



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Assembly**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Sixth Parliament  
First Session**

**Thursday, 23 June 2016**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Thursday, 23 June 2016**

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

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

*Bills*

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

**Returned**

**The SPEAKER:** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning the abovementioned bill without amendment.

*Bills*

## **FINES AMENDMENT (ELECTRONIC PENALTY NOTICES) BILL 2016**

**First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Troy Grant, read a first time and printed.**

**Second Reading**

**Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Deputy Premier, Minister for Justice and Police, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Racing) (10:14):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Fines Amendment (Electronic Penalty Notices) Bill 2016 amends the Fines Act 1996 to provide for the issuing of electronic infringement notices by the NSW Police Force, and other agencies who are authorised to do so, with the understanding and consent of the recipient to receive a notice in this manner. The amendment follows a successful proof-of-concept trial in 2013 in which five NSW Police Force local area commands trialled the use of mobile technology to issue traffic infringement notices electronically.

While information technology companies have developed products that have been used by law enforcement agencies internationally, it is understood that the trial represented the first in-house application to be developed by any law enforcement agency in the world. In modern times, customers have an expectation that almost all transactions can be completed electronically. The use of infringement notices as a penalty for certain offences is an inevitable and essential provision for the NSW Police Force, although recipients will now have the convenient option of settling this penalty in electronic format.

The bill, therefore, amends the Fines Act 1996, to provide that when police are to issue a penalty notice, the police officer may offer the recipient a choice to receive the notice electronically, by email or SMS. Police will only issue electronic penalty notices when the recipient consents to this format. Should the person not understand the offer or choose to receive the notice in the paper format, penalty notices will be issued manually by police and sent by post, in line with current practice. The recipient will be required to provide their email or SMS phone number for the purpose of receiving the notice electronically. These details will be stored on the police computerised operational policing system, known as COPS, as the current record of a person's address would be for the paper-based system.

I now turn to the details of the bill. A number of replacement provisions are included to modify or streamline the language of the Act as a consequence of the primary amendment. These amendments do not change the existing intent of these provisions. Under section 3 (1) the definition of "penalty notice offence" is amended to "an offence under a statutory provision for which a penalty notice may be issued". This clarifies the link between the Fines Act and those statutes which allow a penalty notice to be issued. This link is further clarified under amendments to section 19 (1) (a), which now reads "a person is alleged to have committed a penalty notice offence for which a penalty notice may be issued under a statutory provision".

Section 19 (1) (a1) is amended to omit the term "the appropriate officer" and to insert "the officer who may issue a penalty notice". This amendment clearly defines the authorised person who may issue a penalty notice or administer a caution in place of a penalty notice and facilitates the transition to this method by those agencies authorised to issue penalty notices. Section 19A (1) is amended to remove the term "appropriate officer" and insert "officer authorised to issue a penalty notice". Section 19A (1) is also amended to remove the term "an offence

under a statutory provision for which a penalty notice may be issued" and insert "a penalty notice offence". These amendments modernise the language of the Act in keeping with the new provisions. Section 20 (a) is amended to define a penalty notice as applicable to the person who has been issued with the penalty notice. Section 20 (b) is amended to clarify that should a person wish to pay the penalty notice without attending court, they may pay the appropriate amount within the stated time and to the appropriate person as specified on the notice.

The amendment to section 21 (3) is the primary amendment in this bill. This section is amended to provide for the issuing of electronic penalty notices by a police officer to a person's email address or telephone SMS. Persons authorised to issue electronic penalty notices by other agencies are also detailed in this subsection. This section provides that a police officer may issue a penalty notice by causing the penalty notice to be sent to an email address or phone number, but only if the recipient elected to have the penalty notice issued in that way. The recipient must also voluntarily provide an email address or phone number for the purposes of that issuance.

At this time the intent is that only police officers will be issuing electronic penalty notices. However, the provisions futureproof the amendments so that when another agency develops the capacity to issue electronic notices and authorises their officers to do so, they can commence without further legislative amendment required. Section 21 (3) (b) allows for other persons who are authorised by a relevant issuing agency to issue a penalty notice to do so electronically. Section 21 (4) provides that a police officer, or other person authorised to issue penalty notices, is not to issue an electronic penalty notice on children under 16 years or over 10 years of age.

Young people under the age of 16 years but over the age of 10 years who commit offences attracting a penalty notice are usually dealt with pursuant to the requirements of the Young Offenders Act 1997. The use of that Act, which encourages young people to take responsibility for their offending, is important. The proposed amendments should not override matters usually dealt with under the Young Offenders Act. This should serve as an assurance to parents that we still expect children and young persons to take responsibility for their offending behaviour, with their parents' support, via the provisions of the Young Offenders Act, which are appropriately tailored to provide suitable penalties in a productive way.

While police may issue penalty notices to persons who have committed minor offences—for example, travelling on public transport without a valid ticket, riding a bicycle without a fitted and fastened helmet, or riding a bicycle on a footpath—the Fines Act in its current form does not apply to children who are under the age of 10 years at the time of the offence. If a young person under the age of 16 years but over the age of 10 years or a young person over 16 did happen to receive a penalty notice, this would occur via the paper-based system. This provides a higher likelihood that parents may become aware of the notice and can encourage more appropriate behaviour. This will also allow parents to assist with paying the fine.

Section 21 (5) requires that a recipient only provide their email address or telephone number voluntarily for the issue of a penalty notice. Section 21 (6) allows a penalty notice to be issued electronically even if the statutory provision providing for the issue of the penalty notice does not authorise the issue of the penalty notice in this manner. Section 22 (1) is to be omitted as the new section 21 (1) gives effect to the same provision. Section 22A (1), (2) and (3), which are to be inserted into the Act, clarify the effect of payment under a penalty notice. Under this section, which also updates the language of a current provision, if the recipient pays the penalty notice in full within the required time, no further proceedings will be laid against them. Should the incident which caused the penalty notice to be issued result in a civil claim, action or proceeding, the recipient does not provide an admission of liability by paying for the notice. Furthermore, payment of a penalty notice will not affect any disciplinary or other proceedings. This includes liability in the circumstances.

Section 23 (2) and the accompanying note is omitted, and more modern language is used with the same intent in section 22A (1). New section 23 (3) is inserted to ensure the amount specified in the penalty notice cannot exceed a fine imposed by the court for the same offence. New section 23 (4) is inserted to ensure the amount specified in the penalty notice cannot exceed the amount specified in any statutory provision providing for that penalty notice. These existing but now updated sections avoid any conflict with penalty notice provisions in other Acts that specifically limit the penalty notice amount prescribed by the accompanying regulations to less than the amount that can be imposed by a court.

New section 23 (5) is inserted to provide for the varying amounts specified on penalty notices. This will allow for circumstances where different offences attract differing monetary penalties, as do varying severities of the same offence. Section 23AA (6) and 23AB (5) are omitted to insert the term "this section applies despite section 22A (1)". This amendment will clarify the Act relating to matters requiring a vehicle or vessel driver nomination. These amendments are consequential to the recently passed Fines Amendment Bill 2016 and are required to ensure no anomaly exists with the provisions of that bill. Section 23A (3) (a) and section 36 (5) (a) are omitted and replaced with the words "section 22A (1) ceases to apply in relation to the person". This removes

reference to section 23 (2), which is now omitted. The reference to section 22A (1) clarifies that proceedings will occur, as the recipient has elected this option.

Sections 23A (2A), 24, 25, 26, 42 (1) (a) and 42 (1CC) are amended to clarify that a person is "issued" with a penalty notice rather than "served". This brings the language of the legislation in line with the electronic method of administering penalty notices. Section 33 is amended to remove a reference to statutory provisions under which the notice was issued. This is unnecessary wording as reference is already made to payment in accordance with the penalty notice. Therefore, by paying the notice as originally instructed, the matter is dealt with appropriately.

Schedule 1 and reference to schedule 1 under section 19 (1) (b) are omitted. This amends the current structure of the Act. In recent years new penalty notice provisions have not been added to the schedule; rather, reference is made back to the Act so its inclusion is now outdated and redundant. However, this does not mean that penalty notices cannot be issued for these offences. Instead, the statute which refers to a penalty notice provides for its issuance. This streamlines the legislation without removing the option of issuing a penalty notice if the relevant Act permits.

I now turn to the benefits of these provisions. These reforms will improve administration and customer satisfaction rates and will ensure that we are delivering services that are responsive to the community and meet customer needs. The amendment aligns with the Premier's priority to improve government services by increasing the level of online transactions to 70 per cent by 2018-19. The proof of concept trial proved to be a huge success for the NSW Police Force and the Office of State Revenue with respect to the security and applicability of the technology and was an efficient and cost-effective way for government agencies to do business.

The project returned significant time saving for front-line police by eliminating unnecessary data duplication and entry requirements. The Office of State Revenue has estimated that \$1.2 million could be saved each year by eliminating the manual handling of traffic infringement notices alone. The NSW Police Force Highway Patrol has estimated that approximately an hour per day per police officer will be saved through the service of traffic infringement notices electronically. This equates to around 240,000 hours a year and will allow more time to be spent working on the front line rather than undertaking administrative tasks.

I will now describe the process of issuing an electronic penalty notice. Police will first seek a person's consent to send the penalty notice via email or text message, not both, or, should the person prefer, by Australia Post. The application contains a number of fields which police populate with all necessary data in connection with the offence. These include the person's proof of identity, being his or her driver licence details, the location, date and time of the offence, vehicle registration number, if required, and the offences alleged to have been committed. The location field uses global positioning system [GPS] technology and a map to pinpoint the exact spot the offence occurred. If the recipient elects to receive the penalty electronically, a portable document format [PDF] of the penalty notice will be sent to the person via email or text message, which they will then be able to download and print, or pay via a hyperlink to the Office of State Revenue website. The electronic penalty notice will contain the same information as that found on the existing paper-based notice.

A separate penalty notice will be issued for each offence, if applicable, to ensure that the recipient understands the concept of receiving each ticket electronically. If the person receiving the notice chooses to pay one and challenge another in court, they will be able to do so using the unique penalty notice number. As with current practice, the electronic penalty notice will provide a number of payment options for the person concerned. If a person wishes to have one or all of the offences determined by a court, then he or she will be required to complete and submit the court election format provided at [www.sdro.nsw.gov.au](http://www.sdro.nsw.gov.au). If submitting the request electronically, the online court election format requires the person to enter the penalty notice number for the matter which they want dealt with at court. It is anticipated that additional paperwork and administration will be eliminated, as the police officer will not be required to re-enter data from his or her notebook onto the computerised operational policing system [COPS] when they return to the station. The data will automatically upload to the COPS database from the field.

The security model used to protect the application, the device and the Cloud during the trial worked well and there were no security breaches. This same model will be used in the future. If the person declines to provide a phone number or email address then the officer will issue the penalty notice manually and send it by post, in line with current practice. It is inevitable that officers will encounter vulnerable persons when issuing a penalty notice. If the recipient does not understand the process of paying for a penalty notice electronically, or does not have the technology, the officer will issue the penalty notice manually. Officers who issue penalty notices are well trained and highly experienced in assessing the needs of vulnerable persons and will be more than capable of gauging the recipient's understanding of the process.

In the event that a person fails to provide a bona fide email address or phone number, he or she will be dealt with via the Office of State Revenue's follow-up procedures. The Office of State Revenue issues reminder notices 28 days after the initial notice has been issued. These reminder notices are mailed to the person's residential address as shown on their driver licence. If a police officer believes at the time that the email address or phone number being provided is false, they may choose to proceed with a manual paper notice. In this way avoidance of service, in terms of an electronic penalty notice, will not differ from the current process where issues may occur with the person not receiving a paper fine. In the event that an electronic penalty notice is issued to an email address or phone number which belongs to a person other than the intended recipient, a disclaimer will be provided on the penalty notice with instructions requesting that the person contact police and, quoting the penalty notice number, advise that the notice has been sent in error.

A link will also be provided which will take the person to the NSW Police Force "contact us" page on its website. At that location the person will be able to select the area they wish to contact, in this case the Customer Assistance Unit, and enter all necessary details. Should the person wish to provide additional details such as their name, email and contact number they can; however, it is not compulsory to do so. The Police Assistance Line [PAL] number will also be available and PAL staff advised on how to record and deal with issues relating to electronic penalty notices. On notification, police will send the penalty notice to the correct recipient by mail.

If a tablet is lost, police will have the capability to locate, lock and wipe the device remotely. Accountability mechanisms have also been built into the penalty notice application to ensure that all of the required fields have been entered and checked prior to sending. This will mitigate any instances of an error occurring. These are straightforward amendments that serve a good purpose. They will enable the NSW Police Force to provide a technological response in a highly technological society where electronic communications are fast replacing more traditional methods. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS (CARE AND PROTECTION) AMENDMENT (PROTECTION FROM SERIOUS OFFENDERS) BILL 2016**

**First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Ms Tanya Mihailuk, read a first time and printed.**

**Second Reading**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (10:36):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

On 12 November 2015 I moved a private member's bill with the intention of strengthening child protection laws for all children and young people. Debate was gagged by the Government and the bill lapsed, despite my request to have it reinstated. Today I am reintroducing the bill. When I introduced the bill last year the South Australian Government was considering making similar amendments to its legislation, which have subsequently been passed. It is now even more pressing that New South Wales should do the same.

Labor fundamentally believes that the rights of the child must prevail over the rights of those parents or guardians who cause serious, violent harm to their children. The New South Wales Government has a fundamental obligation to stand up for the rights of vulnerable children. This bill is not about partisan politics; it seeks to champion the rights of the most vulnerable and voiceless children in our community. The safety, welfare and wellbeing of vulnerable children must always be the paramount consideration with respect to their care.

This bill would guarantee that vulnerable children and young people are kept safe from parents or guardians who have previously committed a series of violent offences against children, such as murder, manslaughter and other offences which would clearly demonstrate that the parent is incapable of caring for any child. It is important to note that the Parliament of South Australia has now made those amendments to its legislation and I stress the need to ensure that New South Wales keeps up with States like South Australia in protecting vulnerable children, particularly children in care.

The Children's Protection (Implementation of Coroner's Recommendations) Amendment Act 2016 (SA) was introduced in response to the Coroner's recommendations following the inquest into the death of Chloe Valentine. The bill was proclaimed by the Governor of South Australia on 28 April 2016. The South Australian Government has led the way by strengthening child protection standards in its State, and we must ensure that New South Wales is not left behind when it comes to prioritising the rights and safety of vulnerable children. This bill prioritises the safety of the most vulnerable children, while also containing a number of safeguards to ensure that parents who may be capable of adequately caring for their children are not punished twice for a previous serious crime.

This Parliament has an overwhelming obligation to act immediately to further strengthen the legislative framework surrounding the protection of vulnerable children and young persons in New South Wales, particularly in light of the series of recommendations made by the 2015 South Australian Coroner's report into the death of Chloe Valentine. We cannot stand still and rest on our laurels when it comes to an issue as important as protecting the most vulnerable children in our community from harm. This bill will deliver on the New South Wales Opposition's commitment to protect such vulnerable children from persons convicted of previous serious child-related offences against their own children. It will close a loophole in the existing legislation and ensure that all abused children are protected from future harm from parents who have previously committed a range of serious offences, such as murder and manslaughter against their own children, and other disqualifying offences.

Labor wholeheartedly believes that every child fundamentally deserves the right to be protected from harm. We cannot leave the fate of the most vulnerable children in our communities to chance, nor can we leave the fate of children to the actions or inactions of public or private institutions when it comes to safeguarding their safety. In 2012, four-year-old Chloe Valentine was tragically killed after being repeatedly forced by her mother and her mother's partner to ride and crash a 50 kilogram motorbike. Chloe Valentine had been the subject of 20 child protection notifications to Families SA, and the coronial inquest into her death clearly highlighted both the manner in which child protection authorities in South Australia had mishandled her case and the need for reform in this area.

Here in New South Wales, four-year-old Bailey Constable was killed by Nathan Forrest, his mother's boyfriend. In 2013, Mr Forrest pleaded guilty to the manslaughter of this vulnerable child. Forrest was sentenced to a maximum of eight years in jail and was to serve a non-parole period of six years. Tragically, Bailey Constable was also the victim of physical abuse before his death. The equally tragic death of Ikicia Leach highlights how this is not an isolated example. Benjamin Leach served less than four years in prison following his conviction of the manslaughter of his own seven-week-old daughter. Following his release from prison, Leach changed his name and had a child with a new partner, without disclosing his crime.

Under the existing legislative framework nothing will prevent people such as Mr Forrest, Mr Leach or untold numbers of other individuals who have committed similar horrific violent offences like murder or manslaughter of a child, from residing with another child in the future. There is a clear gap in the legislation, and this bill will correct this gap by prohibiting such violent offenders from caring or residing with their own or other children in the future. The tragic deaths of Chloe Valentine, Bailey Constable, Ikicia Leach and many others before them may have been prevented if a legislative framework such as the one proposed in this bill had been enacted in those jurisdictions.

Labor has also acknowledged that in some circumstances a person who is not the parent of a child who is residing with them may have a previous conviction for a serious violent offence against their own child. The presence of a partner or other adult residing with a child's parent or guardian, who has a previous conviction for a serious violent offence against their own child, may also pose a significant risk to the safety and wellbeing of the child they reside with. The bill will also address this issue by proposing to restrain such persons with serious prior convictions from residing with a partner's or de facto's child.

The bill clarifies what constitutes a disqualifying offence which may threaten the safety of vulnerable children. This would include previous serious convictions for offences under the Crimes Act 1900 relating to infanticide, assault causing death, acts done to the person with intent to murder, certain other attempts to murder, attempts to murder by other means, wounding or grievous bodily harm with intent, reckless grievous bodily harm, injuries to a child at the time of birth, female genital mutilation, and removing a person from a State for female genital mutilation.

A disqualifying offence would include offences within the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998, such as the abuse of a child and young person, an offence constituted by an attempt to commit an offence referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (d) of proposed section 38H, and an offence under the law of another jurisdiction that corresponds to an offence referred to in paragraphs (a) to (e) of proposed section 38H of the bill. These offences are the most serious kinds of offences. They are unjustifiable, and any parent that has committed them against a child in the past should simply not have the right automatically to expose any children to the further risk of harm.

This bill is about strengthening the rights of the child, particularly vulnerable and voiceless children who are at a higher risk of harm. These proposed reforms will significantly strengthen the child protection legislative framework in New South Wales, whilst also introducing the necessary safeguards that create the right balance between protecting our children from serious harm and protecting the rights of the parent or guardian, who may have committed a serious violent offence in the past, to care for future children. The bill acknowledges that a one-size-fits-all approach with respect to the issuing of an instrument of guardianship or restraining notice for a

person who has committed a serious disqualifying offence against a child may not be appropriate in all circumstances.

If there were mitigating circumstances where it would be manifestly unjust to restrict guardianship of a child who was not at any risk of harm, then the individual who committed the prior offences against a child would have the capacity to make an application to the Children's Court. This would ensure that if such a parent could demonstrate to the Children's Court's satisfaction that they are no longer unfit to care for a child they would be permitted to still do so. In this regard the court could take into account the age of the victim of the relevant disqualifying offence, when it was committed, the seriousness of the offence and penalty imposed, any aggravating or mitigating factors concerning the matter, an illness or condition of the offender that may no longer exist, and whether or not the offender has a record of a previous finding of guilt for other serious offences.

Overall, this bill is a fair and proportionate proposal that will close a loophole which still exposes some of our most vulnerable children to the risk of serious harm from violent offenders. The bill will strengthen the rights of the child over the rights of parents who have previously committed serious criminal offences against children. The onus should be on such criminal parents to prove why they once again have the capacity to care for vulnerable children, not the other way around, and I stress that this bill has the scope for this to occur in the appropriate circumstances.

Members in this place have an overwhelming duty and obligation to do everything that is necessary to protect the children currently at risk of harm but also any children yet to be born from the evils of those that are simply unfit to care for them. That is the lesson that has been learned from the tragic deaths of Chloe Valentine, Ikicia Leach and Bailey Constable. Not everybody in this State is fit to care for children, and this bill will, once and for all, clarify that those violent criminals who have committed unspeakable offences against children should be prevented from doing so again.

As I did last year, I pay tribute to the many groups and families who have publicly advocated for strengthening the child protection framework in our State. I take this opportunity to acknowledge Martha Jabour from the Homicide Victims' Support Group, who has been a tireless advocate for this cause. Her contributions have been immensely invaluable. I also recognise again the families of Ikicia Leach and Bailey Constable, who made themselves available for consultation, for their advice in formulating these necessary reforms. It was a very emotional time when we met last year on a number of occasions.

I pay tribute in particular to Karen Chapman, Jannice Florendo and Sandra and Chris Campbell, who know more than anybody else the heartbreak of losing an innocent child due to the actions of a violent criminal. Their bravery and courage in advocating for these reforms and sharing their touching stories has been truly appreciated. If this bill saves just one family from the suffering that these individuals sadly suffered, we will have achieved something befitting the memory of those children. Their deaths will not be in vain. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **TECHNICAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION COMMISSION AMENDMENT (FUNDING GUARANTEE FOR TAFE) BILL 2016**

### **First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Ms Prue Car, read a first time and printed.**

### **Second Reading**

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (10:50):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

As the shadow Minister for Skills I am proud to be speaking this morning to the Technical and Further Education Commission Amendment (Funding Guarantee for TAFE) Bill 2016. The bill was introduced by the Leader of the Opposition but the Government let it lapse, so here we are again today. This bill is about protecting TAFE—one of the great public institutions of New South Wales, one of our State's greatest equalisers for over a century, the vehicle by which thousands of students have gained the skills they need to put them on the right path and by which our young people and, in turn, the families and communities around them, have been put on the road to a better life. This bill will ensure the future health of TAFE in this State. It acknowledges one inalienable fact: It is the role of government to ensure there is a strong, affordable and accessible public education system.

