen to reach the third brick on Nola's house"—is simply outdated in the year 2016. Ungarie requires automated depth gauges installed for Humbug Creek as soon as possible along with an appropriate early flood warning system. Council has applied for a further allocation of \$85,714 to complete stage two of the Ungarie flood study.

I thank the following people for their time and effort in ensuring the safety of Ungarie residents: State Emergency Service [SES] members Trish Malone, Ken Peterson, Delwyn Wright, Terry Lemon, Laurie Reid, Jodie King, Aaron Fyfe, Taylor Rixon, Chris Duncan, Shaun Farmer, Shane Apps, Joshua Nicholls, Damien Buchanan, and Ray Johnston; NSW Police, including Morgan McKenzie, Matt Warn, Kath Carey, Anthony Dunstan, Nick Seddon, Kim Trainer, John Wordworth and Mick Ronan; and Bland Shire staff, general manager Ray Smith, Adele Casey, Glenn Neyland, Karen Raymond, Michael Hampton, Rod Sams, Stewart McKander, Brendon Whitty, Michael Thomas, Tony Carr, Brad Frost, Owen Pettit, Leon Sharp, Peter Turner, Jack Downey, Alan Curren, Perry Maybury, Wayne Reid, and Steve Reid

I also thank Ungarie Rural Fire Service [RFS] members Group Captain Lindsay Henley, Jason Lewis, Reece Archibald, Tom Barron, Mick Hale, Nathan Chantrill, Andrew McCrae, Mark Bryant, Brent Clarke, Frank Brewer, Rodney Brewer, Margaret Izzard, Dave Clarke, and Colin McKay; RFS Catering members Nichole Lewis, Kim Cassidy Lea Hale, Norma Thomas Nicky Lemon, Ellen Williams, Maresha Hale, Jenny Thomas, Shelia Henley, Sarah Hale, Rachael McKenzie, Kaye Wales and Pam Brewer; volunteers Wayne Taylor, Simon Hales, Matt Daniher, Graham Cattle, Terry McCartney, Rhys McKay, Harrison Thomas, Michelene Izzard, Blake Brewer, Anthony Archibald, and Morgan McKenzie; in SES Lachlan headquarters, Nichole Richardson, Kevin Anderson, Tanya Jones, David Marks, Kathryn Read, and Cliff Green; and staff at NSW Health and Local Land Services.

I thank all those people so much for their community service through this tough time. I also thank very much the Local Land Services staff, who in the coming weeks and days will have the very cumbersome job of assessing the stock losses that will no doubt be realised as a result of the flood. It is always very rough on farmers and, of course, on the stock. Once flood waters have receded and the damage can be accurately assessed, Bland Shire Council will apply for category C natural disaster assistance. I encourage the Minister to act swiftly to approve the application and to deliver much-needed assistance to individuals, farmers and businesses. I strongly support the approval of funding for stage two of the Ungarie Flood Study so that residents of this wonderful village can have adequate flood warning in order to protect their assets and move to safety in a timely way. I am sure that you, Temporary Speaker (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith), the Speaker and the Parliamentary Secretary, indeed all



members in this Chamber, wish the residents of Ungarie well during this very difficult time and as they face their challenges. We wish their village a speedy recovery.

### MIDDLE DURAL PUBLIC SCHOOL 125TH ANNIVERSARY

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (18:31):** It is with great pleasure today that I speak about the start of celebrations for Middle Dural Public School's landmark 125th anniversary this year. For many, it would seem like only yesterday that the school celebrated its historic centenary. I am told the school experienced a touching tribute to mark the occasion when the oldest surviving student, Marjorie Best, was asked to cut the anniversary cake together with the school's then youngest student. What a great way to celebrate this important milestone in the school's history.

Students and teachers at Middle Dural Public School are continuing their commemorations today by selling anniversary school jerseys for students and teachers, both past and present. The staff also recently organised a Colonial Day celebration in conjunction with the school's 125th year, which provided them the opportunity to dress up in traditional costumes from the nineteenth century and to learn more about their school's rich history. Dural resident and parents and citizens committee member Ian McArthur said fellow students from nearby Hillside Public School in Glenorie were also invited to the educational event, which taught the students about the convict era and the growth of New South Wales and included a singing and dancing performance by The Journeymen.

I thank the incredible principal, Ann Mills. She is a local icon and much-loved figure in our community. I also thank her hardworking staff behind the scenes, including Joanne Urio, Lyndon Moss, Susan McLennan and Mr Tyszyk, for organising this early anniversary commemoration event. Middle Dural Public School is indeed an important link to our past. It has managed to stand the test of time and has an exciting history rife with drama and controversy. Its origins precede its foundations, beginning with Mr Arthur Best, a descendant of a convict who had been pardoned by King George III and transported to Australia instead of being sentenced to death. Arthur's ancestor, Mr George Best, had arrived in New South Wales on the convict vessel *William and Ann* in 1791.

George Best was the model prisoner, and for his services to the Crown as an overseer he was rewarded with a land grant of 185 acres. The land was enjoyed by him and his wife, Martha, their eight children and, later, every student of Middle Dural Public School. In 1890, the villagers of Middle Dural, most of whom were orchardists, submitted an Annex to Application for Establishment of a Public School. Though there were schools in the area, they were deemed unsatisfactory by the parents, and so Middle Dural was established as a provisional school with a quota of 30 students. The Department of Education deemed that there would be approximately 15 enrolments at the school, although it would be a provisional school and therefore had a maximum enrolment of 12.

As a provisional school, it could not be funded by the government and relied upon the community for its establishment and building costs. It was then that Arthur Best offered that the school be built on his family's estate. In 1891, Mr Best notified the department that the schoolroom, founded on the south-west corner of Foster's Farm with a frontage on the Great Northern Road, was prepared. The school's opening day in mid-March 1891 saw 19 students arrive for class in a building which at the time was described as Middle Dural's "finest piece of architecture".

Middle Dural's first teacher was Lucinda White. Her journey to school each day was not an easy one, requiring a train ride from Parramatta and then a horse-drawn cart to Middle Dural. Ms White proved to be a very popular teacher, and in June 1891 she had 21 pupils enrolled at the school, which was well above the prediction of the Department of Education. Ms White's capability quickly upgraded Middle Dural to a public school in 1892, a mere year after its founding. Ms White's tenure did not last long, however, as a scandal broke out when Mr Best complained that the school was "dirty and filthy" and that Ms White was much too harsh. The reality, however, appeared to be that Mr Best's eldest brother had developed a liking for Ms White and their intimacy had become of considerable concern to his siblings and their families. As such, Ms White was reassigned and was succeeded by Rose Dowel.

Middle Dural's value became apparent only in the early 1900s when Minister Broughton O'Connor made the decision to close the school, deeming it to have "never been needed". This, however, could not have been further from the truth, as a petition was launched with 37 names as well as the names of 50 children. However, the resistance was high from teachers in neighbouring Glenorie and Dural, who would have been subjected to salary cuts if children left Middle Dural. Even the local member of Parliament of the day advocated on behalf of the school, raising concerns about the students' lack of access to neighbouring schools, which were not only too far but also dangerous to young children, who would be subjected to the elements. His calls were heard, as the Director of Education made a personal visit to Middle Dural and overturned the decision.

The fact that the school remains today is testament to the hard-fought battles of the local community over many generations. Following the Minister's visit, the school was reopened and Mr Herbert Hart was installed as the principal. He oversaw a dramatic period of growth at the school, with many new enrolments, thus ensuring the school's long-term future. Middle Dural Public School has endured highs and lows throughout its colourful and fascinating history. It has always remained at the heart of the community in Middle Dural—at the heart of not only students past and present but also community groups and local residents of surrounding areas. Middle Dural Public School is also a fundamental part of the larger Hornsby community. It has forged an identity characterised by triumph and hardship.

Whilst much has changed since that time, one thing that has not changed is the school's commitment to quality education for every student. For more than a century now, passionate and highly dedicated professionals have supported, nurtured and inspired the learning and education of our local students. The strong academic program at Middle Dural has seen students excel in the classroom whilst the diverse co-curricular offering and pastoral care has enabled countless numbers of local children to explore their full potential. I congratulate Middle Dural Public School on its 125 years of service to the Hornsby community, and I acknowledge all the hard work everyone involved with the school has done over the past 125 years. I also recognise the many achievements of former principal Gary Barnes, and Jeanie Keenan, who served as the school's office assistant for more than 25 years.