The bill proposes to do this by capping contestable public funding for private education providers at a maximum of 30 per cent. This is, in effect, a guarantee that TAFE, the public provider, will receive a guaranteed minimum of 70 per cent of public funding, and potentially more. Clause 3 of the bill inserts in the principal Act—

the Technical and Further Education Commission Act 1990—a TAFE funding guarantee that will deliver the guaranteed minimum 70 per cent funding for vocational education and training to be allocated to the TAFE Commission, but it will also ensure that the TAFE Commission receives, in each of its institutes, not less than 70 per cent of the funding allocated to vocational education and training courses.

Let us look at why such a bill is necessary. This week's budget is another timely reminder about what this Government is in the process of doing to our great TAFE system. The numbers are in the Government's own budget, in black and white. They are there in plain sight. The forecast for 2016-17 shows that there will be 126,000 fewer students enrolled in TAFE than there were in 2012. Of this incredible number, 14,500 are students with disabilities. This is a disgrace.

The budget reveals that 5,200 teachers and support staff have been lost. In an unbelievable insult to hardworking TAFE teachers and their students, the papers reveal that while the Government is sacking staff, cutting course hours and increasing fees, it spent a total of \$314 million less on TAFE than was promised last year. This week, when the Treasurer was asked about these sobering statistics in question time, she said she was proud of what the Government was doing to TAFE. What an insult. That tells us everything we need to know about this Government's approach. These are not the actions of a government that believes in TAFE.

A few weeks ago, in Tamworth, together with the Hon. Daniel Mookhey from the other place, I had the privilege of speaking through an interpreter with a group of hearing-impaired students. TAFE had had a transformative impact on those students. Their teachers, together with the classroom support workers, had provided opportunities for them to learn skills that would enable them to contribute to the workplace and to our communities. They were given those opportunities because of the specialist support that enables them to realise their potential. That specialist support is one of the things that makes TAFE unique. However, the New South Wales Government decided to remove that specialist support and rolled those jobs into generalist support, leaving these students without that vital link to a better future. They were angry, and why would they not be? I asked them what they would say to Mike Baird if he were there. They answered: Tell him to pick on someone else.

After much media attention and scrutiny—amid the revelation that TAFE NSW was planning to appoint 14 new highly paid executive managers in head office—it now seems that any changes to the Disability Services Unit at that TAFE institute are on hold. It is a small victory in the face of an increasing assault on TAFE. But it should not require desperate students and their families to go to the media to stop cruel cuts to their education.

I turn to the issue of our hardworking, passionate, highly skilled teachers in TAFE. In the past few months as the shadow Minister, it has been a real pleasure to meet many of these professionals. They care about the future of their students. They are usually experts in their industry and they love TAFE because they have seen what it can do and have seen lives transformed. They are bringing about that transformation. Together with the support workers and the learning consultants I referred to earlier, over 5,000 of them have gone since 2012. What government would think that is acceptable? This Government does.

This Government comes into the Chamber and heckles the Opposition about its concern for TAFE teachers. Yes, we are concerned and we wear that concern with pride. TAFE teachers teach TAFE students—it is not brain surgery. The *Sydney Morning Herald* recently revealed that many of the TAFE teachers who are being shown the door are teaching core trades: building, carpentry and plumbing. And they are teaching in institutes that are geographically placed in the middle of the Sydney building boom. Every other day we have Government Ministers coming in here crowing about housing approvals and infrastructure. Who is going to be building these homes, if that same Government is so hell-bent on sacking the teachers who teach the necessary skills? It is sheer madness. On top of everything else, we have had the chaos of the Education Business System [EBS].

**The SPEAKER:** It being 11.00 a.m., in accordance with the resolution of 2 June 2016, debate is interrupted. I remind all members to extend the usual courtesy to the Leader of the Opposition to allow him to deliver the budget reply speech uninterrupted.

#### **APPROPRIATION BILL 2016**

#### **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL 2016**

#### **STATE REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (BUDGET MEASURES) BILL 2016**

#### **Second Reading**

**Debate resumed from 21 June 2016.**

**Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (11:00):** This budget fails our community. It fails the pupils in our schools, and their parents. It fails the patients in our hospitals. It fails the paramedics and police, the nurses and teachers, who cannot afford to buy a home in our State's capital. It fails to plan for a sustainable future. We might

be disappointed, but we cannot be surprised. This budget comes from a Government that spent the past year campaigning to increase the goods and services tax [GST] to 15 per cent. It wants to increase the GST and use the billions in extra revenue not to invest in our State's schools and hospitals, but to fund massive tax cuts for corporations. Treasury advised that an increased GST would add tens of thousands of dollars to the cost of a new home, making it even harder for first home buyers. The aim is to make every household pay more to give large corporations a tax break.

The assault on household budgets does not end there. Mr Baird is now the highest taxing Premier in our State's history. Electricity, public transport, tolls—the Government wants families to pay more. Next week electricity prices will go up, not down. The Government could and should have backed lower prices for households and small businesses, but it went to court to put the prices up. Because of its privatisation program, the Government wants the electricity companies to make super profits so that electricity prices go up. Regular commuters face a 12½ per cent increase in their weekly train fares from September at a time when inflation is a mere fraction of that. Soon there will be a toll imposed on the existing M4, making commuters pay \$45 a week for a road that is currently free. Over a year they will pay an extra \$2,300. Worse, the toll on the M4 can be increased above the consumer price index in the future, making the toll more expensive every year.

This Government's defining characteristic is its arrogance, a self-importance that sees it dismiss legitimate community concerns. The Government has trashed local democracy, sacked elected mayors and councillors, forced mergers, gerrymandered boundaries and cancelled elections—all this while integrity reforms have been stonewalled this very week. This Government has no respect for our history and our heritage. It wilfully, spitefully, destroys century-old trees along Anzac Parade, even though trams and trees coexisted there for decades. At Parramatta it will not even talk with the community about how the War Memorial Swimming Pool can be kept, along with a new stadium. This Government knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.

Destination NSW says that our State's key tourist attractions are its physical beauty and natural experiences. Being clean and green is also central to our reputation as a premium agricultural provider to Asian markets. Given the economic importance of these industries, protecting our environment is not only the right thing to do; it also has a real economic value. But, whenever there is a choice to be made, this Government goes against the environment and against sustainability.

Look at the heavy new penalties for peaceful protesters alongside the reduced fines that apply to rogue mining companies that damage prime agricultural lands. Look at the 1950s thinking that allows sewage to be dumped into Sydney Harbour at 25 locations. Look at the weak regulations for particulate air pollution when we know its lethal health effects. Look at the return to the bad old days of land clearing, even while the Local Land Services have had their funding cut. Look at the culture war being waged against cyclists, with new penalties that have nothing to do with improving safety. Labor stands for the protection of our natural environment and our urban heritage. We will repeal the laws that criminalise peaceful protest and ensure that there can be no repeat of the desecration of Anzac Parade. We will once again have land clearing laws that protect our beautiful native bush and unique Australian animals.

The Department of Education reported earlier this year that there is a \$10.8 billion shortfall in funding for the school places we must deliver over the next 15 years. By 2031 we must find places for almost a quarter of a million more schoolchildren; 165,000 more children will be attending our public schools. The Government has boasted all week about increased funding for capital works for schools. Take this additional funding over the next four years announced in the budget, then make an assumption that the increased allocation will continue beyond the forward estimates. Add all other current and promised expenditure on new schools and upgrades of existing schools. Under the Baird Government it will take 45 years to deliver the new schools that are required within the next 15 years. At the rate New South Wales is delivering new classrooms it will take until 2061 to deliver the school places we must provide by 2031—30 years behind schedule. In this budget, the Government announced one new school, for the fifth budget in a row, and still not a sod has been turned. That is why I am so angry at the waste and mismanagement, the cost blowouts on this Government's watch.

**The SPEAKER:** I remind Government members of my earlier warning. The Leader of the Opposition will be heard in silence. The same courtesy should be extended to him as was extended to the Treasurer on Tuesday. I also remind Opposition members to cease interjecting.

**Mr LUKE FOLEY:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been wasted on the shambolic rollout of the failing Learning and Management Business Reform [LMBR] software project. In transport the Government stumbles from one budget blowout to the next. The WestConnex road project has blown out by \$6.8 billion. The Metro Southwest has blown out by \$1.5 billion and the inter-city fleet renewal by \$1.1 billion.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind members of my previous warning.

**Mr LUKE FOLEY:** The CBD and South East Light Rail has blown out by \$500 million, and \$38 million has been squandered on a footbridge that no-one uses to a promised stadium that the Government will now not build. Labor knows that education is central to the long-term success of our people and our society. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] says that "the quality of schooling in a country is a powerful predictor of the wealth that countries will produce in the long run". We live at a time when a property boom is delivering rivers of gold to the Government's coffers, and the Premier boasts of the billions the Government is making from asset sales. If we cannot secure the future of our State's schools now, when can we? Today I call for immediate action. The Government should urgently audit all public land—across each department and every agency—to identify priority sites for new schools.

The single largest expense when it comes to building new schools is the cost of purchasing land. Turning unused and under-used government land in areas of great demand for additional school places into sites for new and expanded schools just makes sense. A Labor Government will drive an unprecedented schools building program. Across Sydney and the Central Coast we will give the Greater Sydney Commission the power to force other government departments and agencies to hand over landholdings that have been identified as suitable locations for new and expanded schools—88 per cent of the new school places our State needs must be delivered in metropolitan Sydney.

This Government's addiction to selling off our public assets has seen prime sites for school expansions and new schools flogged off. The cost of purchasing land in coming years to meet the future school needs of our growing population will be much, much higher than the proceeds of these public land sales now. Labor will create a new uniform planning code for schools. We will build schools where they are needed and when they are needed. The planning code will also ensure that every new public school will include either on-site child care or before and after school care to make life easier for working parents.

Our State's future prosperity will rely on our close economic and cultural ties with Asia. But the number of students studying Asian languages is dwindling. We need to invest in language education. Learning a second language improves the overall academic performance of our kids. It helps them succeed and excel. That is why under the next Labor Government all primary school students will be taught a second language, and we will properly fund our community language schools. This will bring our schools up to speed—not just with other States but with the rest of the world.

Labor believes that children should have every opportunity for a good start in life. We will ensure that every child in this State has access to affordable, quality preschool for the recommended 15 hours per week in the year before school. The Auditor-General has recently exposed how this Government has failed children. New South Wales runs last for preschool participation. We fall well behind every other State and territory. Our families continue to pay the most for preschool anywhere in Australia. Every child deserves the best start in life and preschool is key to making that happen.

It is the role of government to provide a strong and affordable public education system. This Government does not value public education. It does not believe in TAFE. The Government sees TAFE as a cost centre—not as a centre for learning. The Government is running down TAFE. It has sacked teachers, cut courses and hiked up fees. The budget tells the tale—a staggering 126,000 fewer students than there were in 2012; 14,500 fewer students with disabilities; and 5,000 fewer teachers and support staff. Funds have been moved from TAFE to private providers—many of whom have been proven to act unscrupulously. I announce today that a Labor Government will move immediately to establish a private providers investigations unit.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members should reduce the noise in the Chamber. I will remove members from the Chamber if they continue to disrupt the Leader of the Opposition. Their behaviour is inappropriate, and member on both sides know that.

**Mr LUKE FOLEY:** The unit will investigate those dodgy training providers who are breaking the spirits of our young people. We will target the shonks and restore confidence and stability to the sector. Labor will always be the party that stands up for TAFE. That is why we have introduced a bill to guarantee at least 70 per cent of public funding for vocational education and training to one of this State's great institutions: the TAFE Commission. Elective surgery waiting times and lists in New South Wales are now the longest on record. Since this Government was elected five years ago, elective surgery waiting times have blown out to 229 days.

Patients in our State face waits longer than those in Canada, the United Kingdom and New Zealand. Our elective surgery waiting times are the second worst in Australia. There are now more than 74,000 people waiting for elective surgery. Almost half of those patients are waiting for orthopaedic surgery or cataract removal. It is the elderly and families in Western Sydney, the Central Coast, the South Coast and regional centres who are really feeling the brunt of these unacceptably long waits. Yet there was no mention in the Treasurer's Budget Speech of the impact on our hospital system of billions of dollars of Federal cuts that will take effect from 2017.

Innovation and regulatory reform can help us grow a stronger economy. In last year's budget reply, I said that we must accept the reality of the digital age and legalise, and properly regulate, ridesharing services like Uber. Embracing the sharing economy is part of my vision for our State's economic future. Enabled by smart technology, people are finding new ways to share goods and services. But the State's laws have not kept pace. A common regulatory standard for short-term accommodation services, such as Airbnb, is overdue. I propose a statewide planning policy to harmonise the hodgepodge of regulations local councils are currently applying.

Thousands of people are already earning extra income, and thousands more are enjoying the extra choice that services like Airbnb provide. And the visitors contribute to regional economies—80 per cent of listings are outside of traditional tourist hotspots. If you are simply renting out a space in your primary residence, governments should not tie you up in red tape. A statewide, consistent, clear planning instrument will eliminate regulatory uncertainty and benefit neighbours, home owners and tourists.

The Climate Council has ranked New South Wales dead last among Australia's States and Territories when it comes to renewable energy. There are now fewer people employed in our State's renewable sector than there were in 2011. Other States are securing renewable energy investments, but New South Wales lags behind. In 2011, the Government published its draft NSW Planning guidelines for wind farms. Five years on, the guidelines still have not been finalised. The result is that regional areas have missed out on billions of dollars of investment.

The Commonwealth Department of Industry, Innovation and Science says there are 22 wind projects proposed for New South Wales valued at \$5.7 billion. But these projects are being obstructed by the planning system. The regulatory uncertainty created by this Government does not help communities and it does not reduce carbon emissions. Labor supports a clean energy future for our State, and planning mechanisms that provide certainty for the community and industry. The Hunter region is perfectly placed to build new and exciting opportunities in the emerging low carbon global economy.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister for Education will come to order.

**Mr LUKE FOLEY:** It has all the ingredients to be a national hub of clean technology industry with world-class institutions, such as the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation [CSIRO] and the Newcastle Institute for Energy and Resources at the University of Newcastle, a highly skilled manufacturing sector and long experience in commercialising innovation. As with research and development in clean energy and battery storage, the Hunter can also lead the way with driverless cars. Driverless cars will be with us sooner than many might think. The driverless car industry is forecast to be worth more than \$90 billion globally by 2030. This emerging technology has the potential to transform our road system—improving traffic efficiency, cutting congestion and reducing the road toll. I want New South Wales to be in on the ground floor—open for business for this exciting emerging industry.

Legislation should be introduced to facilitate the entry of driverless cars to New South Wales. We should legalise the testing of autonomous electric cars on designated public roads. The Hunter should become the centre of expertise for adapting and integrating driverless vehicle technology into our everyday lives. And we should be making sure that land release areas and substantial new developments are future proofed—built with support infrastructure for electric cars. While supporting new industries, our State should also build on its traditional strengths. Last month Labor announced our steel plan to secure thousands of jobs in the Illawarra and across New South Wales with a whole-of-life procurement assessment that will see 90 per cent of the steel used in major infrastructure projects made in Australia. There will also be a Steel Industry Advocate, based in the Illawarra, appointed to undertake a thoroughgoing review of the sector, with a particular focus on innovation, research and development.

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

**Mr LUKE FOLEY:** Sydney is Australia's professional services capital. More than 125,000 people are employed in the high skill, high wage jobs of the legal, accounting and management consulting sectors. Last year I convened discussions with the professional services sector to consider limited legal liability for partnerships. These would combine the organisational flexibility of a traditional partnership with the limited legal liability of a corporation. Limited liability partnerships exist in many countries, including the United Kingdom. Our businesses should have the right to organise themselves in the same way as do their international competitors. I commit Labor to this reform. It will further cement our leading position in the provision of professional services, particularly as the market for these services becomes increasingly global.

One hundred and fifty thousand people pass through Sydney Airport each day—passengers, airport workers, meeters and greeters. It is Australia's busiest airport—a major piece of national economic infrastructure. Yet only around 20 per cent of the airport's users travel to or from the airport by public transport. If this could be

lifted to 40 per cent, there would be 30,000 fewer people travelling on the roads around the airport each day. In 2012 the Government promised to enhance public transport to Sydney Airport. But four years later there is still only one bus to the Kingsford Smith Airport—the 400 from Burwood to Bondi Junction. Not one new bus service announced by this Government will go to Australia's busiest airport.

The Government will not act, but Labor will. We will provide additional bus services to the airport, including a new service from Sutherland and St George. And we will not stop there. Action is needed to reduce the traffic nightmare around the airport. It is a drain on State and national productivity. The \$13.40 station access fee is a major disincentive to travelling by train. The starting point of any infrastructure plan should be to get the most out of the infrastructure that already exists. Labor removed the station access fee at Green Square and Mascot stations—and saw passenger numbers at these stations surge. A lower station access fee means more people travel by train. My commitment today is that the next Labor Government will enter into commercial negotiations with the privately owned Airport Link Company to secure a reduced station access fee of \$5.00. And we will also eliminate the fee completely for the airport's 29,000 workers. We will support public transport, to cut congestion at Sydney Airport.

One of the first acts of the Coalition when it came to government in 2011 was to close down the permanent Parliamentary Budget Office. It established only a temporary parliamentary budget office for six months every four years, with temporary staff and much diminished responsibilities. Today I commit to lifting the quality of debate in this State on fiscal, financial and economic matters by re-establishing a permanent Parliamentary Budget Office. It will prepare costings of election promises for party leaders and independent members, and also prepare costs of proposed policies from members of Parliament at any time. It will improve the standard of policymaking and legislative decision-making in New South Wales. Labor also commits to modernising parliamentary petitions—that most ancient of a citizen's rights—by accepting electronic petitions as well as paper ones.

The Commonwealth and Victoria have permanent parliamentary budget offices. The parliaments of Queensland, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory all accept e-petitions. Under Labor we will have a modern Parliament. The public needs to have confidence in the democratic process and in the administration of this State. After years of scandal—corruption inquiries, the dodgy Free Enterprise Foundation, resignations, the walking ATMs and the scandalous campaign in East Hills—the public knows the vital importance of the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] and the New South Wales Electoral Commission. But this Budget disgracefully slashes funding to the ICAC.

When it was investigating Labor Party figures it, rightly, received the funding it required to do its job. Now that it has shifted its attention to Liberal Party identities, it is forced to make do with 20 fewer staff. Labor supports the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the commitment I make today is that a future Labor Government will always provide the ICAC with the resources it needs to do its job properly. The Premier should think again, make the same commitment and restore the funding. The Electoral Commission should also be provided with more resources, so that it can operate a properly resourced flying squad to tackle the dodgy donors and shonky lobbyists—with a particular focus on local government.

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr LUKE FOLEY:** The Government's budget ignores a raft of health and education priorities. This Government's assault on local government and cuts to the Independent Commission Against Corruption reveal an arrogant contempt for the very institutions of our democracy. There is a better way for New South Wales. Labor brings new ideas for innovation and reform to grow opportunity and prosperity in our State. Labor understands that our urban and natural environment is not the enemy of but a precondition for a prosperous economy. Labor knows that our schools, our preschools, our technical and further education colleges and our hospitals are the very foundation of a decent life for all of our State's citizens. Labor is focused on the future and on a sustainable economy delivering opportunities for all.

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with the resolution of 22 June 2016 I will now put the question. The question is that these bills be now read a second time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### Third Reading

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations)**  
**(11:28):** I move:

That these bills be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Documents***BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS 2016-17**

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations) (11:28):** I move:

That this House take note of the Budget Estimates and Related Papers 2016-17.

**Motion agreed to.**

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with the resolution of 22 June 2016 the debate now stands adjourned. I set down the resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later time.

**Debate adjourned.***Bills***ROADS AMENDMENT (TRANSPARENT TOLLING) BILL 2016****Second Reading****Debate resumed from 5 May 2016.**

**Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (11:29):** It is with great pleasure that I speak in support of the Roads Amendment (Transparent Tolling) Bill 2016, which attempts to add greater transparency and oversight to the way in which tolls are set, measured and reviewed in New South Wales. The bill comes about following a great deal of consultation with industry and the broader community. It comes about because the Baird Government is increasingly becoming a secretive and elusive administration. The Baird Government has already set in place a number of tolls—some new, some reintroduced—to help pay for the State road network. Labor knows that tolls are part of the funding mix but there is currently no transparency in the way in which tolls are negotiated. As my colleague the shadow Treasurer stated when he introduced this bill, the tolls entail huge sums that will be locked in for decades to come.