The school has been blessed by some talented and dedicated parents and citizens association presidents over the years, including Chris Buckingham, Gemma Silvia and Stephen Loughnan, who have all given countless hours of service over a number of years at the school. The future of Middle Dural Public School is in safe hands with the current school captains, Cameron McArthur, Rachael Liu, Hudson Prestwidge, who all impressed me with their knowledge of State politics on a recent visit to the New South Wales Parliament. The trio have certainly stepped up into the shoes of previous school captains Maddy Reimers and Caleb Glass, Vanessa Elkhazen and Julian Nati to represent their school with pride and distinction during a leadership workshop alongside school leaders from 21 other local Hornsby schools. I congratulate Middle Dural Public School on 125 years of quality education in our community and I look forward to celebrating many more anniversaries into the future.

#### **BISHOP OF PARRAMATTA**

**Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) (18:38):** Today I welcome and congratulate the new Bishop of Parramatta, Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen, OFM Conventuals. Bishop Vincent was installed as Bishop of the Western Sydney region for the Parramatta Diocese on Thursday 16 June in a moving and inspiring installation mass at St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta. Bishop Vincent is the fourth Bishop of Parramatta, having filled the vacancy created by the previous bishop, Anthony Fisher, OP, upon his installation as Archbishop of Sydney. I offer my best wishes and those of this House for the continued recovery of Archbishop Fisher. Late last year he suffered from Guillain-Barre syndrome which left him paralysed but I understand that he is doing much better now. I also acknowledge the superb contribution of Father Peter Williams who acted in the role of Administrator for the Parramatta Diocese for the last 20 months while the diocese did not have a bishop.

Bishop Vincent's installation was attended by thousands of the faithful and visitors, including Bishop Vincent's close family and friends. The installation mass was such a significant and well-attended event that a big screen had to be installed in Prince Alfred Park to broadcast the mass live to the many parishioners who were not able to fit into the cathedral. The mass was also live streamed on the internet, which was an innovative and inspired idea that allowed many who were unable to attend the celebration in person to follow the proceedings. The Hon. Greg Smith, who was a member of this House, was one of those who were able to watch the mass live streamed to the internet. Bishop Vincent has been praised as a bridge builder, reaching out to some of the most vulnerable members of the community and those whom the church has not traditionally embraced. I quote Bishop Vincent:

There can be no future for the living church without there being space for those who have been hurt, damaged or alienated, be they abuse victims, survivors, divorcees, gays, lesbians or disaffected members.

Western Sydney will be well supported with a bishop who is willing to embrace and welcome all people. Parramatta is one of the most diverse and vibrant regions in New South Wales. The story of Bishop Vincent is a typical Australian story—a man from humble beginnings who now leads a congregation and who serves his community with grace and distinction. The new Bishop of Parramatta was born in 1961 in Gia-Kiem, Vietnam. He and his family came to Australia as refugees in 1980. Since then, he has played an active role in the church and in the community. Bishop Vincent was ordained as a priest on 30 December 1989 and then went to Rome for further studies, where he was awarded a licentiate in Christology and Spirituality from the Pontifical Faculty of St Bonaventure. He then returned to Australia and was elected Superior of the Order of Friars Minor Conventuals in Australia in 2005 before being installed as Bishop of Parramatta. During his homily, Bishop Vincent noted that he was very humbled by his appointment saying:

I am very honoured and humbled by this appointment and grateful for the opportunity to serve the Church in Parramatta during this time.

This statement reflects the humility of Bishop Vincent and highlights the dedication and commitment he will bring to the role. I also recognise the excellent work of Greg Whitby, Executive Director of Schools in the Parramatta Diocese. Greg has been an extremely hardworking and effective director who has helped to champion and create better and more innovative schools in the region. On behalf of the Parramatta community and the members of this House, I welcome Bishop Vincent to his new role and look forward to working with him to build a stronger and more welcoming and diverse community. The final words must go to Bishop Vincent. He reminded us that the Australian Vietnamese community had already taken over many of our traditional industries but he warned us that the Australian Vietnamese community is moving into the church and would soon be moving into politics. We welcome him and other Australian Vietnamese church leaders. We also welcome Australian Vietnamese as they move into the area of politics.

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (18:48):** I join the member for Parramatta in welcoming Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen and congratulating him on his appointment to the Diocese of Parramatta. I join with the member for Parramatta and the member for Granville, who is in the Chamber today, in celebrating this appointment. Bishop Vincent's story is a great story, not only for all Catholics but for all Australians. Bishop Vincent fled Vietnam in 1979. He got on a boat with 147 other refugees to make the perilous journey across the seas. His appointment today is exciting because he reflects the face of modern Parramatta, of modern Western Sydney—that a migrant who has come from a different part of the world and has chosen this to be his home has made a difference. That is what Bishop Vincent is doing and I join the members for Parramatta and Granville in congratulating him. I look forward to celebrating and working with him in his ministry as he continues to send the message of Jesus Christ to our community.

### **PUBLIC SCHOOLS MAINTENANCE BACKLOG**

**Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) (18:45):** I speak tonight on the maintenance backlog of public schools across New South Wales and in particular in my electorate of Cabramatta. Our schools have continued to lose out under a Liberal government. Under the O'Farrell Government, \$1.4 billion was slashed from the State's Education budget. Under the Abbott-Turnbull Government, funding for the last two years of Gonski was taken away. Mums and dads were promised by the Liberals that, whether they voted Liberal or Labor, schools would receive the same amount of funding that was promised by Labor. That was a blatant lie. Now, under the Baird Government, schools are on a long waiting list to be fixed. Documents released by the education department reveal that there is a massive \$732 million statewide maintenance backlog. It is unacceptable that students and teachers work in classrooms that are run down and dilapidated. It was revealed that Western Sydney schools will be waiting decades before their growing maintenance backlogs are cleared. The backlogs will not be cleared unless the Baird Government provides a much-needed cash injection.

In my electorate of Cabramatta, the total sum of backlogs for the 2015-16 period was \$7,247,504. That is totally unacceptable. The top five schools in my electorate with major maintenance backlogs are Cabramatta Public School, \$956,343; St Johns Park High School, \$952,402; Bonnyrigg Heights Public School, \$907,871; and Governor Philip King Public School, \$661,560. On school visits that I have undertaken in the past two or three weeks, I have spoken to many teachers, principals and parents who were concerned about the funding to schools. Prior to the last election, on many occasions I stood outside the gates of many schools and on each occasion parents raised with me their concerns about the state of the school.

At a recent meeting with principals and staff to discuss the backlog, one principal told me of the long list of maintenance required for his school. He informed me that parts of his school grounds and pathways flood when it rains because of drainage issues. Due to the small maintenance budget, the school cannot afford to make the repairs, so students and teachers are forced to walk on submerged pathways. To perform well, students must have the right environment—and that is not being provided to students by this Government. The Baird Government announced yesterday that \$330 million would be provided for maintenance backlogs. That is only half of the money needed to carry out the \$732 million maintenance backlog. The Auditor-General found that last year alone the backlog grew by \$195 million.

The Liberal-Nationals Government has failed to restore the funding that was cut in its first budget in 2011, when \$270 million was slashed from school capital works funding. It is appalling that the Liberal Government continues to wield the knife and slash the Education budget. Only a Labor government will properly invest in our schools. The Turnbull Liberal Government has turned its back on schools by breaking its promise to fund the final two years of Gonski, leaving schools underfunded. The Liberals promised that they were on a unity ticket with Labor when it came to school funding. I urge the Government to provide the cash injection that our schools urgently need so that students have well-maintained facilities, which provide the best learning environments for our children.

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (18:48):** The member for Cabramatta clearly has not read yesterday's budget. He has missed out on all the good news for education. The New South Wales Government is investing an addition \$1 billion in new and upgraded schools across the State, bringing the total spend on capital works in education to \$2.6 billion. That never would have happened under Labor. Labor is all talk and no action. That investment is on top of the \$13.7 billion of recurrent spending, which is up by \$950 million on the previous year. The Government has doubled the investment to address the maintenance backlog, from \$160 million to \$330 million. It is all good news. Labor hates good news. Good news is bad news for Labor. I bet the member for Cabramatta has not written to the Minister for Education. He is playing politics with education.

*Bills*

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ELECTIONS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (INTEGRITY) BILL  
2016**

**Returned**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith):** I report the receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning the abovementioned bill without amendment.

Private members' statements having concluded, the House will consider the matter of public importance.

*Matter of Public Importance*

**REFUGEE WEEK**

**Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) (18:50):** As we mark Refugee Week and take a moment to reflect on the hardship faced by millions of people across the world as they flee terror and persecution, New South Wales can be proud of its efforts to address the challenges faced by humanitarian entrants fortunate enough to make our State their new home. Refugee Week is an opportunity to focus on the valuable contribution made by refugees to Australian society. It is also an opportunity for us to experience the rich diversity of refugee communities throughout New South Wales. Australia has a long and proud history of successfully resettling refugees and humanitarian entrants.