In my electorate of Strathfield, the Government will force motorists driving between Homebush and Parramatta to pay an additional \$4.21 each way for the pleasure. On average that is an additional \$42 a week for motorists travelling to and from Western Sydney and almost an extra \$2,200 each year for individuals and families who are trying to balance the budget. When they wheel out the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, he clearly comes across as a Minister without the faintest idea of his brief. How can he understand the impact of tolls when he does not know the figures? At a recent media conference to announce a trial of toll technology, the Minister had no idea of the number of toll gantries that would be in place on the M4, the cost of the toll or the number of cars that were using the road. As the shadow Treasurer said in his speech, the logic of the Liberal-Nationals is: roads are good, WestConnex is a road, therefore WestConnex is good.

God bless them, but that simple faith unfortunately leads to an inability to understand the downsides, that is, the problems associated with a road delivery project, and this road delivery project has problems. That blind faith leads to them simply viewing their opponents as caricatures, which is very much how the roads Minister has behaved towards residents and groups concerned with WestConnex. We only need to look at last night's media to understand the situation the roads Minister is in. It also breeds a contempt and arrogance we can ill afford. The hubris is of particular concern when the Government is negotiating the tolls to pay for roads in absolute secrecy and beyond public scrutiny. It is a bit like asking a child how much they are willing to pay for the latest toy for Christmas. We all know the price will be unrealistically high and possibly not in anyone's interest. So too with the Government's negotiations over road tolling: we fear the result will be skewed against the public interest, which has certainly been the case. That is why this bill is so critical.

This bill will ensure a higher level of scrutiny and better value for the public by inserting a number of provisions into part 13 of the Roads Act 1993 that deal with arrangements surrounding road construction and operation in this State. The bill will require government to subject any future tolling agreement to the review of an independent regulator, such as the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART], and ensure that the public and consumer interests are protected. It will also ensure that tolling agreements are subject to the oversight of the Auditor-General—another commonsense victory for transparency, honesty and public review. Equally importantly, the bill will ensure that no future tolling agreements can price gouge through increases exceeding consumer price index [CPI] movements, as has been happening. For the first time tolls are being set and committed to above the CPI. Finally, in recognition of the importance of commercial users of toll roads—the logistics and transport industries—the bill will ensure that a methodology will be published justifying tolling differentials for trucks.

This bill proposes measures that will boost transparency and oversight regarding the charging of tolls on New South Wales roads. The bill is vital, particularly when we consider that most toll roads in Sydney are controlled by just one company. The M2, M5, M7, Cross City Tunnel, Eastern Distributor and NorthConnex are all operated by Transurban. Monopolistic or near monopolistic situations should give any Parliament cause to think differently about how it can best protect the public interest. That bears itself out when Transurban starts weighing into public debates over tolling, as it has done.

I thank my colleague the shadow Treasurer for introducing this bill. He has stated that the Baird Government is part of the problem rather than the solution when it comes to cost-of-living pressures on working families. This bill is about addressing that. Through secretive decision-making processes and poor project management, the Baird Government is adding to the costs faced by New South Wales families, particularly those in Western Sydney. The Government has reaped windfall revenues from an overheated Sydney property market that is pricing young families out of ever buying a home. It is also backing higher electricity prices to fatten up the calf that is the sale of the New South Wales electricity network.

Governments need to lead but they need to do so in a transparent and honest fashion. That is not happening with WestConnex because those qualities are in short supply with the Baird Government. Government members pride themselves on their economic rationalistic, businesslike approach, but more often than not there is a secrecy and furtiveness that seems to treat all Government decisions and transactions as commercial- or Cabinet-in-confidence. That is not in the public interest and it is why we have introduced this bill to shed more light on the Government's decision-making.

I look forward to the support of all members in this House as a sign that this Parliament supports transparency in government and will continue to strive to ensure that costs imposed by government are justified and subject to as much oversight as possible. At little more than three years old, the Baird Government is looking out of touch. It is removed from the daily concerns of families who are doing it tough and it is descending more and more into secrecy and hubris. It has even take the extraordinary step of placing the entire WestConnex project outside the ambit of the Government Information (Public Access) Act, which I have spoken about in this Parliament many times.

Members know that we introduced a bill to bring the Sydney Motorway Corporation under the freedom of information laws in this State—a bill the Government opposed and defeated. The Government continues to negotiate over tolls for roads that appear to have out-of-control costs in secret and without any checks or balances to see whether the outcomes are in the public interest. This bill will insert measures that keep the public interest at the centre of those negotiations. It will ensure that factors such as the cost of living are considered when the Government is negotiating and setting toll agreements and pricing and not just commercial interests of government and the provider, as is currently the case. I believe that any member genuinely committed to defending the interests of motorists, transport businesses and the broader public will support this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) (11:38):** The Government does not support the Roads Amendment (Transparent Tolling) Bill 2016 introduced by the member for Keira. The primary effect of the bill would be to prevent tolls on any new private sector toll roads as well as any new or existing government-operated tollways, bridges, tunnels or road-ferries from being set or amended until the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal has completed a review and found the proposal to be in the public interest.

According to the Opposition, this Government does not do anything in the public interest. That is a complete furphy. Perhaps by 2019 the Labor members who are in favour of projects and those who are not will become apparent. I am still unsure if they are in favour of WestConnex. We often hear members opposite who represent communities along the WestConnex corridor speak in favour of WestConnex, yet when they come in here they are against it. They are in favour of the better travel times but when it comes to paying for it they want a couple of bob each way. Instead of having a productive Opposition that presents challenging, new, fresh ideas, we have a bunch of wrecking balls. I remind those opposite that the public will see straight through them if they treat the community with contempt or do not offer productive alternatives.

As the WestConnex is such an innovative project, I was concerned that this Government would not be around to see it completed. But as every day passes I am more confident that we are here for the long haul and we will be cutting the ribbon at the end of the process. The Opposition's argument about cost blowouts on tollway projects is another furphy. With a good revenue stream and innovative ideas, such as public private partnerships [PPPs] on infrastructure builds, then the projects can be extended and beneficial parts added. It is similar to building a house—your budget is \$300,000 but if you come across extra money you can extend the project. That is what the Government is doing. We are giving value for money with a better and bigger project for the people of New South Wales.

Many of those opposite, who are beneficiaries of the infrastructure projects we are building, complain in this place about the cost of the projects and the means for paying for them. But when they are in their electorates they talk up these wonderful projects that they are not delivering. I remind the member for Strathfield that it was a Labor government that sold off road corridors. The M4 widening should have taken place years ago; instead, a Labor government dumped the traffic into Concord and sold off the corridors. Now even the local Labor mayors in the inner west support WestConnex. Why do those Labor mayors support this project but the Labor Opposition does not? I cannot work it out. They are flip-flopping all over the place. Labor is trying hard to walk the walk but it is not talking the talk.

I turn now to the bill. Labor has asked, What processes exist to protect the public interest when the Government makes decisions around tollways? It is logical that the Government has to protect the public interest. The Government already has a range of different processes in place, including development and strategic plans, the application of strategic merit tests, the preparation of detailed business cases for major projects, independent assurance, competitive tendering to ensure value for money, and gateway reviews for major procurements and formal planning approvals, including environmental impact assessment under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. Additionally, any tollway concession agreement is subject to approval by the Treasurer under the Public Authorities (Financial Arrangements) Act 1987.

Those opposite would have us believe that this bill will solve everything as the Government has not put anything in place. They are completely wrong. This bill is about discrediting good projects across the State. I will name only a few of the many projects: the \$8.3 billion Sydney Metro Northwest; \$16.8 billion WestConnex 33-kilometre road network; the nine kilometre NorthConnex Motorway; the \$6 billion redevelopment of Barangaroo; and the \$3.4 billion redevelopment of the Convention Centre at Darling Harbour. They will create a world-class major events destination. This Government is delivering on infrastructure and we are reducing red tape.

In presenting this bill, the Opposition is questioning our openness and transparency. It will get absolutely nowhere when these projects are up and running. During our first three years in office, those opposite said the projects would never get off the ground, even after they were approved. Two years later WestConnex is at lockup stage. The Opposition now asks how we are financing the project. Is it borrowed money? Where are we getting the money from? They complain that the project originally cost \$14 billion and now it is \$16.8 billion. That is because the project has got bigger and better. It is hard to work out what their next strategy will be. Today Labor made a major announcement about driverless cars because they have nothing else taking place behind the scenes.

I return to the bill. What will be the impact on customers if this bill is enacted? The risks and uncertainty could discourage or deter private sector investment in new or improved motorways, which means that the Government would not be able to deliver major upgrades to the motorway network as quickly. Another significant issue for road users might arise if tolls were only able to increase at the rate of the consumer price index [CPI]. It may be necessary for the initial tolls on a motorway to be higher in order to recover the costs of constructing and operating the motorway over the life of the tolling project.

When we came to office after 16 years in opposition the landscape was desolate and had very little infrastructure. In fact, I will never forget standing on the Gladesville Bridge at the time and seeing only one crane in the sky—by the way, it was broken. There are now in excess of 150 cranes on the New South Wales skyline. We are second to Dubai; that is absolutely phenomenal. This Government wants to build more and more infrastructure. That means we will look at innovative initiatives, such as public-private partnerships [PPPs], which offer great opportunities to improve services. We will provide value for money, as long as we can continue to appropriate risk sharing, encourage innovation, greater asset utilisation and an integrated whole-of-life management of the assets.

Bills such as the one before the House affect the confidence of those who want to do business with government. How can we entice the private sector to join in projects when those opposite try to turn things around in this place? It reminds me of what happened in Victoria where a billion-dollar road project was to be built and the government of the day came along and said, "See you later alligator." That is the problem. The harm that the Opposition is doing is incredible. I would like those opposite to take a productive approach—unlike the Leader of the Opposition did in his reply to the budget. There was just nothing in it; it ended before it started. The worst aspect of this bill is that it will discourage businesses from doing business with government because they know the goalposts will be continually changing if those opposite are ever returned to office.

Another question that has to be asked is what impact this bill will have on taxpayers if it is enacted. Transparency and openness are at the core of that question. The bill has the potential to place upward pressure on the overall cost to government because toll road operators would likely require a higher rate of return on their investment to compensate for the higher risk. This would increase the overall cost to government for a new toll

road to be built and operated by the private sector. It is common business practice. Those opposite who have never been in business—although according to Ms Jodi McKay they have all been to TAFE—

**Mr Clayton Barr:** I have.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** And I have. I am quite informed to talk on the benefits.

**Mr Paul Lynch:** Even TAFE has some failures.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** I always welcome interjections from the member for Liverpool.

**Mr Paul Lynch:** No you don't.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** His remarks just show that he is still awake.

**Mr Paul Lynch:** Unlike you, who talks when you're asleep.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** You look like you're asleep when you're talking. What would be the impact on taxpayers if the bill is enacted? I have already stated one impact. Another impact is that it would make an investment in toll roads riskier and reduce flexibility for toll road operators to manage the risk through pricing. The bill could also be expected to reduce the price that the private sector would pay for toll road concessions, such as WestConnex, once completed. One can see the pattern developing here. And it has not developed overnight; it has been happening since 2011. Those opposite will try whatever they can. They will say one thing in the Chamber, hoping that their comments do not leave the Chamber, and then say something else in their own community. That is the pattern developing, particularly for those from the inner west.

I want to talk about WestConnex, which is a project that will benefit all of Sydney. I think it is the largest road program ever built in Australia. It is not only a road project, as those opposite would have people believe, it is also a transport project because the WestConnex and urban renewal process includes upgrades to better public transport. It also includes the urban renewal that will be around this major infrastructure and a value capture scheme that can pay for all the things the Leader of the Opposition spoke about in his reply to the budget, such as health, education and law and order. We heard a whole lot of polished statements in his speech.

**Mr Paul Toole:** Rhetoric.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** It could be called rhetoric. It is like their polished brochures: nothing ever eventuates. The WestConnex project in my electorate brings huge benefits. I note the member for Cabramatta is in the Chamber. It will bring great benefits for his electorate also.

**Mr Nick Lalich:** The people in my electorate will need an extra \$2,000 a year to travel. That is the benefit it will bring!

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** That is exactly my point. Labor wants the infrastructure but when it comes to who pays for it that is another ball game. The Opposition members want everything but they do not want to know how it will be paid for. This Government has been up-front and transparent throughout the process. We do not need safeguards as the Opposition requests because there are safeguards already in place. When we look at the forecast growth in heavy vehicle movements across Sydney, the doubling of passenger and freight movements at Sydney Airport, the increased goods passing through Port Botany, and the population and employment growth along the M5 and M4 corridors—in the electorates of those opposite—we can see the value added by this project. In fact, this project is expected to deliver more than \$20 billion in economic benefits for New South Wales. So when the Opposition talks about paying for projects, the sources are already there. I will return to the bill—

**Mr Paul Lynch:** Why spoil a perfect record?

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** —because I want to keep the member for Liverpool awake. In relation to the questions around probity and the essence of the bill, I ask: How will the bill compromise the independence of the Auditor-General? That is another important question. For the Auditor-General to be genuinely independent of government, the Auditor-General must have the discretion to select which projects or agencies will be subject to financial or performance audits. By requiring the Auditor-General to undertake performance audits of a specific class of projects, that discretion would be compromised. That would be the result of this bill brought forward by the member for Keira. One might ask: Why is it inappropriate for the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] to determine whether a project is in the public interest? It is quite simple.

The IPART's core function is to regulate prices charged for government monopoly services, such as electricity, water and public transport, in order to protect consumers from abuses of monopoly power. That is a different situation to the road network, where the Government's policy is to ensure that there is always a free alternative to a toll road. Additionally, many customers have public transport alternatives to using a toll road, thereby providing communities with even more choice. As such, it is neither necessary nor appropriate to require

IPART to review specific proposals to determine whether they are in the public interest. It is real dinosaur stuff when the Opposition starts talking about public interest. Everything this Government does is about the public interest.

**Mr Jamie Parker:** What about Concord Hospital?

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** I am more than happy to discuss public hospitals any day of the week. This bill is all about the polish that the Opposition puts on everything. The Government, in its budget, made a fantastic announcement for Concord Hospital of \$750 million for planning. The member for Liverpool laughs. He does not care about hospitals. This Government is not going to do what the Opposition did when it spent \$500 billion on the Rozelle Metro and delivered absolutely jack. The Opposition delivered squat when it came to the Rozelle Metro. If the Opposition had spent money on planning it would have ended up with a good infrastructure project. That is why those opposite are sitting on the Opposition benches, and I hope they keep those seats warm for the next 16 years. They fail to plan and when a government fails to plan it will not get the desired outcome.

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

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** The member for Liverpool continues to complain about Concord Hospital. He has a slightly sad look about him after hearing that there is \$750 million for planning. When more money is allocated next year the member for Liverpool will become Mr Sad Face. Come 2019 when the hospital is built, the member for Liverpool will be very, very upset. I will return to the bill.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Order! Members will cease interjecting and allow the member for Drummoyne to speak on the bill in silence.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** I welcome the interjections as I have unlimited time in this debate. I do not think I have an appointment until Christmas, so I have plenty of time.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Order! The member will return to the leave of the bill.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** I am happy to ask the questions that the Opposition will not. This Opposition bill has a lot of polish but no substance. Those opposite do not know if they are coming or going. A question that has to be asked is: How will the bill limit the Government's ability to set tolling policy? It is important to recognise that the Government would have less flexibility to adjust tolls to reflect changes in policy or changes in the road network.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** You can do it.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** No, we cannot. For example, if the bill were enacted, the Government may be unable to introduce bi-directional tolling on a motorway where a toll currently applies in only one direction, as doing so could result in an increase above the consumer price index [CPI] for some motorists or the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] may find it is not in the public interest. The Government's ability to set a consistent toll for parallel routes could also be constrained. For example, aligning tolls between the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Sydney Harbour Tunnel, or with a potential future western harbour tunnel, may be constrained, as any agreement or tolling order would be subject to an IPART review that could potentially take a different view, which would bind the Government.

I return to where we started half an hour ago—delivering the infrastructure that this State needs and that those opposite also want but failed to deliver in 16 years. We remember well the level of confidence the private sector had when Labor was in government. What company would want to enter into a partnership in the Cross City Tunnel or the Lane Cove Tunnel with those opposite? The companies would just go broke. Since 2011 the confidence we have built up in the private and public sectors has reached the point where the Government is able to deliver major infrastructure across the State. The importance of that should not be overlooked. The Government will continue to look at other methods of partnership to encourage more investment above and beyond what it is already doing.

It is the role of the elected government to make decisions on matters of overall public interest. Major infrastructure projects in New South Wales, including new or improved toll roads, are already rigorously assessed to ensure that they are in the public interest and to make sure they deliver value for money for taxpayers. The great safeguard is that, if government does not efficiently deliver projects that are effective and change the lives of people, with value for money, they will not be in government for long. In 2011 and 2015 the Government set down guidelines informing the New South Wales public of our plans. We are moving along the path of delivering those projects. As I said earlier, such processes include the development of strategic plans. There is so much that goes into the planning of a project. The last thing we need is bills like this that could restrict that progress.

To ensure transparency, tolling agreements must be published under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 and contracts are audited by the Auditor-General and tabled in the Parliament under the New South Wales Public Private Partnerships [PPP] Guidelines. Should the Government of the day consider there is a particular need for IPART to conduct a review of toll roads, the existing legislation that governs IPART allows for a referral to be made to them in relation to industry pricing or competition. A new Act for this purpose is therefore unnecessary. Another reason not to support the bill is that the proposed role for IPART is not necessarily consistent with its core functions around pricing of government monopoly services. It is unnecessary, given the Government's policy of there always being a free alternative to a toll road. The requirement that IPART complete a review within four weeks is unworkable.

The bill would increase risks for private sector investors in toll roads who would have less certainty about agreements struck with the Government. This would increase the cost to government and potentially impact the delivery of new tolling roads. The bill would constrain the Government of the day from setting tolling policy. The bill would compromise the independence of the Auditor-General by limiting her discretion about which projects or agencies should be subject to a performance audit and would place onerous burdens on private sector toll road operators by requiring them to meet the costs of an audit of a government agency. I will continue to speak to the genuine concerns of the public. I will not be silenced on delivering some of these nation-building infrastructure projects and I will not support ridiculous bills that restrict the potential for development of this State.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** You don't believe that.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** The member for Strathfield should return to the House so that we can talk about WestConnex because it does affect her electorate. These projects are vital and challenging, particularly the project we have been talking about with regard to tolling and WestConnex. Work is progressing in unprecedented terms. One has only to see the fencing that is going up around the construction sites in North Strathfield; the widening from Parramatta to Homebush Bay drive; and the fencing around a number of allotments in the Haberfield area to realise the project is well underway together with the other projects we have in the pipeline. We were talking about education five minutes ago. There are four new schools in my electorate. One is complete, two are on the way and a fourth one will be finished by 2018.

**Mr Chris Patterson:** High schools or primary schools?

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** There are two Catholic schools and two public schools together with some innovative thinking and design around one of our schools that only went to year 2 but that will now go to year 6. Bills like this reflect badly on the credibility of those opposite because it would appear to the public that such bills are only introduced to stifle good infrastructure projects. Those opposite want to create an image, a smokescreen, that infrastructure is not being built and when it is being built, apart from those opposite wanting to take credit for it, they look at discrediting the process. We have a process in line and we follow it in an orderly fashion.

**Mr Mark Coure:** St George Hospital.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** Let us not go into health infrastructure, member for Oatley, because the Government's progress in that area has been unbelievable. We need to work together to deliver these infrastructure projects to a point where it can continue as a win-win situation for our communities. We must make it easy to deliver good, effective infrastructure in order to obtain the investment that will meet the demands of our increasing population—a further 1.6 million people, with more than 27.5 million journeys occurring every weekend in Sydney. Something that has not been mentioned in debate on this bill is population growth. Population growth is probably one of the most significant drivers of future infrastructure demand.

The New South Wales Government expects that 1.6 million more people will call Sydney their home over the next 20 years. On recent trends, almost 80 per cent of that population growth will occur in existing areas. That is why projects like WestConnex are of paramount importance. Opposition members should be consistent. They should say exactly the same thing in their communities as they are saying in this place. But that is not what happens. People think that what goes on in this Chamber remains in the Chamber, but that is not the case.

I am proud that the WestConnex project is progressing. The overall benefits will be fantastic for the entire State. From a local perspective, where the M4 ends at Concord it is a massive rat run. Many years ago people invested their life savings in property there, thinking that the M4 would continue. Then the Labor Party sold off the corridors and left residents in a state of limbo for years. People who bought houses in relatively quiet streets live on very busy streets now because of the increase in traffic and the lack of investment in infrastructure over a long period of time. There is traffic congestion along Concord Road and over the Ryde bridge. There are bottlenecks in areas that were traditionally quiet. Labor turned roads such as Queens Road in Five Dock into a rat run.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order: I ask that the member be directed to return to the leave of the bill. It is about tolls.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** It is a wide-ranging debate on infrastructure.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** To the point of order: I have been talking for 20 minutes on tolls. If the member for Strathfield wants to take a point of order after being in the Chamber for only two minutes, she is more than welcome to do so.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** I remind the member for Drummoyne that I have not yet ruled on the point of order. Even though the debate is broad ranging, I ask the member for Drummoyne to address the content of the legislation. I also remind the member for Strathfield that she is fortunate not to have been called to order for making interjections from behind the bar of the House. If the member wishes to interject she should do so from within the House or she will be called to order.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** I am content that the member for Strathfield is upset about WestConnex because she understands the benefits that it will bring for her community. I do not want to have a medal pinned on my chest for my involvement in this project, but I am happy to represent the community of the member for Strathfield as well. Having been a mayor in that council area, I still have many ties there. I speak to many community members in that area. Even those of a different political persuasion tell me privately about the economic benefits of the WestConnex project. In a few years time, when the project is finished, Labor will say that the public transport is fantastic on Parramatta Road and will try to take credit for it.