Premier Mike Baird launched Refugee Week at the Community and Refugee Welcome Centre in the former mental health facility at Callan Park on Thursday 16 June 2016. The welcome centre functions as a day centre three days a week for refugees, where they are offered practical support, cookery lessons and sporting opportunities. At the launch, Premier Baird said Australia should celebrate the contribution made by refugees, pointing to the fact that Australia has resettled 800,000 refugees since World War II.

A great example of a refugee who has made a significant contribution and has been acknowledged for that contribution is Deng Adut. Deng was born in South Sudan. At the age of seven, when most children are at primary school, he was kidnapped, taken away by the military and trained to be a child soldier. He witnessed many atrocities and was the victim of abuse himself for sticking up for others. Deng was fortunate to come to Australia at the age of 15. He settled in Western Sydney, studied hard and learned English. After completing an advanced diploma in accounting and working in many part-time, low-paid jobs, Deng was able to support himself to study law at the University of Western Sydney in 2005. He is now a lawyer. From child soldier to refugee advocate, Deng Adut is an example of the enormous contribution refugees make to our community. He should be put on a pedestal so that others can be made aware of his success.

In my electorate, there are many services that assist refugees and migrants. One of the excellent services is the Community Migrant Resource Centre in Parramatta. I acknowledge Melissa Monteiro, who is the executive director. It is a not-for-profit, community-based organisation established to promote a just, equal and inclusive society where individuals are valued, contributing and self-sufficient members. Tomorrow the centre is hosting a symposium in Parramatta that will focus on the humanitarian crises facing the world today. Melissa says that she has been deeply moved by the plight of Syrians, knowing that hundreds of thousands are dying and suffering. There are an estimated 12 million people in Syria in need of assistance, 7.6 million people internally displaced and an estimated 4.1 million refugees in the Middle East, including 2.1 million children.

It was great news when in September 2015 Premier Baird appointed the former head of the Australian Public Service, Professor Peter Shergold, as the New South Wales Coordinator-General for Refugee Resettlement. This was in response to the Prime Minister's request for assistance from the States and Territories to help welcome into Australia 12,000 additional refugees who had been dislocated by the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. Professor Shergold is working across all levels of government and with private industry and community groups to formulate a plan to house approximately 7,000 refugees from Syria and Iraq. I pay tribute to Professor Shergold for his work and his dedication to this cause. Australia is a nation built upon migration. Refugees around the world have made

a valuable contribution to society. They continue to make a valuable contribution not only economically but to society as a whole, especially the harmonious and diverse society that we are very proud of in New South Wales.

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (18:55):** Refugee Week is an opportunity to recognise the important contribution refugees make to the Australian culture, way of life and economy. I thank the member for Parramatta for bringing this matter of public importance before the House. Refugees and asylum seekers come to Australia because they are escaping violence, persecution, war and famine. They put their faith in us as a generous and open nation that offers a chance at a better life. Like many, I fear that we often fail refugees. We can do much more to live up to our promise as a wealthy nation founded on principles of generosity and opportunity. I am really proud that this spirit is strong in my electorate and across Sydney's inner west, where refugees are welcomed by the community. Local organisations like Settlement Services International do amazing things to make refugees feel welcome.

Other organisations, such as Metro Assist, Mums 4 Refugees and the Bower Reuse and Repair Centre, the Bread and Butter Project, the Asylum Seeker Centre in Newtown and the Refugee Council of Australia, also provide great services. I love going to the monthly night markets at the Addison Road Community Centre. It is a Welcome Refugee Zone, where refugees sell food and wares, learn to run a business, and build capacity for their families. The project has supported refugee start-ups by creating a space for merchants to sell food that is cooked at home by the family. I will tell the story of 25-year-old Habib Asbati, who arrived in Australia from Lebanon in 2014 with a dream of opening his own business. Within two years he completed a bakery certificate and started his small business. With the support of the markets, he is now making a modest profit and reinvesting in his business and family. Habib says of the markets:

I love working in the street food market because it has a good atmosphere, the live music is excellent. At the last festival some people came to my stall six times to buy my crepes. I think they really like them.