It is a fantastic project. Rather than spruik the economic benefits of this project, Opposition members will do whatever they can to discredit the project. They introduce bills to try to make Government policy appear to be something that it is not. Labor members are not standing up for their communities, for the greater good, to deliver projects that will change the lives of people in their communities. This bill is a deliberate ploy by Labor to discredit the project. There are already safeguards in place. This bill is pointless. That is what one would expect from an Opposition that has not made any inroads in trying to discredit the project.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (12:13):** Under Standing Order 86, I move:

That the question be now put.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** The question is that the question be now put.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....31  
Noes .....45  
Majority.....14

#### AYES

Dr McDermott  
Mr Chanthivong  
Mr Dib  
Mr Kamper  
Mr Mehan  
Mr Piper  
Mr Zangari  
Ms Catley  
Ms Haylen  
Ms Mihailuk  
Ms Watson

Mr Atalla  
Mr Crakanthorp  
Mr Harris  
Mr Lalich (teller)  
Mr Park  
Mr Robertson  
Ms Aitchison  
Ms Finn  
Ms Hornery  
Ms T. F. Smith

Mr Barr  
Mr Daley  
Mr Hoenig  
Mr Lynch  
Mr Parker  
Mr Warren (teller)  
Ms Car  
Ms Harrison  
Ms McKay  
Ms Washington

#### NOES

Dr Lee  
Mr Bromhead (teller)  
Mr Coure  
Mr Elliott  
Mr Gulaptis  
Mr Humphries  
Mr Maguire  
Mr O'Dea

Mr Anderson  
Mr Conolly  
Mr Crouch  
Mr Evans  
Mr Hazzard  
Mr Johnsen  
Mr Marshall  
Mr Patterson (teller)

Mr Aplin  
Mr Constance  
Mr Dominello  
Mr George  
Mr Henskens  
Mr Kean  
Mr Notley-Smith  
Mr Perrottet

## NOES

Mr Piccoli	Mr Provest	Mr Roberts
Mr Rowell	Mr Sidoti	Mr Speakman
Mr Stokes	Mr Taylor	Mr Toole
Mr Tudehope	Mr Ward	Mr Williams
Ms Berejikian	Ms Davies	Ms Gibbons
Ms Goward	Ms Hodgkinson	Ms Pavey
Ms Petinos	Ms Skinner	Ms Upton

## PAIRS

Mr Foley	Mr Baird	Mr Minns
Mr Barilaro	Ms Doyle	Mr Grant
Ms Hay	Ms Williams	Ms K. Smith
Mr Ayres		

**Motion negatived.**

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (12:21):** I make a contribution to the Roads Amendment (Transparent Tolling) Bill 2016, which has been introduced by the Opposition. This is an anti-roads bill. It is a bill from a party that would never manage to build a modern toll road, and, should the bill pass, would try to prevent any government from ever doing so. This Government is building the toll roads that those opposite when in government would not. We are building the roads that Sydney and New South Wales need. The public knows that. The public can see the difference because it stands out a mile. The wonderful budget that the Treasurer introduced in this House the other day includes roads aplenty meeting the needs of the community from one end of Sydney to the other and throughout the regions of New South Wales.

Who does the public trust to build an infrastructure project in New South Wales? The public knows it could never trust the Labor Party on any infrastructure project. This bill, which has been introduced by the Labor Opposition, contains what might be called a Clayton's argument because the Opposition does not have any position at all on WestConnex. One day, depending on the audience, it pretends to commuters, travellers and people in the community that it is in favour of better roads. The next day, if there are protestors in the streets, it pretends that it is against the WestConnex project. Opposition members try to walk on both sides of the street, depending on which day it is and which audience they are talking to.

This bill is a way for the Opposition to say something without saying anything at all. The Government is not going to follow that approach. We want to get on and do the job that the people of New South Wales elected us to do. We want to build the roads and railways that the community need. We are constructing the Sydney Metro, both the north-west and the newer south-west rail components. Those projects are being built by this Government, after years of talk from those opposite. They talked for years, made empty promises and released a few glossy brochures and multimedia kits but they did not construct a single centimetre of rail track. There was not a single tunnelling machine in the ground to build any new tunnels. The bill before the House is about delaying, obstructing, preventing, and providing excuses; it does not facilitate anything at all.

I turn now to the specifics of the bill. The bill seeks to give responsibility to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] to determine what is in the public interest. I put this question to the people elected to this House: Whose job is that? Who is supposed to determine the public interest? Is it the economists in IPART—no doubt they are professionally qualified in their field to test economic assumptions—or is it the elected representatives of the people? We are elected to this House and the other place and it is our job to determine the complex competing priorities facing the people of New South Wales.

It is clear that it is the job of the elected government and the elected representatives. It is not the job of IPART to determine public interest. The only reason that Labor members are proposing to shift that role to IPART is because they are in opposition. They would never propose a bill like this if they were in government because they know it would be unworkable and inappropriate. They know handing over a responsibility of elected representatives to public servants is not the right way to do business. Public servants have undoubted expertise in their fields but it is not their role to determine the public interest.

As can be seen from the recently handed down budget, this Government is serious about putting real money towards meeting the needs of the people of New South Wales, whether it is in toll roads, public transport, health, schools, new police stations or a myriad of other projects contained in the budget document. It is no

accident or coincidence that this Government is able to provide the funding to meet those needs. It is because of the hard work, the tough decisions, the fiscal discipline and the single-minded focus of the team running New South Wales since 2011, previously under Premier Barry O'Farrell and now under Premier Mike Baird. We have ensured that we are meeting the needs and putting the money where it matters. We are doing the things that need to be done.

The Government is not just talking about projects, we are getting on and building them. That is what we are focused on. Our focus is not on introducing bills in order to pretend we have a position on something when really we are doing our darnedest to avoid having a position. The Opposition does not want to admit to the community that it thinks WestConnex is a good project. Because there are some protestors down the road, the Opposition pretends it is not a good project. The Opposition wants to walk on both sides of the street, and it is doing so in an unseemly manner. The Opposition is not conning anyone with this sort of approach. The community knows who to trust and who will meet its needs. The community knows who means business and who will get things done.

Congestion costs Sydney an enormous amount of money. In fact, it is estimated to be \$5 billion per annum, and it will grow to an estimated \$8 billion per annum by 2020 if nothing is done. The infrastructure projects outlined in the most recent budget, and the ones already underway, are crucial to meeting the needs of this State and this city and the people who live and work here. People depend on good outcomes, and they want the opportunity to get to work, to earn an income and to contribute to society. Those are the people we are focusing on. They need us to do this work, and we intend to do it.

The productivity and economic growth benefits of roads like WestConnex, NorthConnex and indeed all of the other projects that we are undertaking are enormous. If goods can get from the factories to the markets, from the country to the ports, and from the shops to people's homes far more quickly it means less cost. The system becomes more efficient, more effective and cheaper for the people of New South Wales because of a reduction in the cost of doing business and in the cost of living. There is a real gain for everyone in having a more effective road network. I do not have to convince too many people of the benefits of that. Those in Sydney who drive to work are reminded of it every day as they sit in the congestion that was left to them after 16 years of inaction by Labor governments. It was 16 years of neglect, 16 years of excuses, and 16 years of bungling and waste.

**Mr Nick Lalich:** Four elections.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY:** That is right, for four elections the people returned the mob opposite, and not once did they deserve it. Not once did they deliver for the people of New South Wales in all of that time.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** In accordance with sessional orders debate is interrupted for consideration of General Business (Notices of Motion) General Notices. I set down the resumption of this debate as an order of the day for tomorrow.

I acknowledge Justin Cordi, from St Patrick's College, Sutherland, a work experience student who is with the member for Oatley. He may learn that I do not appreciate the interjections of the member for Oatley.

#### *Motions*

### **WARRAGAMBA DAM**

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill) (12:30):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the \$58 million investment in the 2016-17 State Budget to raise the Warragamba Dam wall by 14 metres.
- (2) Notes the significant protection from flooding that this measure will provide for communities in Western Sydney.

Warragamba Dam is well known by almost everybody in metropolitan Sydney, given the majority of them draw their water from that dam. The dam was commenced in the late 1940s and completed in 1960. At the opening of the dam in 1960, a senior hydrologist involved with its construction was reported to state that whilst Warragamba Dam was not a flood mitigation dam but a water storage dam, the provision of this piece of infrastructure would preclude a flood ever occurring in the Hawkesbury-Nepean district in the future and that it would take a minimum of 10 years of weather to completely fill the dam.

In 1961, one year after the senior hydrologist said that, the Hawkesbury-Nepean area witnessed the worst flood since European settlement at a height of almost 15 metres. My family remember that flood. As I stated in my introductory remarks, my first ancestor to the Hawkesbury, Joseph Wright, arrived on the First Fleet and was fortunate to have been given a land grant in the Hawkesbury area. Shortly after another descendant, James Whalan, arrived and also received a land grant in the Hawkesbury area. My family has remained in the Hawkesbury area

to this day and during that time there have been approximately 120 floods. We have also seen the very serious floods upwards and above 11 to 14 metres that have occurred unfortunately every decade since records have been maintained.

In 1990 my family had a metre of water through our own home. When one has elderly parents, and a grandmother in her 90s, I know it is absolutely traumatic to have to evacuate a home that is inundated with water. My family was one of the lucky ones that could return to their home and get on with life, but many people suffered the destruction of property. Floods rise very rapidly, as a matter of fact in a matter of hours, in the Hawkesbury-Nepean area once water breaches the Warragamba Dam. People can go to sleep some nights and wake up with paddocks inundated, and horses, animals, cattle and cows floating dead in the river or washed downstream because of the devastation of flood.

Currently, it is recognised that 134,000 people either reside or work in the Hawkesbury-Nepean flood area and it is the worst flood-affected area in New South Wales, if not this country. In 1993 the Greiner and Fahey Government made a responsible decision to raise the wall of Warragamba Dam and put in place infrastructure at the dam that would mitigate the risk of flood. Unfortunately, in 1995 a Labor Government was elected under Premier Bob Carr and that project was cancelled. Fast forward to this Liberal-Nationals Government today with the announcement of an injection of \$58 million, in Tuesday's budget of \$73 billion, which is the first phase of funding towards a commitment of some \$700 million to raise the Warragamba Dam wall.

The Hawkesbury-Nepean valley between Penrith and Sackville has the greatest flood risk in New South Wales. Floods in this valley pose a risk to life and property due to the unique topography of the area. Following detailed evaluation by an expert task force led by Infrastructure NSW it was identified that raising Warragamba Dam by 14 metres was the most cost-effective solution to significantly reduce risk to life and potential economic impacts in the valley. Raising the Warragamba Dam wall by 14 metres to reduce flood risk in the Hawkesbury-Nepean valley is estimated to cost \$690 million. As I said, \$58 million was provided in the budget: \$30 million for detailed concept designs, environmental assessments and preparation of the full business case to raise the Warragamba Dam wall, and \$28 million to increase community flood risk awareness, create evacuation signage, improve flood forecasting and integrate the flood risk management with regional planning.

Raising the dam wall is also expected to reduce potential economic impacts from flood risk by about 75 per cent on average. This will provide additional protection for townships downstream of the dam that are built on a floodplain, including Windsor, Richmond and parts of Penrith. The current full storage level at Warragamba Dam will not be changed: The raised dam wall is only for temporary storage of floodwaters during large flood events. I welcome this critical piece of infrastructure and once again credit our Premier and Minister for Western Sydney for it.

**Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (12:37):** I support the motion moved by member for Castle Hill to raise Warragamba Dam wall by 14 metres. Warragamba Dam is in my electorate of Wollondilly and I stand proud along with many other members representing the electorates of Castle Hill, Seven Hills, Riverstone, Mulgoa and Penrith and those further downstream who have worked together over many years to see this project come to fruition. The \$58 million is for the first phase of this \$690 million project. As the member for Castle Hill said, if that area suffers an event similar to that which occurred in Queensland 2011-12, approximately 134,000 people from 43,000 homes will have to be evacuated.

In 1995 the Labor Government looked at this issue and built the spillway, but the height of the wall was not raised and unfortunately this Government has to undertake this project and it is the most important thing we can do for those people. Six or seven years ago Labor said that Warragamba Dam would not flood for many years. In the five years since I have been the local member I have seen it flood many times. I know it is at full capacity as I speak and any major rainfall event will see it flood again, putting those downstream in potential danger.

It is important to me to support members with electorates downstream from Warragamba Dam. Last fortnight Wollondilly suffered from a severe east coast low storm event, which damaged many homes across the region. In Picton many businesses were damaged and 30 to 40 homes were flooded. The one-in-100-year flood levels were exceeded and some business were affected by floodwater that rose up to 8 feet. A local school has been closed until at least next term due to storm damage and its 400 students now have to travel an additional hour to attend another.

When the storm hit us on Sunday afternoon I saw the waters quickly begin to rise. I pay respect to our emergency services personnel in the Rural Fire Service, Fire and Rescue NSW, the police and the Ambulance Service who did a fantastic job protecting life and property, and making the community safer. They worked day and night for more than a week. I also thank the members of Wollondilly Shire Council who accompanied me as I toured Argyle Street, the main street in Picton, at 3.00 a.m. when the waters receded. Simon Landow, general manager Luke Johnson and I saw something that resembled a war zone on a movie set. The contents of every shop

were strewn across the main street. There were caravans, cars, big bins and gas cylinders everywhere. It was a disaster zone. Within the hours of 3.00 to 6.00 a.m. the council and emergency services workers had cleared the main street so that at least it could be opened.

I thank Superintendent Ward Hanson, who led the recovery committee and coordinated the services to make the area safe. We were fortunate to have the Premier visit us not once but twice. On the first occasion there was no media or rigmarole. He just came and said sorry to the home and business owners who had lost everything. He put an arm around them and let the community know that the New South Wales Government was right behind them. The next day I was happy to host the Premier and Prime Minister in our community when we made a natural disaster declaration, which unlocked much-needed funds to assist with the clean-up, and will help businesses and home owners alike. The community has received great support from people such as the great legend Mark Geyer, also known as MG, and the Wests Tigers, who are preparing to do a charity walk from Concord Oval to Picton. I have set up a relief fund in conjunction with the Lions Club of Tahmoor, which has already raised more than \$50,000. Wollondilly council has also set up a fund. We will work together to distribute those funds where they are most needed.

Floods like the one we experienced have devastating impacts on people's lives. I met a man who left home when he was a teenager and did the right thing by getting an education at university. He became a teacher at Picton High School and was renting the home he had lived in since he was about 15. The floodwater came in so high it did not merely damage the house, but effectively demolished it. I visited him to lend my support and see what we would do. I wanted to let him know that the community was behind him. While I was there three of his students came with a few dollars each and said, "Sir, can we buy you lunch? Can we help you clean up?" I am not sure who was crying more—the young gentleman or all of us who witnessed that act. The very worst of events has brought out the very best of the Wollondilly community.

I saw shopkeepers who had lost nearly everything help shopkeepers next door who had lost more. I saw thousands of people come to the main street to help one another. Within 24 hours something like 2,000 people were registered to volunteer in one way or another. Many community groups are now fundraising and providing assistance. For example, the Wollondilly Food Pantry is providing food with the money we are raising. We also have the Wellies for Wollondilly campaign. Some of the money we raise through the relief fund will go to provide food for about 80 families as they recover over the next three months. [*Extension of time*]

The Wollondilly Food Pantry, which is run by Community Links, will deliver not just canned goods but also fresh food, vegetables and grocery items to families that desperately need them. That is the type of work the Wollondilly community has done and will continue to do. The community outreach has been amazing. I thank my staff, who have been with me throughout this ordeal and worked above and beyond to ensure that we provide whatever level of support we can. I also thank the Premier for appointing State disaster recovery coordinator Dave Owens, who has done a fantastic job in providing assistance to Wollondilly and other areas that suffered damage in the storm. In my electorate Broughton Pass, a vital link between Appin and Wilton, has been partly washed away. Even though it is a council asset we have been in touch with Wollondilly Shire Council to ensure it makes an application under the disaster arrangements so we can fund the reconstruction of that bridge. It is an important issue that people continue to raise with me.

Obviously events like these raise issues about insurance. Various people have various policies. I am advised that about 98 per cent of insurance claims are approved and there is only a handful still to go. I call on all insurance companies to make their assessments as quickly as possible and pay the claims so people can get their lives back on track. As I said, the devastation I saw was unbelievable. At Khan's SUPA IGA a large commercial fridge that would take 30 people to lift was easily flipped over by the floodwater. That store lost something like \$2 million worth of stock.

I thank the Rapid Response Team, who always assist in our community when there is a disaster. They provided food for the volunteers day and night and did a great job. The Lions Club of Tahmoor has been fantastic in not just helping me with the relief fund but also providing assistance and coordinating the volunteers at the council chambers. In particular I thank District Governor Sharon Bishop and President Dawn Saxton. I also thank the Picton Rotary members who manned barbecues and assisted wherever they could. I do not have the time today to thank everyone I should thank, but to say that the Wollondilly spirit is alive and well is an understatement.

The heightening of the dam wall is important so that communities in the electorates of members who will speak shortly do not suffer from storm events like we have suffered. In 2012 I asked then Premier Barry O'Farrell to once again make the dam wall available to the public after Labor closed the public viewing area many years ago. We set up a trial and have now reopened the dam wall to the public on weekends and public holidays. That has revitalised tourism in the Warragamba community and provided a much-needed boost to that town on the border of my electorate and the Mulgoa electorate. I commend this important motion to the House.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) (12:48):** I make a brief contribution to debate on the motion and say that the Opposition supports the Warragamba Dam infrastructure, which has had a chequered history. It is fair to say that the project has been discussed for many years and it is by no means uncontroversial. Chapter 12 of the 2012 State Infrastructure Strategy report titled "Water Infrastructure" deals with the benefits, and, conversely, the risks associated with not undertaking this project. I quote from page 161 of that report:

A flood with a 1 in 1,000 chance occurrence per year, such as occurred in some Queensland catchments in 2011, would be expected to cause \$4.3 billion in direct damages and an estimated \$8 billion in total tangible damages in the HNV [Hawkesbury Nepean Valley]. It would flood 14,000 homes above floor level and destroy 6,500 homes. At risk would be 43,000 residents and 9,000 employees of local businesses. The impact of such a disaster would be felt across the NSW and Australian economy and impact negatively on people and businesses outside the HNV. The western railway line, for example, would be disrupted for up to six months which affects coal and other freight exports from Central and Western NSW. It would also disrupt 6,000 daily train commuters from the Blue Mountains and passenger services from Central and Western NSW.

The report continues with those sorts of scenarios. Significantly it states:

In 2011 report specifically on flood evacuation if the HN, commissioned by the (then) Department of Planning, identified that in a major flood event today, in some scenarios, more than 22,000 people would not have time to evacuate due to inadequate road evacuation infrastructure ...

As part of its study Infrastructure NSW had a cost benefit analysis undertaken of providing significant flood mitigation to the HNV by raising Warragamba Dam wall.

In 2014 then Minister for Primary Industries, Ms Katrina Hodgkinson, announced a task force to lead the next stage of the review, including an assessment of the engineering, economic, environmental and social impact of raising the dam. I also note that there was an earlier review in relation to this issue and in 2013, unless I am mistaken, then Prime Minister Julia Gillard pledged something like \$50 million towards raising the wall by 23 metres. At that time then Premier O'Farrell did not agree to support that, perhaps because at the time he wanted the review to be completely conducted—that is justifiable.

In respect of the cost-benefit analysis done by Infrastructure NSW and all of the planning reviews and the like that will accompany it, we ask the Government to be completely and utterly transparent with the people of New South Wales and not hide any of the details—financial, social, environmental or otherwise—as they are wont to do with all the major projects that are currently happening in New South Wales. The WestConnex, NorthConnex and light rail projects are all cloaked in secrecy. Environmental damage is accompanying a small project like the CBD and South East Light Rail and communities have been ambushed. We ask the Government to come clean on this and to publish all of the data. We will support the Government if it does that.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Hawkesbury—Minister for Finance, Services and Property) (12:52):** I commend the Government's decisive action in tackling flood risk and improving safety for families in Hawkesbury. The commitment by this Government to raise the wall of the Warragamba Dam will be one of the largest infrastructure projects the Hawkesbury has ever seen. This financial year alone \$58 million dollars in the New South Wales budget will fund the planning and design work necessary to complete the project. The total cost of the project is estimated to be around \$690 million dollars and we will see this project through because we are a government that delivers. The reason we can deliver on projects like this one is that we have managed the New South Wales budget into a position of strength. Our prudent stewardship of the State's finances means that we can now deliver the projects that Labor could only dream of delivering.

Back in the 1990s the Carr Labor Government well knew the pressing need to raise the dam wall, but did nothing. Since being elected to Parliament, and particularly since I have represented the electorate of Hawkesbury, the need for this project has been made clear to me by the Hawkesbury community. When the Liberal-Nationals Government was elected in 2011 we wasted no time commissioning up-to-date flood mitigation and management studies to be in a position to undertake the necessary work in the region. At the last election I made a commitment to the people of Hawkesbury that I would fight to better protect the region, their families, their homes, their farms and their livelihoods. Indeed, there is a sense of relief and genuine astonishment in Hawkesbury because after decades of inaction they can now rely on a government that delivers.

The magnitude of this project and the funding it will require are significant. That is just the dollars and cents; the practical matter will be managing the State's finances so that we can get the job done. That is the minimum the people of New South Wales and the people who live and work the Hawkesbury-Nepean floodplain can expect from their Government. More important than the dollars and cents, is the protection this massive project will offer because the threat of floods is ever present for the people of Hawkesbury and Western Sydney. This project is about people's lives, people's homes and people's jobs. The Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley is one of the most heavily developed and at-risk floodplains in Australia and it is hugely important to the New South Wales economy.

Paul Broad, the former head of Infrastructure NSW, has said that a one in 1,000 year flood in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley could cause \$8 billion dollars in damage; potentially put 43,000 residents and 9,000 employees of local businesses at risk; flood 14,000 homes above floor level and destroy 6,500 homes; disrupt transport infrastructure in Hawkesbury and the Blue Mountains; and its impact would be felt across the Australian economy. The risk of flooding is felt deeply in Hawkesbury because it is ingrained in the history of the region. Since 1799 there have been 120 floods over six metres. There are far too many stories of loss of life from these floods, but I will draw the attention of the House to one story. In 1867 with floodwaters rising at Cornwallis two brothers—local farmers by the name of Eather—along with their wives and their 10 children, were forced by rising waters on to the roofs of their houses. Despite attempts to rescue them, all but the two brothers and one son did not survive. This story was brought to my attention by John Miller, a Hawkesbury local who has campaigned tirelessly for action on raising the wall of the Warragamba Dam.

I acknowledge Mr Miller's efforts and the efforts of others such as Les Sheather and the countless locals who have persisted in campaigning for action on raising the dam wall. I congratulate my predecessor in the electorate of Hawkesbury, Ray Williams, on his advocacy and on moving this motion. I also thank Kevin Conolly, the member for Riverstone, on his advocacy. I also congratulate and thank the Treasurer and the Premier on acknowledging the need for action on flood mitigation in Hawkesbury and Western Sydney and on taking action that will make a real difference to people's lives in my electorate. The tragedy that befell the Eather families—and countless other families—should never be forgotten. But remembering the loss is not enough. We must act to protect families in Hawkesbury and Western Sydney from further loss and tragedy in the future. For as long as I am a member in this place I will be committed to fighting for this dam wall. The people of Hawkesbury can rely on this Government to deliver on its commitment to raise the dam wall.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (12:56):** On Friday 17 June the Premier historically announced that the wall of Warragamba Dam will be raised. This will go down as a great day for the people of the Hawkesbury. I had been looking forward to that day for 16 or 17 years and I know some people in the Hawkesbury had been working towards that day for longer. In my former role as a councillor on the Hawkesbury City Council and chair of the Hawkesbury-Nepean Floodplain Management Committee—in fact, I instigated the formation of that committee—I have worked to see that the people of the Hawkesbury are protected from this huge danger of flooding. For the benefit of those not familiar with why the Hawkesbury faces such a significant risk I will give some background information.

The catchment of the Hawkesbury-Nepean system is huge—it extends from Goulburn in the south to Putty in the north and includes the area between the ranges of the Central Tablelands and the Southern Highlands. They all funnel their catchment water down through the Nepean. The Nattai, Wingecarribee, Coxs, Gross, Macdonald and Colo rivers all feed into a relatively narrow system. At the end of the catchment are the narrow gorges at Sackville and Ebenezer, through which only a small volume of water flows out at a time. When we had that huge downfall a couple of weeks ago massive amounts of water were coming in but a plughole effectively blocked by the gorges was stopping the water getting out at the other end. The depth of water, or the number of metres above normal level that the river can rise to, is quite significant in the Hawkesbury.

We talk about a flood in the 1960s of 15 metres above its normal level. The probable maximum flood—what is estimated as the greatest flood we are likely to see—is 26.7 metres at Windsor. It is hard to contemplate a flood of 26.7 metres—if you allow three stories to a building that is a nine storey building of floodwater—and most people who live in the region now do not comprehend what floods can be like. It is incumbent upon those who are familiar with these issues to do what they can to lead and to provide a level of safety. I commend those in the community who have worked hard for years to bring this about. I will mention just a few with whom I have worked closely: Norm Johnson; the late Dr Rex Stubbs; Les Sheather, a former Hawkesbury councillor; and an eternally vigilant advocate, John Miller, who has spoken at every opportunity to bring this to the attention of every elected official. These people know the risk and have spoken out on behalf of their community.

I have not yet come to what is, for me, the central issue. We have heard about the billions of dollars worth of damage that could occur to private property and public infrastructure. One could not conceive of any other Australian infrastructure involving such huge damages. If a flood record occurred in the Hawkesbury, it could be the largest catastrophe ever in Australia. My main concern is for the safety of people. As we have heard, many thousands of people would have to be evacuated. A rough estimate of 50,000 people would be isolated by a one-in-100 chance per year flood and would have to be evacuated as a precaution against rising water. [*Extension of time*]

The significant risk is that of those 50,000 people, even with the best intentions and with the best system and processes to evacuate them, a significant number will not be evacuated; they will not get out in time. The rise of the river in this region in times of major flood can be rapid. There are people who are inexperienced in flood situations. Whenever there is a flood we see images of people driving into floodwater. The risk is that if thousands

of people are trapped on ever-diminishing islands, as the water rises many will make the fatal mistake of trying to get out when it is not safe to do so.

Indeed, a real risk is that some may be trapped on ever-diminishing and over-topped islands and there is no opportunity for evacuation. It is relatively remote; we are talking about rare floods. But, sadly, we know it is possible. From hydrological evidence, we know that there were extremely large floods in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley prior to the relatively short time that European people have occupied that space. If we had known about these massive floods, it is possible that the settlement of these areas that has occurred over the past couple of hundred years would not have taken place.

That brings me to another point. In providing this extra level of safety—and, critically, it relates to safety of people—we must plan for the future and not repeat the mistakes of the past. Progressively over the years, planning levels for dwellings have been raised. With a greater knowledge of the science and the risks, planning levels have been upgraded. In the Hawkesbury, I believe that has happened three or four times over the past 50 years. In the Windsor region, the current planning level is at 17.3 metres for a one-in-100 chance per year flood, and it is similar for the other affected councils. That level must never be reduced and we must increase the level of safety. Many people live below the level because their houses were built prior to the current planning levels. So that the number of people who are at risk does not multiply, the current planning level must remain and we must build infrastructure that will reduce the likelihood of massive flooding.

In so doing, we will reduce the risk of not only loss of life but also, as I mentioned earlier, loss of private property—thousands of homes and businesses, as well as major public infrastructure, such as sewage treatment plants, railway stations, railway lines, bridges, hospitals and nursing homes. They are all at risk from major floods in the Hawkesbury, which we know are possible. The cost of not proceeding with this project far exceeds the cost of building it. I am proud to be part of a government that has methodically worked its way to this point. The Government has calculated the risks and has been up-front about them and we have committed the expenditure that is needed to protect this community. I am delighted to speak to this motion. I congratulate the Premier and the whole Cabinet for bringing forward this project.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall):** I welcome to the gallery two guests who have joined us this morning, Marilyn and Dennis O'Keefe, who are guests of the Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra and South Coast.

**Ms TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (13:04):** I am very pleased to stand with my colleagues who represent the Western Sydney region to congratulate the Baird-Grant Government on this year's New South Wales State budget, in which \$58 million has been allocated to start the process of raising the Warragamba Dam wall by 14 metres. The \$58 million allocation will be used to undertake detailed concept designs, environmental assessments and the preparation of the full business case.

The role of good government is to not only deliver services for the needs of today's population but to identify what is needed in the future and to begin today to plan and deliver for those future needs. The raising of the Warragamba Dam wall by 14 metres is the right action to take to significantly lower the risk to lives, livelihoods and livestock throughout the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley. The largest flood recorded in the valley occurred in 1867 and reached 19.3 metres at Windsor. Such a flood has roughly a one-in-200 chance of occurring in any year. If this flood were repeated today it would flood more than 7,000 homes and cause significant structural damage to about 1,200 of them. It would flood more than 1,600 businesses and cause approximately \$3 billion in damages. Raising the dam wall by 14 metres is expected to reduce the potential economic impacts from flood risk by about 75 per cent, on average. However, what cannot be calculated is the emotional, mental and psychological impact that such a catastrophic flood event would have on the lives of tens of thousands of people.

Action must be taken to mitigate this flood risk, and I am proud to say that the Baird-Grant Government is taking such action. Molino Stewart's Hawkesbury-Nepean Flood Damages Assessment report for Infrastructure NSW in 2012 highlights a range of intangible benefits to the community from the raising of the dam wall. These include reducing the population at risk, with the average number of people at risk per year reducing from 560 to 50; reducing the probability of mass evacuations from about a one-in-100 chance per year to less than a one-in-800 chance per year and reducing untreated sewage discharging into the river for weeks from about a one-in-500 chance per year at Penrith and a one-in-100 chance per year at Richmond and Windsor to less than a one-in-1,000 chance per year at these locations.

Raising the dam wall by 14 metres is estimated to cost \$690 million, and \$58 million has been allocated to commence this project. The recommendation to the Government to raise the dam wall was developed over four years and required the detailed, time-consuming and cutting-edge modelling of thousands of flood and evacuation scenarios. This investment demonstrates the Baird-Grant Government's commitment to Western Sydney, as it is making the right long-term infrastructure decisions for the necessary infrastructure for our region and great State.

I congratulate the Premier and Minister for Western Sydney and the Treasurer on their continued commitment to delivering for Western Sydney and the wider Nepean region. The announcement last Friday to commit \$58 million towards the eventual raising of the Warragamba Dam wall further demonstrates that this Government is on the ground and at the grassroots of our community and we are listening and working hard to put the needs of our region first and foremost in all our decisions.

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) (13:09):** By leave: Over many years my electorate and those of my Western Sydney colleagues have been affected by the floods that have inundated our region. In the recent floods at Camden, we sadly experienced a loss of life in the north of the district. Although Camden was cut off, the area got off lightly in terms of property damage. A couple of clubhouses off the main street and the showgrounds were affected, and a couple of sporting fields, local soccer venues, are still closed because of the flood damage. Compared to areas such as Picton, Camden was spared the worst.

I stand with my Western Sydney colleagues in support of the raising of the Warragamba Dam by 14 metres. An amount of \$58 million has been allocated in this budget and nearly \$690 million will be allocated over the whole project. The people of our area can be confident that the Government is doing all it can to safeguard them. Nature is nature. No matter how much we prepare for disasters, nature will always win. However, raising the dam will give people a fighting chance.

The men and women of the State Emergency Service [SES] in the Macarthur region, especially the Camden State Emergency Service, perform selflessly and at times put their lives at risk to help those in need. Andrew Ellis, the SES Commander, does a very impressive job. I cannot speak more highly of the Camden and Macarthur region SES workers who have given their time, and are still giving their time cleaning up after the recent floods. We often see the SES volunteers at community events such as the Camden show, assisting with car parking and so on. But the community particularly thanks them during times of floods and natural disasters. Their work is invaluable and much appreciated.

If we had to pay for the work that is done by the volunteers of the SES, we would not be able to afford it. I thank them for giving their time. The Premier visited Camden and Picton on the days following the floods. I thank the Premier and the Cabinet for ensuring that the improvements to Warragamba Dam went ahead. They have seen and responded to the needs of the area. The Government will continue to support all those affected by the latest flood event and any events in the future.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill) (13:12):** In reply: I thank my colleagues for their contributions to debate on this motion: the member for Riverstone, the member for Mulgoa, the member for Maroubra and the member for Hawkesbury and Minister for Finance, Services and Property. I hope I have not left anyone out. I greatly appreciate all the contributions by members. In 1990 our family home was inundated by a metre of water. We greatly appreciated the responsible action taken by the Coalition Government under Premier Fahey and Premier Greiner in its decision to raise the Warragamba Dam wall in recognition of the huge threat that floods posed to the Hawkesbury-Nepean area.

In 1995, Labor Premier Bob Carr revoked that decision. The people of the Hawkesbury-Nepean area, the thousands of residents who had lived with flood and the threat of flood throughout their lives, were devastated with that decision. I did what any red-blooded Western Sydney boy who was furious with that decision would: I joined the Liberal Party and I determined to do whatever I could to advocate for this infrastructure project. I stand with the member for Riverstone, who has been involved in this issue for almost two decades, in support of this project. I could not be prouder of this Government for investing \$700 million into this project. It has been established in preliminary investigations that this project will reduce the risk of flooding by 75 per cent and save lives.

I appreciate the Opposition's support of this motion today, although it voted against the precedence motion yesterday. However, I am surprised that the member for Londonderry is not here, given that in her electorate the suburbs of Londonderry, Agnes Banks, Marsden Park, Shanes Park, Ropes Crossing, Willmot and St Marys are subject to the risk of flooding when there is a major flood in the Hawkesbury. Likewise, parts of the electorate of the member for Blacktown are affected. In response to an interjection from the member for Blacktown yesterday, I explained my background, which has provided me a sense of empathy with the people of that area. Like all members of the Liberal-Nationals Government, I have great empathy for people whose safety is in jeopardy. The Government will do whatever it can to mitigate the risk to safety and we will never betray our obligation in that regard.

I remind the member for Blacktown that the areas of Quakers Hill, Mariong and parts of Woodcroft are all affected by the backwash of floodwaters when there are floods in the Hawkesbury. Many areas in my electorate and the electorates of Riverstone and Hawkesbury are affected. The Killarney Chain of Ponds backs up in and around the Box Hill area, causing it to be affected by floods. This is a red-letter day. This is a great outcome for

the 134,000 people who live and work on this floodplain and who have been affected by flood for many years. They will be able to live safely in the knowledge that this Liberal-Nationals Government will invest almost three-quarters of a billion dollars to raise the Warragamba Dam wall by 14 metres, thereby ensuring their safety in the future.

**Motion agreed to.**

## GAS BILLS

**Debate resumed from 2 June 2016.**

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (13:17):** Any motion moved by the Labor Party relating to gas supply or gas prices comes with a fair dose of hypocrisy. When we came to Government in 2011 the coal seam gas industry was in utter chaos. Labor had distributed exploration licences like confetti across the countryside without regard to the consequences. Since coming to power, this Government has regulated the industry. We have put in place a scheme that makes sense and gives people confidence that the process of exploration and extraction will be done in a safe and professional manner. Those opposite simply handed out licences to their mates. The outrage of Opposition members about prices or supply of gas cannot be taken seriously.

The NSW Gas Plan will ensure that a responsible approach is taken to the national gas industry, based on science and fact. We will continue to act in the best interests of the people of this State in an open, transparent and accountable manner. New South Wales provides about 5 per cent of the gas it uses. As a responsible government, we must ensure that gas will continue to be available to the people of New South Wales. Our Gas Plan will provide certainty to companies that are planning to invest in this field.

They can know that their investment will be on safe and solid ground, where everybody knows the rules and can trust that the rules will be applied evenly and fairly and that there are mechanisms in place to check that that is being done. With that certainty, companies can invest, gas can be produced, the people of New South Wales can have certainty of supply and the price can be minimised through competitive pressure. That is what this Government can deliver, rather than the chaos that we were left with after Labor was in power. The NSW Gas Plan is the way forward.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (13:19):** The Government's response to this motion was as predictable as fish on Good Friday. To treat surging gas prices as simply a supply issue is lazy. It demonstrates a remarkable lack of nuance and understanding about the gas industry and current gas supply. It is a distraction to frame this as simply a problem of rising prices as a result of lack of supply. The Australian Energy Market Operator has outlined in an extensive report that New South Wales will not experience a gas shortfall until 2034 at the earliest. That is almost 20 years away. A shortfall two decades from now is hardly a satisfactory explanation for the doubling of gas prices right now.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission [ACCC] recently looked into gas prices on the east coast. It found that inefficiencies within the operation of the local market were a significant driver of rising prices. It found that the problem was not with supply but with inefficiencies within the market. The member for Riverstone used the final two minutes of his speech to talk about supply. He has been told to endorse his party's view. I am offering a contribution that identifies significant, well-informed research from the Australian Energy Market Operator and the ACCC. The ACCC said:

There is, however, evidence that a large number of pipeline operators have been engaging in monopoly pricing. This gives rise to higher delivered gas prices and is having an adverse effect on the economic efficiency of the east coast market and upstream and downstream markets, the costs of which will ultimately be borne by consumers.

The report goes on to say that fewer than 20 per cent of transmission pipelines on the east coast currently fall under government regulation. That means that more than 80 per cent are outside the regulation of the government. This Government would prefer to sensationalise the availability of future gas supply rather than address the Rafferty's rules operation of the gas market. The Government should go to the Council of Australian Governments [COAG] and work with fellow Premiers and the Commonwealth to pull pipeline operators into line by tightening the net of regulation. As long as the majority of the transmitters are unregulated, then the people of New South Wales and their government, no matter who is in government, will have no power to do much about the issue, even though it appears to be a strong contributor to the rise of prices in our State.

The Government could also demand greater transparency about the operation of the market. The ACCC highlights the level of reserves, as well as commodity and transport prices, as areas in which there is insufficient information available to certain market participants. The balance between supplier and buyer has been skewed. It has nothing to do with supply. The Government, which is a great believer in the efficient market hypothesis, should be alarmed at the inequality of knowledge that undermines a competitive market and should be trying to do something about it. Where is the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps when you need him? Mandatory, consistent and

enforceable reporting requirements are suggested in the ACCC report, as is a framework for sharing information between governments. That will have a direct impact on gas prices. Gas prices are rising and people's budgets are tightening. Instead of adopting simplistic talking points about future issues of supply, as the member for Riverstone has just done, the Government should stand up for its citizens by dealing with the highly visible problems of today.

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (13:24):** In reply: I thank the members for the electorates of Oatley, Newcastle, Riverstone and Cessnock for their contributions to this very important debate. It is a grassroots issue, and that is the reason I moved the motion. As the member for Wallsend, my job is to ensure that I represent all my constituents, the richest and the poorest. The issue of rising gas bills came to my attention because constituents rang my office to tell me about it. They also told the member for Newcastle, who spoke about Fay, a constituent. I am sure the member for Cessnock can provide similar examples. Fay is an elderly woman who is poor and lives on her own. She turned off her gas in winter because she could not afford to pay the rising gas bills. This motion is about making sure that our constituents can afford to turn on the air-conditioner, if they have one, on the hottest days and turn on the heater in winter. That is fundamental to their quality of life.

The member for Oatley spoke about the gas rebate, to which Labor alerted members. We think that is important. Whether the rebate goes far enough is questionable. The member for Oatley did not mention the rise in gas bills over the past three years. There has been an incredible 28 per cent increase. The member for Newcastle also talked about the importance of the rebate but noted that gas bills are set to rise in July. That is another blow to the elderly, the pensioners and the vulnerable in our community. The member for Riverstone, unfortunately, talked about Labor's hypocrisy on this issue. I do not find it hypocritical to say that gas bills have risen by 28 per cent and that we should do something about it. If the Baird Government puts the interests of the people of New South Wales first, as the member for Riverstone claims, why are gas bills rising?

The member for Cessnock made some sensible and well-researched remarks, as always. He mentioned the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission finding that some market operations were questionable. He referred to evidence of a pricing monopoly on the east coast. The price rises are being borne by consumers—in other words, the poorest people in Wallsend. The member for Cessnock also made the very good point that New South Wales will not experience a fall in its gas supply for another two decades, so a lack of gas supply is not an excuse for costs rising by 28 per cent.

My purpose in moving this motion today was to raise with the Government the need to investigate why gas bills have risen by more than \$100 in two years, which affects the poorest people in our communities. I ask the Government to show leniency and to understand that not everyone can afford to pay those bills. I ask the Government to show compassion for people like Fay, whom the member for Newcastle mentioned, who have to turn off the gas in winter and live without heating because they cannot afford to pay the bill. I ask for leniency, kindness and compassion from the Baird Government as it looks at the cause of the incredible rise in gas prices. I ask the Minister to support this motion and to investigate why pricing monopolies occur. I ask the Minister to ensure that gas prices are reduced. People cannot afford to pay their bills, and that is unacceptable. I ask all members to support this motion on an important grassroots issue.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall):** The question is that the motion as moved by the member for Wallsend be agreed to.

**Motion negatived.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall):** With the concurrence of the House, I will now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.15 p.m.

*Announcements*

#### **MEMBER FOR THE ENTRANCE**

#### **MS EMMA GITTOES**

**The SPEAKER:** I wish the member for The Entrance a very happy birthday. He looks shocked. Perhaps he had forgotten his own birthday!

On behalf of the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing, and former Leader of the House, I have a message of farewell to Emma Gittoes. She worked in the capacity of the only assistant to the then Leader of the House for about 2½ years and is now leaving to take up employment with Australian Wool Innovation. We wish her all the best for her future. We will certainly miss her, and I am sure the Minister will in particular.