Habib is a success story and has many role models in the prominent refugees who make Australia a better place. I refer to people like Sir Gustav Nossal, Frank Lowy, former Governor of New South Wales James Spigelman, Osamah Sami and Nahji Chu. Each of them took a chance on Australia and committed themselves to making Australia a better country. The Refugee Council estimates that the total number of displaced persons across the world was 65.3 million last year. We should reflect on the contribution that refugees make to our country's economy and to the world economy. The Migration Council of Australia estimates that migration will add \$1.6 trillion to Australia's gross domestic product [GDP] by 2050, adding 15.7 per cent to our workforce participation rate and 5.9 per cent in GDP per capita growth. They are astonishing figures that we should reflect on. The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports that much of this growth can be attributed to the work of asylum seekers. It stated:

... Humanitarian migrants displayed greater entrepreneurial qualities and reported a higher proportion of income from their own unincorporated businesses and this income increased sharply after five years of residency.

So we can see that there is an incredible number of displaced persons around the world. When we accept them with open arms into our country, we not only benefit from having them share their wonderful cultures with us but also share incredible economic benefits. We know that they work incredibly hard when they come to our country, and the figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics confirm that. We live up to our promise to be a generous and compassionate country when we welcome and support refugees. A number of activities have been held across my electorate and others during Refugee Week. Again, I thank the member for Parramatta for bringing forward this motion. We need to remember that our recognition of refugees goes two ways—migration and refugees make us stronger, more compassionate and more generous. Refugees are indeed at the heart of the Australian story.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (19:00):** Today I express my support for a particularly special matter of public importance on Refugee Week. I support its aim to inform the public about refugees and celebrate positive contributions to Australian society made by refugees. I thank the member for Parramatta for bringing this issue to the House tonight. Refugee Week provides a national medium where positive images of refugees can be promoted in order to create a culture of welcome throughout the country. The ultimate aim of the celebration is to create better understanding between different communities and to encourage successful integration, enabling refugees to live in safety and to continue making a valuable contribution to Australia.

The theme for Refugee Week this year is "With courage let us all combine". Taken from the second verse of our national anthem, this theme was chosen by the Refugee Council of Australia to convey the fact that it takes courage to be a refugee and it takes courage to speak out against injustice. It is also a call for unity and for positive action, encouraging Australians to improve our nation's welcome for refugees. It also acknowledges the skills and energy that refugees bring to their new home. Some \$146 million will be provided over four years by the New South Wales Government in additional funding to support refugee integration. This new allocation of funding will focus on the areas of health and education, improving employment opportunities, helping refugees settle into local communities, and encouraging participation to help build connections and friendships.

This additional funding will assist refugees to receive the best start to a life in New South Wales and will empower them to live independent and fulfilling lives. I pay tribute to the dedicated and passionate staff and volunteers of the Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre for all the work they do for refugees in south-west Sydney. The Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre [MRC] works with newly arrived migrants, refugees and diverse communities by building their capacity to take part in local life in Liverpool and the surrounding areas. It provides vital services such as casework and group activities to help migrants and refugees to settle well in Australia and to participate in Australian life, and in our local area in particular.

It offers information and referral services; playgroups and parenting support; youth services, including homework support, youth casework and recreational activities; classes and courses, such as English, art and computer skills; employment and training opportunities; aged care support; social groups; and festivals and community events. The Liverpool centre is amazing, and visiting it is particularly eye opening. It does phenomenal work. I thank all the staff at the Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre—especially the Chief Executive Officer, Kamalle Dabboussy—for all they do in assisting refugees. As we reflect on how lucky we are to live and work in a peaceful, cohesive and multicultural society, Refugee Week is an opportunity to consider whether we are doing all we can as a society to assist those impacted by conflicts overseas, whether we can do better and how we can support those new members of the community who now call New South Wales home. I encourage everyone to get behind Refugee Week 2016.

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (19:03):** By leave: Refugee Week draws attention to the plight of the world's 21 million refugees at the same time as reminding us of the enormous contribution made to Australia by people who have come here seeking refuge from war and political persecution. It was a great honour as a local member and as a Catholic to attend the inauguration of the Parramatta Catholic Diocese's new bishop last week, the Most Reverend Vincent Long Van Nguyen. Our diocese's new bishop came to Australia as a refugee by boat from Vietnam in 1979. He is one of the many refugee success stories and he is also a strong advocate for a compassionate approach to refugees.