*Visitors***VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I welcome all our guests with us in the gallery this afternoon. I extend a very warm welcome to students from Menindee Central School, William Mitchell and Andrew Sloane, as well as William's mother, Amanda, and their teacher Adam Bailey. William and Andrew are the first students in New South Wales to study an Aboriginal language. They are guests of the Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education and member for Port Macquarie.

I also welcome to the gallery Denis and Marilyn O'Keeffe, guests of the Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra and South Coast and member for Kiama. I also welcome Justin Cordi of St Patrick's College. He is completing his work experience in the Oatley electorate office and he is a guest of the Deputy Government Whip and member for Oatley.

*Question Time***STATE BUDGET AND ICAC**

**Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (14:20):** My question is directed to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer reverse her budget funding cut to the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] which is forcing it to make do with 20 fewer staff?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations) (14:21):** I refer the Leader of the Opposition to the footnote and the budget papers that clearly state that if we take away the one-off supplementary that ICAC receives when it makes requests to the Government the funding to the ICAC has actually increased.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! If members interject during question time today they will be out of the Chamber early, and they will be out for the rest of the day.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** The budget very clearly indicates that last year's budget and the one previous to that included one-off supplementation that ICAC requested of the Government and those requests were acceded to. The base funding has increased. We have said from the outset if ICAC wants more money from this Government we will consider those requests.

**Mr Luke Foley:** Read the letter.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** You asked the question, let me answer it. To date those requests have been acceded to.

**STATE ECONOMY**

**Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) (14:22):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Premier, what are the economic choices facing New South Wales?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind members of my previous warning: Members who are called to order on three occasions will be removed from the Chamber if they continue to interject.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD (Manly—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) (14:22):** The member for Albury is an incredible advocate for his community in Albury and an outstanding member who understands the importance of good economic management in this State.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** This week we have had two distinct visions. The Treasurer has electrified the State from one end to the other. They cannot believe what this Treasurer has done and that New South Wales is not only leading the nation but also streaking ahead of the nation.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** They cannot believe that of all jobs created across the country last year, more than 60 per cent were in New South Wales. They cannot believe our \$73 billion in infrastructure while at the same time getting debt down.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** We have surpluses: more than \$2 billion on average, year after year.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** That is what this Treasurer has done.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** What an outstanding Treasurer: the best in the world right here in New South Wales. It is unbelievable.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Then we had a vision from the Leader of the Opposition. I have to say that was the absolute best insomnia cure I have ever seen. If people are struggling to get to sleep they should turn on YouTube and they will be okay.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** All the faithful came from the rafters and packed into the gallery to hear how the State was going to change. There were two: one was asleep but one person loved it.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** In a budget in reply speech would you talk about economic growth? Forecasts? Debt? Surplus?

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Deficits, jobs, and savings?

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** There was absolutely none of that. In fact, there were almost no numbers. Why talk about numbers and stuff—whatever.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The vision was very clear: under this Opposition there will be a middle manager-led revision of the State. It will be coming back. They will be charging. Forget about the policies.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Forget about the numbers. We heard in the budget in reply speech about committees, advocates, units and electronic petitions.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Flying squads, you little ripper, are coming back to look after New South Wales.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: Standing Order 369 prohibits cheesy overacting.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Maroubra would get a Logie or the Academy Award for that.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The Leader of the Opposition raised concerns about the funding of WestConnex, hospitals and educational capital funding—

**The SPEAKER:** I remind members of my previous warning regarding members who are on three calls to order.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** —but did he actually put any solutions forward in relation to those? Were any dollars put forward? No dollars whatsoever. We are used to that from Labor because those magnificent four seconds on national radio with Robbie Buck will never ever be forgotten: "So, Leader of the Opposition, how will you fund that?" The Leader of the Opposition said, "Ah, ah, ah" for four seconds. It was magnificent and it came out again in the speech.

**Mr Paul Lynch:** Point of order: The Premier is now breaching Standing Order 73. If he wants to launch an attack like this upon the Leader of the Opposition he needs to do so by substantive motion.

**The SPEAKER:** I am not sure that that is a substantive attack at all. The Premier has the call.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** If you are asked how you are going to fund it, you would just say how you are going to fund it? You do not pretend you are at the dentist by saying, "Ah, ah, ah". We have heard them talk about housing affordability and what this Government needs to do but were any plans put forward on housing affordability? [*Extension of time*]

My favourite was when the driverless Opposition spoke about driverless cars. We have an Opposition without a driver who wants driverless cars across this State. Hello.

**Mr Greg Warren:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Campbelltown will not direct the Premier to sit down; that is my role. The member for Campbelltown speaks to me; he does not direct the Premier to sit down. He should show respect for the standing orders.

**Mr Greg Warren:** Standing Order 73: the Premier's personal reflections are irrelevant to the question. It is in breach of Standing Order 129 as well.

**The SPEAKER:** I have listened to the personal reflections from both sides this week. There is no point of order. If the member for Campbelltown wants to dish it out he is going to have to cop it.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I am sure the Leader of the Opposition has seen what the Government is doing with driverless cars. The Minister is meeting with a number of players in relation to driverless cars. New South Wales is already working on driverless cars and the Government is happy to work with the Leader of the Opposition on it. One of my favourites was the establishment of a Parliamentary Budget Office [PBO]. It will mean we will get a whole unit that will sit there all year costing policies from the Opposition. What on earth are they going to do?

**Mr Clayton Barr:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** I remind the member for Keira that he is on three calls to order.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** My point of order is under Standing Order 74. The Premier is being disorderly with his logical inconsistencies. He cannot say that he wants us to put forward costings and then—

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

#### PROPERTY DEVELOPERS AND POLITICAL FUNDRAISING

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) (14:30):** My question is directed to the Minister for Planning. Will the Minister ask his Liberal Party to advise how many property developers accepted its invitation yesterday to attend a \$3,000-a-head fundraiser to hear an address from the Chief Commissioner of the Greater Sydney Commission?

**Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Planning) (14:30):** I have been advised that Lucy Turnbull, AO, had been invited to attend party functions in her role as the spouse of the Prime Minister. Without Mrs Turnbull's knowledge the invitation made reference to one of her public roles. The Liberal Party has apologised to Mrs Turnbull for this mistake. Because of this mistake the proceeds from the functions will be paid to the St Vincent de Paul Society CEO Sleepout in support of women's refuges.

#### STATE BUDGET AND ECONOMIC PLANNING

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill) (14:31):** My question is addressed to the world's best Treasurer.

**Mr Paul Lynch:** Point of order: Standing Order 128 prevents ironic expressions in questions.

**The SPEAKER:** It was far from ironic.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** How is the budget providing New South Wales with a real plan for even greater economic success?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations) (14:32):** I thank the best member for Castle Hill in the world for his question.

**Mr Dominic Perrottet:** She meant in the present tense.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Yes, I meant in the world just now, not ever. That was a real-time comment. I reiterate that Tuesday's budget was the reflection of five years of hard work. We delivered surpluses, zero net debt, a triple-A credit rating, record infrastructure spending and record services spending.

**The SPEAKER:** I remind the member for Rockdale that he is on three calls to order.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** In the past five years we managed to take—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Hornsby and the member for Kiama to order for the first time. I will stop the clock until members cease arguing across the Chamber. The Treasurer is attempting to answer a serious question. She will be heard in silence or members will be removed.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** As I was saying, we have delivered a very strong budget that demonstrates that we have not only the strongest fiscal position in the nation but also the strongest economy in the nation. That is in stark contrast to what we inherited five years ago. Labor left us with deficits, debt and a string of failed projects. I listened intently today to the Leader of the Opposition to hear what new economic plan or fiscal strategy Labor would offer. After five years in opposition the self-proclaimed policy thinker on the opposite side stood up—

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** He was not able to outline a single economic policy or fiscal strategy. All we got this morning from the Leader of the Opposition were more audits, more reviews and more red tape.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Members opposite need to realise that if you want to build more schools and hospitals you need money.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** The Leader of the Opposition failed to articulate whether Labor is committed to delivering surpluses.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Is Labor committed to low debt? Is Labor committed to protecting the triple-A credit rating? They are not. We have demonstrated that unless you deliver a strong budget you cannot pay for the things that the people of this great State rely on day in and day out. Instead, the Opposition moved to its default position, which is more middle management—the member for Maroubra wrote that part of the speech—and more red tape, audits and reviews.

Members opposite talked a lot about where they would like to spend their money but the problem is they did not tell us how they would get the money. They outlined no policy whatsoever. For example, from where will the Leader of the Opposition source the \$300 million to remove the airport access fee? From which hospital or school will he take the money to fund that promise? Where will he get the money to fund all of the things he said he wants in his budget reply speech?

The part of his reply speech that was particularly galling was in relation to the cost of living. They want us to forget that when Labor was in government electricity prices rose by more than 60 per cent. That is in stark contrast to us. On 1 July this year electricity prices will rise by just 1.5 per cent, which matches the inflation rate. Compare that with the 60 per cent increase under those opposite. In 2011 Sydney residents paid the second-highest water and sewerage bills in mainland State capital cities. That was Labor's record. From 1 July this year Sydney and Wollongong residents will pay the lowest bills in any capital city. Under Labor transport fares went up by almost 60 per cent, yet they have the hide to talk about the cost of living. [*Extension of time*]

When the Leader of the Opposition began talking about reducing waste and mismanagement we knew he had lost the plot. This morning was not a budget reply speech; it was a stream of consciousness from a leader of a party that has no idea about how to put together a fiscal strategy or an economic plan. It reminded us that if they ever have the chance to take over the Treasury benches the State will plunge to the lows it was at during their 16 years when services were cut, infrastructure contracts were ripped up and the cost of living went through the roof. We know it is hard for members opposite to hear this but at the end of the day you cannot provide what the people of this great State need if you do not have an economic plan and a fiscal strategy.

#### **EMERGENCY SERVICES PROPERTY LEVY**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (14:38):** My question is directed to the Treasurer. Given that her budget statement outlines that her new emergency services property tax will hit all home owners in New South Wales, will she now release the 14 Treasury documents titled "Winners and Losers" that she refused to release under freedom of information laws?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations) (14:38):** Let us just get this right. The shadow Treasurer has asked me a question today regarding reform to the Emergency Services Property Levy. This is a reform that every State in Australia has undertaken except New South Wales. New South Wales is the only mainland State that has not undertaken this critical reform.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Under this reform everyone who holds an insurance policy will pay less.

**Mr Ryan Park:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Treasurer has been completely relevant, therefore I am anticipating a different point of order.

**Mr Ryan Park:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. I clearly asked about the document titled "Winners and Losers".

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. The Treasurer is clearly relevant. The member for Keira will resume his seat.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** This is an example of why members of the Labor Party just do not get it when it comes to reform. They do not get it when it comes to the cost of living.

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Not only will this important reform reduce premiums in New South Wales and allow people who have premiums to pay less contribution to the levy, but one thing that really upsets me about this question from those opposite is that in New South Wales many people are locked out of insurance premiums because they cannot afford them. This reform will address the issue of underinsurance in New South Wales.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Blacktown has woken up and will come to order.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Those opposite just do not understand. This is such important reform that the Government has appointed Professor Allan Fels and Professor David Cousins, two leading lights in protecting consumers, to oversee this process. They are perhaps two of the most knowledgeable people in the country on not only this issue but also reducing the burden on consumers in the area of insurance premiums. I say to the Labor Party, "Please do your research before you ask a question because you are embarrassing yourselves."

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** This is critical reform which every other State around the nation has undertaken.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Treasurer has remained relevant throughout her answer. Has a different standing order been breached?

**Mr Jihad Dib:** My point of order is about relevance.

**The SPEAKER:** The member will resume his seat.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** The question was, "Will you release them?" Yes or no?

**The SPEAKER:** The member is arguing with me again, which is a mistake.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** I am not arguing.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Madam Speaker, can I please directly respond to the shadow Treasurer who obviously did not read the bill that was recently passed in this Parliament. The Emergency Services Levy Insurance Monitor Bill was recently passed by this Parliament and in that bill Professor Fels was officially appointed to act as the monitor. That bill said to the people of this State, "Treasury and the Government will now be able to collect the data in order to put the rates in place for this policy." And a second piece of legislation will be coming to this Parliament before the end of the year to ensure that this reform goes through.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Had the Opposition spokesperson actually read the bill he would have realised that. I thought we were going to see a press release about some policy or position changes from those opposite today because earlier when I was flipping through the regional clips to see what people were saying about the budget—

**The SPEAKER:** I warn the member for Cessnock that if he persists with his repeated interjections he will be removed from the Chamber.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** This is what I read in today's *Hornsby Advocate*: "Opposition Treasury spokesperson Michael Daley". Has there been a change on the Opposition benches?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Interjections are becoming habitual.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** That is what it said.

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. The member for Hornsby is not helping.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I am pleased to have received this question because not only does it highlight the shadow Treasurer's lack of ability to read what he talks about in this Parliament but it also highlights the fact that the Labor Party is not interested in reform that actually helps people and reduces the cost of living.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order: My point of order is tedious repetition. I have put up with this all week.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Strathfield will resume her seat. There is no tedious repetition.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** The Treasurer has said "Madam Speaker" 34 times.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Strathfield will resume her seat.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** She should try to give a speech without saying "Madam Speaker" rather than anything else.

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

#### PUBLIC SCHOOLS INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour) (14:44):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Education. What is the Government doing to provide new and upgraded education facilities for public schools in New South Wales, and related matters?

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

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI (Murray—Minister for Education) (14:45):** Today at 11 o'clock all the Government members were here but not every Labor member was watching.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Londonderry to order for the second time. The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the first time.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** A protest was happening outside and somebody came running out the door waving a piece of paper and said, "Oh my God, online petitions. We are saved." It was the great centrepiece of the Leader of the Opposition's speech. On that note, I would like to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition on his last budget reply speech. In years to come he will look back on his last budget reply as his crowning achievement. Congratulations and best wishes for whatever you might do in the future.

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

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I take this opportunity to acknowledge the two young men from Menindee Central School who are seated in the gallery. I cannot remember if I met them earlier this year or last year but it was not long ago. They are the first students to do Aboriginal language in the Higher School Certificate. Welcome and congratulations. I again wish you both all the best for the future. I know why the Opposition particularly focused on education and health today. They have seen the polling and they know that they cannot win government until they win education and health. They are never going to win education and health because over the past five years we have delivered. The Leader of the Opposition said, "We are going to do this and we are going to do that right."

But there was not a word about how they are going to fund any of this. It reminded me of that great saying that it is easy to be righteous when you are impotent—please do not take that the wrong way. They can say that they are going to do all of these things: "We support funding Gonski. We support building all these new schools. In fact, we would not just build all those new schools, we would build all these other new schools." But they have opposed every single measure this Government has undertaken to be able to do all those things. When those opposite visit schools the people at the schools say to them, "Isn't it great that the Liberals and The Nationals are funding Gonski in years 5 and 6 and it is in the budget." They say, "We support that too."

But they fail to say that they opposed every single measure this Government took to be able to afford it—the 2011 budget and the 2012 budget when there were difficult decisions about savings. But we made those difficult decisions. Our members explained to people in their electorates that we had made those difficult decisions so the money could be invested in frontline circumstances. Those opposite now want to bank that. They will say,

"We will forget it was a tough decision. We are just going to bank the money." They will see these surpluses in the future and think they can spend that money. Who would trust Labor with a big bucket of money? Absolutely no-one. This is not a hypothetical.

**The SPEAKER:** I remind the member for Lakemba that he is on three calls to order. There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** There is empirical evidence as to what they would do with a big bucket of education capital—it is called the Building the Education Revolution [BER]. Labor had a big bucket of capital and they completely wasted it. Under Labor's management, public education was the worst performer in terms of value for money and complaints.

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

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** It was a bonanza for those head contractors. The thought of putting billions of dollars in Labor's hands again is utterly disgusting.

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

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** Those opposite say, "We go around and do an audit of government property and we put schools in there."

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

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** Let me give them a list of schools they closed and sold. Alexandria Public School, Camperdown Public School—we are having to go back and buy properties nearby, at huge cost, to replace the schools Labor closed—Forest House School, Maroubra High School, Randwick North High School, Redfern Public School, Vacluse High School, Waterloo Public School, Beacon Hill High School. [*Extension of time*]

Peter Board High School—I know the member for Ryde is arguing strongly for a new high school now in the member's own electorate—Liberty Plains school, Minali school. All of those schools Labor closed and sold. Then, in the lead-up to the election, Labor promised a high school on every street corner—well, every street corner in every marginal electorate. Labor promised 12 high schools, some of which are required, but half of them are not. About \$220 million of wasted money was cynically promised during an election campaign. Those opposite talk about the Greater Sydney Commission coming in and taking over, but Labor's record stinks when it comes to poorly allocated capital in public education.

If Labor had won the election it would now be committed to spending that \$220 million in areas that do not need new high schools. Which schools would Labor not have funded? Would it have been the \$20 million we are spending at Rutherford High School? Would it have been the \$20 million we are spending at Hunter Sports High School or the \$20 million at Homebush West? Would it have been the Victoria Street School we built in Strathfield or the schools at Parramatta and Oran Park—the growth corridors? Labor has a very poor record in education, both recurrent and capital. I remind those opposite which government was the first government in this State to fund every single Aboriginal student at public schools: this Government—the Liberal and National parties.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms to remove the member for Lakemba under Standing Order 249.

[*Pursuant to standing order the member for Lakemba left the Chamber, accompanied by the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms.*]

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** Those opposite are incapable of making difficult decisions. All they want to do is piggyback on the good reforms this Government has undertaken. They are a joke as a political party. I am proud to be a part of such a great government here in New South Wales.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! If members are not sure how many times they have been called to order or how many warnings they have had they can come to me and ask; they should not argue with me on the way out. The member for Lakemba was warned at least 10 times and he was on three calls to order. I remind members that I am no longer using Standing Order 249A. I remind the member for Cessnock that he is on three calls to order. He has had numerous warnings.

#### **POLICE TACTICAL VAN AND LINDT CAFÉ SIEGE**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (14:53):** My question is directed to the Minister for Police, and Deputy Premier. Why did the Government fail to ensure that the police tactical van, acquired to be used by hostage negotiators, was not repaired or replaced after it was storm-damaged in 2011 and was not available during the Lindt café siege?

**Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Deputy Premier, Minister for Justice and Police, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Racing) (14:53):** In one of the darkest days in this State's history, this community, this nation, was confronted with something that it has never faced before. Jurisdictions right across the world have not been faced with the extreme and horrifying circumstances that we saw played out at the Lindt café in Martin Place.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members should not interject during this answer, given the seriousness of the subject matter. I call the member for Blacktown to order for the first time.

**Mr TROY GRANT:** An incident that took the lives of two people, put the lives of many, many more in grave danger and placed police officers there, charged to protect and serve our community, in the gravest of circumstances. A coronial inquest is currently underway into the circumstances surrounding the most horrific incident in our nation's history. Whilst I am aware of much of the contents and details of it and would dearly love to share it, it is completely inappropriate for me to comment on a coronial matter whilst it is underway. I have complete and utter confidence in the Coroner to examine in full all the evidence of a very complex situation, challenging many aspects of the NSW Police Force's response in relation to that type of event and the community's preparedness and the organisation's preparedness in the future. In regard to the issue of the negotiator's truck, as I have said publicly on that matter, the allocation of resources in response to any police operation is completely a matter for the Commissioner of Police. In regards to the question, circumstances and information will be revealed at the end of the coronial inquest. I am really, really disappointed that to politicise—

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: We will not be lectured to by this man. We asked a simple question about the resources of a police van.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! That is not a point of order. The member will resume his seat.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Under Standing Order 129 and Standing Order 73 we are allowed to ask about resourcing.

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

**Mr TROY GRANT:** I have answered the question: resourcing is a matter for the Commissioner of Police. The fulsome answer I gave in regard to the specifics of the question was that it will be disclosed at the completion of the coronial inquest and that for me to answer any more than that is completely inappropriate, as is your question, which is politicising this incident. The leadership of those opposite was on display for everyone to see today in his budget reply speech—the lack of content and the disgraceful attention he is paying to the economic future of this State. Then, under his leadership, a joke, and a disgraceful question is asked on the floor of this Parliament. You are not fit to lead and those opposite are not fit to govern.

**Mr Guy Zangari:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Deputy Premier will resume his seat.

**Mr Guy Zangari:** The Deputy Premier is not addressing the House through the Chair.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Deputy Premier has completed his answer.

## JOBS GROWTH

**Ms TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (14:58):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy. What is the Government doing to help drive jobs creation across New South Wales and is the Minister aware of any other related matters?

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy) (15:00):** I thank the member for Mulgoa for her question and her keen interest in jobs creation in New South Wales. What a pleasure it is for us on this side of the House to be members of a government that does what it promises and delivers for the people of New South Wales. It is no surprise to the member and to the people of New South Wales that jobs growth is this Government's number one priority. At the last election we committed to creating 150,000 new jobs over this term of government and—thanks to the sound economic management and leadership of the Premier and the Treasurer—this target has already been met and delivered, well ahead of time. That is how this Government rolls. But it has not always been that way. I refer to an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. It says:

Workers in New South Wales are losing their jobs at a rate of 500 a day. Joblessness in the state is worse than in Britain.

It was on my desk, so I picked it up and I was surprised. But then I looked at the date—2009. What a difference a change in government makes. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics more than 150,000 jobs have been created in New South Wales in the last 13 months. It gets more exciting. I thought I was excited but the

member for Keira will be bouncing around. The Jobs for NSW Fund—a \$190 million jobs package—is the Government's commitment to grow jobs across the State.

The board of Jobs for NSW is skills-based and includes some of the top business minds in the country. It is chaired by former Telstra chief executive officer [CEO] and current CSIRO chair David Thodey and includes the former general manager of Navitas, Helen Zimmerman; the CEO of the online retailer Birdsnest, Jane Cay; the former CEO of Cochlear, Chris Roberts; and Craig Dunn, the former CEO of AMP, a current director of Westpac, a member of ASIC's external advisory panel, and chair of the Sydney fin-tech hub Stone and Chalk. Contrast that to Labor which, at the time, wanted to appoint its union mates to the board, like the bad old days. I am always happy to listen but the Minister for Corrective Services would not give them day release, so we had to settle with what we had.

Jobs for NSW is focused on delivering the jobs of tomorrow, the jobs that will allow New South Wales to continue to thrive and innovate, not just today but 20 years from now. From the Leader of the Opposition's budget reply speech today, he thinks innovation is simply driverless cars but it does not mean you can be asleep at the wheel. Driver or no driver, those opposite are still driving the policy equivalent of an unregistered Leyland P76 rust bucket. Earlier this week I was pleased to announce with the Treasurer and the Minister for Skills, the creation of the School of Entrepreneurship. I point out that it is not to be confused with the privately run school of entrepreneurship under the previous government, which was run by Eddie. It is totally separate.

With our \$25 million investment, the Sydney School of Entrepreneurship will be a joint venture between New South Wales universities and TAFE NSW and will be supported by some of Australia's most successful entrepreneurs. Students will receive the practical training, support and mentoring they need to hit the ground running as entrepreneurs when they graduate, creating the start-ups that will deliver thousands of new jobs and continue to build the growth and prosperity of the State. Jennifer Westacott, the Chief Executive Officer of the Business Council of Australia said:

This is a very positive step by the New South Wales Government. Businesses are the engine room of employment and economic growth.

As my colleague says time and time again, we are the party of small business and the party of the worker. Our budget re-targeted the Jobs Action Plan towards businesses with fewer than 50 employees, increasing the payroll tax rebate from \$5,000 to \$6,000 for each additional employee those businesses take on. [*Extension of time*]

Members on this side of the House are driving growth across a variety of sectors. Those opposite would be unaware that the defence industry's economic contribution to New South Wales is more than \$5 billion in turnover and employing more than 30,000 skilled workers. In response to this we recently appointed retired Air Marshal John Harvey, AM, as the NSW Defence Advocate, to ensure the State's defence industry businesses are ready to provide the Commonwealth's needs while also delivering jobs and investment for New South Wales. Not only does retired Air Marshal Harvey have a wealth of experience in the Defence Force, but members might be interested to know that he is a highly decorated airman with a range of service medals—that he actually earned.

**Mr David Harris:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** I am speaking to your Whip.

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** Much has changed since the Liberal-Nationals led New South Wales out of Labor's economic wilderness. The Premier and the Treasurer have announced record investments in schools, public transport—

**Mr David Harris:** My point of order is under standing orders 49 and 73. A number of people on the other side continue to think it is funny to use schoolyard bullying to attack a member on this side of the House. You, as Speaker, should be intervening to protect them. These cheap little jokes should be stopped by the Speaker.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Wuyong will resume his seat and stop pointing at me. He knows that this type of thing happens on both sides.

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** The member opposite was the one who mentioned someone. We just need to look north of the border to see how Labor does business. We are not going to build a wall to keep out those who want to come to the State of prosperity. Our message to Queensland is to enjoy the State of Origin win because it is the only win it is going to get over New South Wales. This is a government that is delivering for the people of New South Wales.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Would the member for Wuyong like me to give him examples of bullying from his side? It has occurred. Government members will come to order. The member for Lake Macquarie will be heard in silence.

**LAKE MACQUARIE TRANSPORT INTERCHANGE**

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (15:06):** My question is directed to the Premier. With the Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange failing to receive any funding in this week's budget, despite support from Hunter councils, the Hunter Business Chamber, the NRMA, the Property Council of New South Wales, all locally elected members and others, due to its compelling obvious benefits to the region, will he confirm whether or not the project still has the support of the Government?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD (Manly—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) (15:07):** I am in shock—getting a budget question in budget week. It is great to have a member who is concerned about his community, understands the budget and understands the importance of good economic management. I know the member certainly understands that to have the capacity to build infrastructure you need budget discipline, you need to ensure you have your operating balance under control, and you need to make sure you have money available for capital and infrastructure, and that is what the Treasurer has outlined. In relation to the specific project, the Government has supported it and allocated \$15 million to stage one. I know the member recently met with the Minister. As part of that, we are looking at everything we can do to continue the work in relation to the project. The only way we can have additional funds is to continue the action we have undertaken.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Is there any reason why the member for Blacktown is looking happy today? He has seen the Leader of the Opposition put the State to sleep and he is thinking, "Here I come." Member for Blacktown, come on, mate.

**Ms Kate Washington:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129 and goes to relevance. There is a real desire to hear about Lake Macquarie interchange and this Government's plans for it.

**The SPEAKER:** Perhaps Labor members should not interject while the Premier is answering such questions.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** May the leader return with his new deputy, the new dream team. There they are. Look at them working—one, two—together. They are very close. In answer to the question, this Government has done far more than the previous Government on that project. We have commenced stage one. We continue to work with the local member and the community, as we do on many other projects across the State. We thank the member for his advocacy. The Minister for Transport and Infrastructure will continue to look at how the Government can progress that project. The point should not be lost that this week the Treasurer delivered a budget with \$73 billion of funding for infrastructure to be delivered across the State. Members opposite might oppose that. The member for Maitland might not want anything in her electorate, but we do.

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 73. It is very clear to everyone in this House that I want Maitland Hospital and other infrastructure to be built. I also want fully funded services.

**The SPEAKER:** There was no accusation directed at the member for Maitland. The member will resume her seat.

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** There was. The Premier named me.

**The SPEAKER:** The member should not argue. The member will resume her seat.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The only way for the member for Maitland to ensure that Maitland Hospital is delivered is to vote for this Government. Labor had an opportunity to build it and did nothing.

**The SPEAKER:** I warn members to remember the number of times they have been called to order. I refer in particular to the member for Maitland and the member for Port Stephens.

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

**The SPEAKER:** Government members are not helping by shouting at the member for Maitland, who may have a valid point of order this time. I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the third time. The member will be escorted from the Chamber by the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms.

*[Pursuant to standing order the member for Port Stephens left the Chamber accompanied by the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms.]*

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

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 74. The Premier knows that the budget for Maitland Hospital is 25 per cent lower than he said it would be.

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

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** There is a lousy additional \$2 million. That is outrageous.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Maitland is skating on thin ice. The Premier has the call.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The member for Port Macquarie is aware of the Government's commitment. The Government delivered stage one and will continue to work with the member. This Government continues to make the economy surge and continues to provide desperately needed infrastructure across the State.

#### STATE BUDGET SURPLUS

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (15:12):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Finance, Services and Property.

**Mr John Robertson:** It is open-mic Thursday.

**The SPEAKER:** If the member for Blacktown has his mobile phone with him, he should it turn on.

**Mr John Robertson:** I brought it with me so that I could listen to the stand-up comedian from the Hawkesbury.

**The SPEAKER:** All members are anticipating that, but the member for Blacktown should be patient. The member for Ku-ring-gai has the call.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** How has the New South Wales Government achieved a budget surplus at the same time as near zero debt? Is the Minister aware of any alternative strategies?

**The SPEAKER:** All members on calls to order are now deemed to be on three calls to order.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Hawkesbury—Minister for Finance, Services and Property) (15:13):** What an exciting time to be alive in New South Wales. What a budget—the best budget in the history of this State. The birds are chirping, the sun is shining and people are smiling. Even the staff of the finance department have been singing this week. They have joy in their hearts, and for good reason. There have been only a few governments in the recent history of this State, let alone the nation, that have delivered a budget with both a surplus and near zero debt. The member for Ku-ring-gai reminded me this week that the Menzies Government was one and the Howard Government was another. Now, with the Berejiklian budget, the Baird-Grant Government takes its rightful place in the pantheon of the greatest governments of all time.

**The SPEAKER:** I warn members that they should not interject.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Not only does this budget deliver a surplus and near zero debt, it invests record amounts in health, education and transport while at the same time cuts tax. This budget does everything. It is the budget of fairness. It is the budget of opportunity. It is the budget of equality. Most importantly, this budget puts people first. It delivers for our nurses, our police and our tradies. It delivers for the vulnerable, with support for refugees, funding to address domestic violence and support for foster care. It delivers for the working families of Auburn and Albury, of Lismore and Liverpool, of Parramatta and Prospect. It is important to note, though, as the Minister for Education pointed out, that this budget did not just happen. The Government made the tough decisions to get the economy back on track. Each time, those decisions were obstructed, blocked and opposed at every step by the economic illiterates on the Opposition benches. They opposed efficiency measures. They opposed tax cuts.

**The SPEAKER:** I remind the member for Shellharbour that she is on three calls to order. Everybody who was on a call to order is now deemed to be on three calls to order.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** They opposed the decision on poles and wires. They opposed infrastructure. They opposed everything that got us into this position. It is clear from this morning's speech in reply by the Leader of the Opposition that Labor has learnt nothing. One line from the Leader of the Opposition stood out. He keeps using it. He constantly talks about rivers of gold. That is the difference between our parties. Labor sees other people's money—taxpayers' money—as rivers of gold that it can spend, splurge and plunder. When Labor Party members see taxpayers' money their eyes light up like those of the member for Prospect at a medal presentation. I was a bit bored before question time, so I went to the Labor Party website. There was a link there to "Positive policy". I clicked on it and a message came up saying, "The page you were looking for was not found." I have a copy of the page here. People can still donate, though. The donate button is still there.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** Point of order. My point of order goes to the use of props in the Chamber.

**The SPEAKER:** Does the member for Cessnock object to the use of props?

**Mr Clayton Barr:** Yes, I do; as do you, Madam Speaker.

**The SPEAKER:** I do. The Minister will put the prop away.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** We looked forward to big ideas day today. Labor wants driverless cars but, because of the unions, it opposes driverless trains. Labor wants Airbnb so that Eddie Obeid can rent out even more of Circular Quay to his family. I enjoyed the Leader of the Opposition's point about children learning a second language. The influence of the member for Kogarah was obvious there. With the next racist and xenophobic campaign that the Labor Party runs we can all be offended in two languages.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will return to the leave of the question.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** What scared me most in the Leader of the Opposition's speech was the proposed new private sector investigation unit. [*Extension of time*]

Imagine the member for Liverpool knocking on your door in the middle of the night, wearing his little cap and swinging his baton, and arresting you for making a profit. The Labor Party want a new KGB-style police force.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister has remained relevant to the question. I have checked the question; it was very broad ranging. What is the member's point of order?

**Ms Jodi McKay:** It is on relevance. I would that you bring the Minister back to the point of the question.

**The SPEAKER:** As I said, I have checked the question. It is a very broad-ranging question. The Minister therefore remains relevant.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** As the Minister for Industry has pointed out, one of the great achievements in this budget is that we have driven down unemployment. We are creating more jobs than anyone else.

**Mr Paul Lynch:** Point of order: My point of order goes to Standing Order 59. The Minister has been giving the same speech since he was at university. It is tedious.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I will stop the clock and give the Minister additional time if Opposition members continue to take vexatious points of order.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I have to say that it is very clear from this budget that we are the party of the worker. There are so many jobs out there. I say to those opposite that now is the best time to reconsider their future, because if they are ever going to get a job outside of this place then now is the time. If they still cannot get one, Minister Barilaro has fixed up TAFE so there is a guaranteed place for them there. While those opposite are talking about petitions on the interweb and giant windmills, we will continue to make New South Wales an even greater State than it already is.

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

#### *Documents*

### VARIATIONS OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ESTIMATES AND APPROPRIATIONS 2015-16

#### **Tabling**

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations) ():** I table, pursuant to section 26 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, variations arising from the provision by the Commonwealth of Specific Purpose Payments in excess of the amounts included in the State's receipts and payments estimates and payments estimates—Department of Family and Community Services, dated 18 May 2016.

#### *Announcements*

### **MATTHEW CROCKER**

**Mr MIKE BAIRD (Manly—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) (15:21):** Many in this House would know Matthew Crocker. He has been an instrumental part of our team for many years. Indeed he was there through the dark years in opposition. As the member for Maroubra knows, those years in opposition are very dark years and during that time in opposition you need to have fantastic minds around you. Matthew Crocker has been not only that but also a friend to many of us. He has done such an outstanding job in the development of

policy. He has always been about developing the best possible policy. He and I have at times differed on the way to arrive at the best possible policy, but that is exactly what you need. He is undoubtedly one of the best policy minds ever to be involved in politics, at any level. Certainly we are very grateful for the incredible work he has done for us, as a team and as a government. When he finishes his career, I think he will look back and realise that his contribution has made this great State of New South Wales even better. We thank him and wish him good luck. I wish him all the best.

#### *Committees*

### **COMMITTEE ON THE OMBUDSMAN, THE POLICE INTEGRITY COMMISSION AND THE CRIME COMMISSION**

#### **Reports**

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (15:23):** As Chair: I table the report of the Committee on the Ombudsman, the Police Integrity Commission and the Crime Commission entitled "2016 review of Annual Reports oversight bodies", Report 1/56, dated 23 June 2016. I move:

That the report be printed.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### **Reference**

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (15:23):** As Chair: In accordance with Standing Order 299 (1), I inform the House that the Committee on the Ombudsman, the Police Integrity Commission and the Crime Commission has resolved to conduct an inquiry into the review of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1994, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

### **COMMITTEE ON THE HEALTH CARE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION**

#### **Reports**

**Ms MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley) (15:24):** As Chair: I table the report of the Committee on the Health Care Complaints Commission entitled "Review of the Health Care Complaints Commission Annual Reports 2013-14, 2014-15", Report 1/56 dated June 2016. I move:

That the report be printed.

**Motion agreed to.**

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

#### **Reports**

**Ms MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley) (15:24):** As Chair: I table the report of the Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development entitled "Management of Sharks in New South Wales", Report 1/56, dated June 2016. I move:

That the report be printed.

**Motion agreed to.**

### **JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS**

#### **Reports**

**Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (15:24):** As Chair: I table the report of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters entitled "Inquiry into the Final Report of the Expert Panel -Political Donations and the Government's response", Report 1/56, dated June 2016. I move:

That the report be printed.

**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**.

#### **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 opposing the sale of public housing in Millers Point, Dawes Point and The Rocks, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

#### **Glebe Heritage Listing**

Petition requesting that the Government heritage list the Glebe Trust site and restrict any development on this site, received from **Ms Jenny Aitchison**.

#### **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**.

#### *Committees*

### **LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

#### **Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 20/56**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** The question is that the House take note of the report.

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) (15:26):** I thank the House for the opportunity to speak about the Legislation Review Committee's twentieth digest for the Fifty-sixth Parliament. Three bills were introduced into Parliament in the last sitting week and I will briefly speak to the committee's comments on two of those bills, the Marine Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 and the Point to Point Transport (Taxis and Hire Vehicles) Bill 2016. The Marine Legislation Amendment Bill consolidates existing marine legislation and also seeks to improve the safety and amenity of New South Wales waterways. The bill includes improvements resulting from the review of the Marine Safety Act, which followed a wide consultation process with key stakeholders. In addition, the bill incorporates reforms arising from community concerns about antisocial and menacing behaviour by some jetski users, particularly in the south of Sydney.

First, the committee commented on provisions within the bill that proposes vessels be forfeited to the Crown in certain circumstances. Such circumstances include where a vessel is used in connection with a second or subsequent specified offence within a five-year period. Such forfeiture of a vessel will apply automatically once an offender meets the threshold criteria, and the committee noted that this type of automatic action impacts on the role of the judiciary to tailor an appropriate punishment to the circumstances of each individual case. However, given the public safety objectives of the bill, the committee made no further comments with respect to these provisions.

Secondly, the committee noted provisions in the bill relating to drug and alcohol testing and the power of officers to use force to require persons to undergo certain tests, including blood tests. The committee noted that these provisions may impact upon the right to personal integrity, however concluded that the rights of vessel operators who have failed drug and alcohol tests, or who have refused to take such tests, need to be balanced against the broader rights of the public to safely use and enjoy the waterways. As such, the committee made no further comments on these provisions.

The final issue I wish to speak to concerning the Marine Legislation Amendment Bill are provisions that permit the regulations to outline circumstances where authorities may sell an impounded vessel. The committee questioned what kinds of circumstances would be appropriate given that authorities may only impound vessels for up to three months. The committee referred to Parliament whether allowing the regulations to prescribe the circumstances insufficiently subjects the exercise of legislative power to parliamentary scrutiny.

Turning now to the Point to Point Transport (Taxis and Hire Vehicles) Bill, this bill continues the reforms to the point to point transport industry following the report published in November last year by the Point to Point

Taskforce. The task force was requested to examine the future sustainability of the taxis, hire cars and other emerging point to point transport providers. The committee noted a few issues with this bill. First, the introduction of a number of offences of strict liability, the implications of such being that only particular acts or omissions need to be proved to meet the criminal threshold and the Crown is not required to demonstrate intent, negligence or recklessness on the part of the accused. The committee noted that while offences of strict liability may impact on personal rights and liberties, it is also accepted that such offences are not uncommon in regulatory settings. The committee made no further comments on this issue.

The second issue the committee raised concerned provisions in the bill that impact the privilege against self-incrimination. The bill requires individuals to provide records, information or answers even though they might incriminate them or make them liable to a penalty. The committee noted that similar provisions that abrogate the privilege against self-incrimination occur frequently in legislation in order to assist agencies investigate crime or maintain regulatory schemes. In this instance, the committee considered the provisions justified as they will assist authorised officers under the new regulatory scheme to conduct investigations and identify risks to the safety of the public. That concludes my remarks on this digest. I thank the committee members for their input, and I commend the digest to the House.

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The committee noted a few issues with this bill. First, the introduction of a number of offences of strict liability, the implications of such being that only particular acts or omissions need to be proved to meet the criminal threshold and the Crown is not required to demonstrate intent, negligence or recklessness on the part of the accused. The committee noted that while offences of strict liability may impact on personal rights and liberties, it is also accepted that such offences are not uncommon in regulatory settings. The committee made no further comments on this issue.

Secondly, the committee raised concerns about provisions in the bill which impact the privilege against self-incrimination. The bill requires individuals to provide records, information or answers even though they might incriminate them or make them liable to a penalty. The committee noted that similar provisions which abrogate the privilege against self-incrimination occur frequently in legislation in order to assist agencies investigate crime or maintain regulatory schemes. In this instance, the committee considered the provisions justified as they will assist authorised officers under the new regulatory scheme to conduct investigations and identify risks to the safety of the public. That concludes my remarks on this digest. I thank the committee staff and its members for their input, and I commend the digest to the House.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (15:31):** On behalf of the Opposition I make a contribution to the debate on the Legislative Review Committee's twentieth digest for the Fifty-sixth Parliament. I note the Chair was not able to attend the meeting, but I hope he was okay on the day. Labor Opposition members missed his attendance at the meeting. I am surprised there was no concern from his colleagues in the Liberal Party on the committee who quickly moved to take the chair and take over the running of the committee in his absence. I am sure that is not the way The Nationals are always treated, but it shocked me. We missed him. The committee considered three bills and commented on two. I note there was no comment on the Crimes and Anti-Discrimination Legislation Amendment (Vilification) Bill 2016, a private members' bill moved by my colleague, the shadow Auditor-General, the member for Liverpool. I assume it is a tribute to his drafting of the bill. I endorse the comments of the Chair on the remainder of the digest.

I note the committee sent correspondence to Ministers and those responsible for bills, commenting on the bills and seeking a response. Seven pieces of correspondence were sent and the committee received four pieces of correspondence in reply, all of which dealt with postponement of regulations. None of them addressed concerns the committee had raised in relation to the legislation and I think that is a continuing concern for this committee. I also note the committee has granted the secretariat extra time to prepare a list of correspondence sent and a tabulation of the responses it has received from Ministers and other responsible for legislation. I look forward to a fulsome report from the secretariat after the winter recess.

**Mr Michael Johnsen:** You might want to revisit what the letter said.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN:** It will be revisited time and time again. I thank the committee staff in particular for all their continued work for the committee. I thank committee members, and I commend the digest to the House.

**Report noted.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Committee reports having concluded, the House will now consider the matter of public importance.

*Matter of Public Importance***RAMADAN 2016**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (15:33):** I am delighted to speak on this matter of public importance—the holy month of Ramadan. Ramadan is the month of sacrifice and personal reflection for the Muslim community, fasting, as well as considering the suffering of others and contributing to charities to help those less fortunate. There is also a great emphasis on prayer and even Muslims who do not regularly attend a mosque join together in prayer, particularly evening prayers, culminating at the end of the month in Eid al-Fitr which is massive feast for the entire community. A number of events are planned across Sydney when thousands and thousands of people will come together to celebrate Eid.