How does Australia rank on support for refugees? Not as well as we might like to think when we compare the number of refugees resettled in 2015, which was just 11,776 people—and none of the additional 12,000 Syrians the Federal Government has been patting itself on the back for resettling. Australia ranked twenty-fifth overall, thirty-second on a per capita basis and forty-seventh relative to gross domestic product [GDP]. We can and should do more.

I recently visited a refugee camp for Syrian refugees in Zahle, in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, with the member for Lakemba. We were guests of the Melkite Diocese, which administers the camps with the support of United Nations agencies. We saw firsthand the difficult conditions people are living in—some 200 people in 35 tents. I was particularly shocked when a young girl at the refugee school showed us how well she spoke English. She proudly told us about school and her family, then she told us she was seven years old. She looked like she was four years old, and she was very thin. It was heartbreaking. Despite promises to bring in 12,000 Syrian refugees, only 400 have come as part of the regular annual refugee intake.

I also visited a Palestinian camp while I was in Lebanon. The Bourj el Barajneh camp has been in operation in Beirut since 1948. Generation after generation of displaced people are living there—37,000 in less than a square kilometre. They live without work rights in poorly constructed temporary housing that has been in place for nearly 70 years. Over the years, many Australian charities have supported projects in the camps, but funding has been harder to find in recent years since the Syrian war began. There are two million refugees in Lebanon—1.5 million Syrians and 500,000 Palestinians—living alongside Lebanon's population of four million. By comparison, refugees are not placing much of a drain on Australia at all, even when they first arrive and their needs are greatest.

About a decade ago I did a university work placement and lived in a Liberian refugee camp in Ghana. I learned a lot about trauma, hope, helping your neighbours and boredom. Life is really hard for refugees; no-one would voluntarily move to a refugee camp if they were an economic migrant and not a genuine refugee. I ran a research project about education, vocational training and trauma counselling needs for former combatants living at the camp, including former child soldiers. Some people's stories were harrowing and will stay with me for the rest of my life. While it was funny and embarrassing when someone showed me a bullet wound in their buttocks, I cried after a young woman told me her story about being abducted as a small child and being forced to join a militia as a child soldier, which included sustained sexual abuse. These are real stories and refugees need our support. They also repay this support in spades, making a great contribution to Australia.

**Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) (19:06):** By leave: I will make a short contribution to this debate, as I know that time for debate is running out. I thank the member for Parramatta for bringing this matter of public importance before the House and for allowing me to speak on the issue. The member for Parramatta indicated that since World War II 800,000 refugees have come to this country. My family and I are amongst those 800,000

refugees. My family came here in 1948 from a refugee camp in a desert in Egypt, where we had spent four years. Last year I went back to Egypt to see where we had come from. I went to the area where the refugee camp had been and I found the graveyard where my Mum had buried three children. It was very emotional for me. It is now 70 years since that happened and we have to move on.

When my family came here in 1948, after World War II, we arrived with a lot of Italians, Yugoslavs, Maltese and Greeks. We all lived in the western suburbs. We could not afford to live in the city; we could not afford the land there. We worked on farms and we became farmers. My mum and dad were market gardeners. It was a life full of rain and mud in winter and sun and heat in summer, and my parents worked out in the open with no cover or shade. It was a terrible life, not only for my mum and dad but for all the immigrants who came out at that time and took up the hard life of farming.

I thank the Australian government of the time, Ben Chifley's Labor Government, which brought us here in late 1948. Later, in the 1970s, Syrian immigrants arrived—the Chaldean people from Syria and Iraq—and they helped build this country into what it is today. In the 1970s we also saw the arrival of the Vietnamese, Chinese, Cambodians and Laotian people. They made this country—and in my electorate of Cabramatta particularly the Vietnamese and Asian people—what it is today. I thank them very much for the great contribution they have made to this country. I thank this country very deeply for the opportunity it gave not only to my family but to all those 800,000 people who have come here since World War II.

This country gave us the opportunity to become something. As my dad always said, he had nothing in his own country and he would have amounted to nothing, he would still be living in the village as a peasant. I had the chance to become a councillor, a mayor and a State member of Parliament, and my children had the chance to be educated to become lawyers and partners in legal firms, making five times more than I make in this place. I thank the New South Wales Government and the Refugee Council for celebrating refugees in this country this week.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Cabramatta for his contribution and remind him he is also Opposition Whip.

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (19:09):** By leave: I also commend the Refugee Council and the member for Parramatta for celebrating Refugee Week in Parliament this week. We have a proud history of welcoming people to our country and helping those who are in need, and it is only in very recent decades that we have seen the thinking of the 1950s White Australia policy, xenophobia and fear-based policies around refugees at the Commonwealth level.

After the Vietnam War, and under the leadership of former Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, we resettled tens of thousands of Vietnamese people who went on to strengthen the Australian community and economy. Those Vietnamese refugees were fleeing war-torn countries; they were being oppressed, killed and tortured and were unable to apply to live in Australia through immigration processes. However, we did not lock them up or put families with children in gulag-style offshore detention centres. Families were placed in the community and resettled in a humane and decent manner. On behalf of The Greens, I call on the old parties to look to that great history of resettling asylum seekers in a humane manner that is not grounded in fear as we seek a new way in this State and country.

We know that we helped to write the convention on refugees internationally, and Australia has led an ambitious and bold regional solution like this in the past. We can do it again. The billions of dollars that we could save from closing down the Manus Island and Nauru detention centres could be reinvested to help more people than ever before. Australians have been let down by more than a decade of failed leadership on this issue. Today the Australian Greens have called for refugees to be brought to Australia safely from the stranded boat in Aceh in Indonesia. Our hearts go out to those people and also those who are seeking to rescue them. We know that they also put their lives at risk with people smugglers.

I also want to shout out about the work of members of the Ballina Region for Refugees. I am truly humbled by them. It has been my great pleasure to contribute to their programs. They run a homestay program for people waiting for processing or who are in community detention. Most Australians do not believe that asylum seekers should be placed in detention, yet both of the major parties have variations on that unjust theme. I also commend Sanctuary Northern Rivers and its President, Dr Michael Douglas, who has worked with the community in sponsoring and settling 160 refugees, all of whom have been refugees resettled from another country of first refuge. Sanctuary provides support to refugees in applying for a visa, and when successful, financial assistance for travel and a hand to settle in. The intensive phase of support is mostly on arrival in the community—understanding local culture and contemporary Australian society, learning to negotiate systems, employment requirements and language development. I commend this matter of public importance.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I also recognise communities in my electorate of Lismore. Being the son of Christian Lebanese migrants, I fully understand what this Refugee Week means. Dr Michael Douglas from the Sanctuary Northern Rivers and also the Mingoola community west of Tenterfield—

**Dr Geoff Lee:** We know the Mingoola community in Parramatta too. It is well known.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** —have been working with the group in Parramatta area and have relocated some families. I thank Julie Hartman for working with relocating those families.

**Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) (19:13):** In reply: I thank all members who have contributed to the discussion on this matter of public importance in Refugee Week. I refer to members representing the electorates of Summer Hill, Holsworthy, Granville, Cabramatta and Ballina, who agreed that refugees have added so much over the past couple of hundred years to Australia not only in terms of economic development but also social development, cultural spirit and our ability to be a great peaceful and harmonious nation. This country is an exemplar to the rest of the world of how Australia, the most diverse place with people from around the world, can still function well.

The member for Summer Hill made particularly clear the entrepreneurial spirit of some of the residents in her electorate, for example, Habib Asbati from Lebanon, whose great success story is built upon hard work in a food stall. He loves to interact with the public and I am sure he will do very well in the future because he is taking advantage of Australia as a better place to live, and Australia is giving refugees an opportunity to be everything they want to be. I support the kind words of the member for Granville about the Bishop of Parramatta and his quintessential refugee story. He escaped from Vietnam on a boat with his family. They took their lives into their own hands coming to Australia, and he has now risen to the role of Bishop, the leader of the Parramatta Diocese, a truly significant role in the fastest-growing and youngest diocese in Australia. The member for Granville reflected on the economic impact and the cultural contributions made to society by refugees.

The member for Holsworthy made a positive contribution. She said that the Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre is a wonderful place that is building capacity in her area. It is doing some truly inspirational work through casework activities, playgroup, referrals, youth service, social events and festivals. The member for Cabramatta touched our hearts and spoke of his personal story when in 1948 he and his parents came from a refugee camp in Egypt. He said recently he visited there and saw the graves of close family members. It was great to hear the personal story of the member for Cabramatta about coming to Western Sydney and about refugees working hard to carve out a life. Obviously all members of this House commend all refugees from around the world who make a fantastic and positive contribution to society.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The matter of public importance having concluded, and in accordance with standing and sessional orders, the House stands adjourned until Thursday 23 June 2016 at 10.00 a.m.

**The House adjourned at 19:17.**