Many in my community have been coming together to pray at the beautiful new mosque in Guildford, Masjid Al-Rahma. I was invited to meet the community at Friday prayers on the first Friday in Ramadan, which was also the first Friday prayers held at the new mosque. The community is rightly proud of its beautiful new mosque. It has framed sections of the Kaaba displayed on the walls, beautiful marble around large parts of the internals, inscriptions from the Koran set into brass across the windows, and an incredibly beautiful dome and lights throughout. It is something they can be really proud of. It is one of the very few mosques in Australia that has the full four minarets. That community fought to establish the mosque with considerable resistance from Fairfield council, even though it is quite possibly the most beautiful, attractive and well-planned building constructed in Fairfield in the past decade.

Ramadan is also a time of coming together to break the fast at the end of the day, and in recent years Iftar dinners have become larger and more frequent, as our Muslim communities grow but also as there has been a great emphasis on interfaith dialogue and the promotion of mutual respect and understanding. They are being held by large corporations, political leaders, community associations, schools, mosques, churches and in the homes of people. The Leader of the Opposition and I hosted our own community Iftar last Friday in Guildford at the Sawarbina restaurant with approximately 160 people from both electorates from different ethnic communities, including Christian and Muslim religious leaders such as His Eminence the Grand Mufti of Australia, Dr Ibrahim Abu Mohammed. The religious leaders joined our local schools, business and community leaders, representatives of community associations and many of our good friends to break the fast, renew acquaintances and make new friends.

We were also very blessed that a number of sheiks were in attendance, led prayers and read from the Koran. I understand that the Premier also hosted an Iftar dinner in Parliament House and the Prime Minister recently hosted the first Prime Ministerial Iftar dinner at Kirribilli House. These initiatives are also to commend Ramadan. As I stated yesterday in my private members' statement, an Iftar dinner is not the time to be haranguing the Muslim community about terrorism. We do not invite people to dinner to insult them, and to do so is just rude.

**Mr Mark Coure:** How is it an insult?

**Ms JULIA FINN:** If there is a time and place to discuss terrorism with people it is through effective engagement throughout the year. You do not invite people to dinner to insult them. Over the many, many years during which the IRA conducted many acts of terrorism in the name of the Irish Republican Movement no Irish Catholics were ever invited to Christmas parties and routinely insulted about what they did. I do not think it is the time and place to be raising these issues. They can be raised very constructively at other times. They are a time for effective community engagement to learn about and understand other people's cultures, but they are also a friendly and celebratory breaking of the fast together.

I have found it a great honour to be invited to many Iftar dinners throughout Ramadan this year and in previous years. I thank the families, organisations and mosques that have invited me to their Iftar dinners this year, from the small interfaith gathering at the Parramatta mosque last Sunday to dinners and awards presentations organised by the Islamic Charity Projects Association and the Lebanese Muslim Association. They have been wonderful events. I also attended a dinner hosted by the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils [AFIC] and the Affinity Intercultural Foundation in Parliament House last Monday. I am also looking forward to catching up with many friends from El Dannieh at its community gathering this weekend, as well as many other Iftar events in the near future, particularly the one held by the Turkish Mosque, a different mosque in Guildford. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (15:39):** It is a great honour to speak about Ramadan as the matter of public importance. I wish Ramadan Mubarak to all those in my electorate and the surrounding electorates such as Kogarah and Rockdale. I note the member for Rockdale has a large Muslim community in his electorate, as does the member for Campbelltown. Ramadan is the holiest and happiest season for Muslim communities around the world. It is a time of daylight fasting, good deeds and mercy. It is a time to renew spirituality and think about those in need. Muslims not only play a vital role in our society and community but also take on an active role in preserving their heritage, traditions, language and culture.

Muslims in this State reflect ancestries from Indonesia, the Subcontinent, Europe, Africa and the Middle East. That goes to show that New South Wales has a strong history and connection with our Muslim brothers and sisters as well those from numerous other cultures. In New South Wales we come from about 225 nations, speak more than 200 languages and practise at least 125 religions. Approximately 50 per cent of New South Wales residents were either born overseas or have one parent who was born overseas. During Iftar we celebrate our diversity. Communities in our State and country are the champions of diversity and we do our best to promote and protect our community harmony.

We need to work together to build on the strengths of our diversity and social cohesion to instil a sense of hope and opportunity in everybody from our youths to our seniors. It is our strong harmony as one community and one family that gives us our advantage in embracing the multicultural diversity of our fellow Australians. I am a great supporter of multiculturalism. The differences that would divide communities in other parts of the world have no place in our society, which is connected through family and friends and, most importantly, through our love for this great country. As leaders we need to continue to engage our community and work with them in partnership.

I acknowledge the community leaders and groups in my electorate and surrounding electorates in the St George area. I particularly acknowledge the great work of the Lebanese Muslim Association, the World Lebanese Cultural Union, Future Movement Australia and the Iaal Charitable Association. Many members of the Iaal community live in my electorate as well as in the Kogarah and Rockdale electorates. I note that the Lebanese village of Iaal is next door to Kfarsghab where my wife and her family come from. They, of course, have a close working relationship. I also acknowledge the Affinity organisation and representatives of the Bosnian mosque at Penshurst, who do a marvellous job promoting not only their culture but harmony as well. On behalf of myself and my family I say Ramadan Mubarak to the Muslim community in my electorate.

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (15:43):** I make a brief contribution to the discussion on the holy month of Ramadan as the matter of public importance. A number of members have made contributions about the significance of Ramadan to our electorates, State and nation. As the member for Bankstown, I was delighted to have the opportunity to recently co-host my first Iftar dinner. My fellow hosts were the member for Lakemba, Jihad Dib, the Federal member for Watson, the Hon. Tony Burke, and the Federal member for Blaxland, the Hon. Jason Clare. The event provided a wonderful opportunity to work together with the management and staff of the Bankstown PCYC and students from Al Noori Muslim School.

I acknowledge the member for Lakemba, who did a wonderful job coordinating the Iftar dinner for more than 200 attendees. It was a wonderful evening and a great opportunity to break the fast with our constituents. I also acknowledge the evening's many guests. I pay tribute to our local police commanders and representatives, community organisation members and local Arabic media representatives who attended. I also pay tribute to the Al Noori Muslim School students, board members and management representatives who came along. Their contribution of providing students to volunteer as our wonderful waiters was very much appreciated.

Throughout this month we are blessed as members of Parliament to be able to attend so many Iftar dinners. I pay tribute to the Lebanese Muslim Association and Samier Dandan, who recently held an Iftar dinner and invited many dignitaries from all political persuasions. I acknowledge the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils [AFIC], the Lebanese Community Council and all other organisations. I know Future Movement Australia will soon hold its Iftar dinner. So many different community organisations are now hosting Iftar dinners that involve the broader community by inviting school students, members of Parliament and community and media representatives. They provide a wonderful opportunity for everyone to come together and share the very special month of Ramadan with our Muslim brothers and sisters.

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (15:46):** In reply: I thank members who have made contributions to the discussion about the holy month of Ramadan as the matter of public importance. It is important that our Parliament acknowledges the significance of Ramadan and other holy celebrations of the many faiths in New South Wales. Ramadan is the holiest month in the Islamic calendar. The member for Oatley spoke about how Ramadan is celebrated in his local community and around the world. He told us about the importance of the community coming together at Ramadan to promote social cohesion and learn about each other. I did not know that his wife comes from Kfarsghab, which I visited when I went to Lebanon recently. There are thousands of Kfarsghabis in my

electorate. The municipal elections in Kfarsghab have been a big topic of conversation in the Granville electorate in recent weeks.

**Mr David Elliott:** Did Eddie Obeid win?

**Ms JULIA FINN:** No, Gassam Samia, the previous mayor, won. We heard from the member for Bankstown about the Iftar dinner she hosted with the member for Lakemba, the Hon. Jason Clare and the Hon. Tony Burke, which they held in partnership with the Bankstown PCYC. That is a great local initiative and it is good to involve so many young people in the celebration. Throughout the holy month of Ramadan, as members of Parliament we are incredibly privileged to be able to join our community in their celebrations and break the fast with them. It also makes us aware of the contributions that the Muslim community makes to charities. At the end of almost every Ramadan dinner the leftovers are collected and distributed to the less fortunate and homeless throughout Sydney. That fine tradition has been continuing for many years and was imported from overseas.

During Ramadan a great emphasis is placed on prayer as well as personal reflection. People are encouraged to make an effort throughout the month to be a better person and not engage in backstabbing or putting others down. It is about putting other people before yourself and being considerate of everyone around you. The fasting is about promoting empathy. Whether or not we are of the Muslim faith, we can all learn those lessons and incorporate them into our daily lives. Along with other members, I wish everybody Ramadan Mubarak and all the best for the coming Eid celebrations.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** The matter of public importance having concluded, community recognition statements will now be proceeded with.

*Community Recognition Statements*

**ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE NINETY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Corrections, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Veterans Affairs) (15:49):** Today I congratulate the wonderful air men and women of the Royal Australian Air Force on celebrating the ninety-fifth birthday of the Royal Australian Air Force. This milestone makes the Royal Australian Air Force one of the oldest, and certainly the most respected, air forces in the world. Our air men and women have served and continue to serve in perilous and difficult circumstances. Our thoughts are with those currently deployed in operations overseas and with their families who are left behind. A lot has changed in the past 95 years. Behind every innovation and initiative are the men and women of our defence force, but none has seen more change in technology than those in our air corps. The dedication and sense of duty of its members has made the air force what it is today. Happy birthday, Ronnie Raaf.

**GABBI ANDERSON, 2016 YOUTH AMBASSADOR AWARD**

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (15:50):** I am delighted to acknowledge Campbelltown Performing Arts High School year 12 student Gabbi Anderson on being awarded the 2016 Youth Ambassador Award at the Campbelltown Rotary Youth Excellence awards. Gabbi was awarded the Youth Ambassador Award for her leadership contributions to youth in the Campbelltown community, including her work with students at Beverly Park Special School, organising movie nights and chocolate raffles, fundraising for Alzheimer's Australia, and organising harmony day events and other fundraisers at her school.

Gabbi is a very hardworking student in our community and for her efforts she has been awarded numerous honours, including the Long Tan Citizenship Award and the Marie Bashir Peace Award. Her dedication to the Campbelltown community is an inspiration to the young people in our region. She is a fantastic role model not only for her fellow students at Campbelltown Performing Arts but also for the wider Campbelltown community. I ask the House to join me in congratulating Gabbi on her award as the 2016 Campbelltown Rotary Youth Ambassador and wish her the best of luck for her final year of school.

**TRIBUTE TO MAYLENE DIXON**

**Ms TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (15:51):** Today I place on record the special life and impact made by Maylene Dixon, who sadly passed away suddenly on Anzac Day. I first met Maylene five years ago as the newly elected member for Mulgoa at a community event, where Maylene also met our daughter, Laura, who was four years old at the time. From this meeting Maylene displayed a kindness and affection for Laura by writing little stories and giving small thoughtful gifts on the occasion of her birthday and other special events. Laura responded by drawing pictures and writing thank-you notes, which had a big impact on Maylene's heart.

Maylene may never have made newspaper headlines but she made headlines in the hearts and minds of many local people within my electorate. I convey my sympathies to Maylene's surviving twin sister, Daphney.

I hope that Daphney is comforted in the knowledge of the huge difference her sister made in many hearts, including the young heart of our daughter. Laura was sad and shocked when I told her that Maylene had passed away but she said, "Mummy, when we remember the soldiers on Anzac Day we will also remember Maylene."

#### **MARS FOOD AUSTRALIA LET'S MAKE DINNER TIME COUNT**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (15:52):** Mars Food Australia is located at Berkeley Vale on the Central Coast of New South Wales, with its state-of-the-art facility officially opening in 1992. It has continued to grow its operations to be one of the largest employers on the Central Coast, with more than 300 associates working on site. I was recently invited to the launch of its "Let's Make Dinnertime Matter" campaign at the factory in Berkeley Vale. The event was extended to 400 staff and guests for lunch. General Manager Hamish Thomson invited staff to down tools so they could share lunch in a move designed to highlight the important role food plays in bringing people together.

The "Let's Make Dinnertime Matter" campaign is in response to research revealing that while Australians recognise the benefits of dinnertime—with 78 per cent saying they get more connection from sharing a meal with loved ones than from any other activity—three-quarters of those interviewed wanted to change something about their dinners. To move Aussies to prioritise and celebrate dinnertime, Mars Food Australia toured the country asking people who their ideal dinner guest would be. What was revealed surprised everyone: children choose their parents.

#### **SHARE THE DIGNITY CAMPAIGN**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (15:53):** Last month in this Chamber I spoke in support of the Share the Dignity Campaign, which provides sanitary products to homeless women and women in refuges. My electorate office is a collection point for the Share the Dignity Campaign and I thank the many organisations that have donated sanitary products, including Mortdale Probus Club, Oatley Probus Club, Narwee Creative Craft, St George Lioness Club, and Lugarno Lions which also made a \$500 donation. In Australia the figures in relation to woman and homelessness is disturbing—for 25 per cent of women who are homeless it is because of family and domestic violence and one in four women have experienced physical or sexual violence. The Share the Dignity Campaign provides some relief to women at risk. I acknowledge and thank all of those who have dropped products into my office. We have had three boxes collected and the donations keep coming. I notified schools and community groups in my electorate and they have answered the call. I note the generosity, care and compassion shown by people in my local community.

#### **BOTANY BAY COMMEMORATIVE NAME PLAQUES PROJECT**

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (15:54):** It was my absolute pleasure to join the Botany Historical Trust, the Federal member for Kingsford-Smith, Matt Thistlethwaite, and the Deputy Mayor of Botany Bay City Council, Stan Kondilios, at the launch of the historical plaques project. This Federally funded project, courtesy of the member for Kingsford-Smith, and led by the Botany Historical Trust, recognises those who served our nation with valour in World War I. Some in our community are unaware but many local roads in Pagewood and Daceyville are named after World War I heroes. This is a fitting gesture for the area as Daceyville was the first ever example of a town planning scheme in Australia. It was planned as a soldiers' settlement for veterans and war widows in New South Wales. Now plaques mounted on local streets and at Jellicoe Park describe the achievements and decorations of those service people they commemorate. The project provides a wonderful insight into our nation's history for the community and visitors. I extend my congratulations and gratitude to the Botany Historical Trust, their president, Anne Slattery, and the member for Kingsford-Smith, Matt Thistlethwaite, for their hard work and commitment to honouring the special history of the Botany Bay community.

#### **REBEKKAH WHEELER, ABORIGINAL CLIENT AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICER**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (15:55):** I welcome Rebekkah Wheeler who has started as the Aboriginal Client and Community Support Officer with the Aboriginal Services Branch, Department of Justice, at the Taree Local Court House. The role provides support and assistance to Aboriginal clients of the court—whether they be court clients, victims and family, or court users. The role includes outreach and community education programs such as educating community about the services offered by the court, referring clients to appropriate services, attending community events and promoting services to the Aboriginal community and presenting targeted information about legal rights and responsibilities. Welcome, Rebekkah.

#### **NANCY DICKMAN, NSW COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (15:56):** I congratulate Nancy Dickman on last week being awarded the NSW Community Service Award. Nancy started holding exercise classes in her home almost 30 years ago. It is a credit to her that all these years later her classes have gone from strength to strength, with consistently

high attendance rates. I was lucky enough to participate in one of Nancy's classes last week and it certainly got my heart pumping. At 73 years of age Nancy puts a huge amount of enthusiasm and charisma into her teaching. Her classes are a safe and judgement-free place to stay fit. Nancy has created a social outlet, helping pensioners and retirees, many who live alone, stay connected, strong and independent well into their golden years. When attendees, either due to illness or injury, are no longer able to attend classes Nancy keeps in contact. She gives them a welfare call and lets other classmates know the status of that person's health and recovery. Nancy is a credit to our community and deserving of its recognition.

#### **ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF WORSHIP IN THE FOREST**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (15:57):** Last Sunday a gathering at the Uniting Church of Belrose celebrated 100 years of continuous worship in The Forest area. In 1916 a small group of Christians gathered to worship in a house on an orchard in Frenchs Forest. The service was held in the home of the Holland family, where the Forest High School now stands. It was the first recorded Methodist service in The Forest and from it has grown the churches which now represent the Uniting Church in The Forest area. They comprise The Forest Kirk at Frenchs Forest, as well as the Uniting churches in Belrose and Forestville. The thanksgiving service at the Belrose Uniting Church was presided over by Reverend Ian Weeks. It was attended by many people connected with the three Uniting churches or other churches in the area. I congratulate the organisers of this significant event and recognise the passion and dedication of Christians both past and present who have contributed to 100 years of continuous worship in The Forest and our broader community.

#### **DISABILITY SOUTH WEST**

**Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) (15:58):** On Tuesday 14 June 2016 I had the great pleasure of visiting Disability South West at Bonnyrigg to inspect the new vehicle purchased through the Community Building Partnership Program. Disability South West is a great not-for-profit organisation which has serviced the south-west region for more than three decades. Disability South West was one of 20 successful applicants which secured \$20,000 in the last round of the Community Building Partnership Program. The Hyundai iMax seats up to eight passengers and will help more than 200 people with disabilities in the south-west region. This vehicle will give people with disabilities greater access to the community and increase social interdependency. I thank Chief Executive Officer Sean Langshaw and the staff at Disability South West for the hard work they do in providing disability services for our local community.

#### **TRIBUTE TO DR STEVE SKINNER AND DR NICK ANNESLEY**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (15:59):** I pay tribute to two doctors from Gosford Hospital who this year completed a 10-day 1,500-kilometre bike ride from Brisbane to Sydney to raise money for our local cancer patients. Dr Steve Skinner and Dr Nick Annesley, emergency department specialists, are to be congratulated on their fantastic effort in completing this enormous bike ride through all conditions. The Signature Tour De Cure event raises awareness and money to help our local cancer patients on the Central Coast. All money raised this year went to the CoastCanCare Wellness Program, which helps local adults live with cancer through its support programs. Being keen cyclists, the doctors were only too pleased to take part and they were also a great help in providing medical attention for the numerous bike injuries along the 1,500-kilometre bike ride. Well done, Dr Skinner and Dr Annesley.

#### **SLOVENIAN INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (16:00):** I was pleased to have recently attended a local Slovenian Independence Day celebration at Triglav Club, St Johns Park, together with the ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia, Her Excellency Helena Drnovšek Zorko. Slovenia has been independent since 1991 and now has a population of 2.06 million people. Slovenia is a small country without kings or famous military leaders of its own. Slovenians are very resilient people who were determined to have their own independent State.

Slovenia took the most important step towards independence in 1990 when it held a referendum in which 90 per cent of the population opted for independence. Since then, Slovenia has gone ahead in leaps and bounds, becoming a global player when it joined the European Union in 2004 and became a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In 2007 it was the first of the new European Union members to take up the euro. On behalf of the House, I congratulate the Slovenian community on 25 years of independence.

#### **DANIEL HOSE, QUEEN'S SCOUT AWARD**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (16:00):** One day Bear Grylls will meet his match, but little does he know that that match will most likely be one of Hornsby's homegrown scouts, Daniel Hose. The Queen's Scout Award is the highest youth award achievable within the Scouting movement in the Commonwealth. Although to some people being awarded the Queen's Scout Award may seem easy, one actually has to be the crème de la crème

to achieve such an incredible feat. Through his quiet determination Daniel has completed every task with the highest success. Daniel attained the Grey Wolf in Cubs, the Scout Medallion in Scouts, and now, in Venturers, he has attained the Queen's Scout Award. This task requires four components: Adventurous Activities, Community Involvement, Leadership Development, and Personal Growth.

Each task is rigorous and challenging, and it takes the highest level of expertise and determination to complete each component. To fulfil these tasks, Daniel completed the Endeavour Award, which requires a Venturer to pursue a major interest through research, application and reflection on personal endeavour, and must be done over a period of at least 50 hours or more. It is with great pleasure that I commend Daniel on achieving these incredible feats. But his success comes as no surprise as his parents, Greg and Belinda, are two of the most committed, hardworking and dedicated community people I have ever met. The apple has not fallen far from the tree.

#### **BANKSTOWN CENTENARIANS BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (16:01):** Last Friday I was delighted to be able to visit the BUPA Aged Care facility in Bankstown to wish a very happy birthday to John Hinds, who recently turned 102, Marianne Lefevre, who has also reached 102 years of age, and Leida Harris, who will celebrate her 100th birthday in August. These are wonderful milestones that all three have achieved and I take this opportunity as the member for Bankstown to congratulate each of them. I also take the opportunity to congratulate BUPA Bankstown, which is a wonderful aged-care facility. I pay tribute to the general manager, Peter Makuzha, and Dr Wicky Wong from the aged-care facility for not only inviting me and for being so hospitable but also for ensuring that they continue to look after their wonderful clients and provide a wonderful work environment for their staff. Again I take the opportunity to say happy birthday to each of those clients of BUPA and to congratulate the organisation.

#### **BOWRAL SALVATION ARMY CENTRE**

**Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (16:03):** It was a pleasure to be able to attend the opening of the new Salvation Army centre on 21 November last year in Bowral. Salvation Army Major Graham Longbottom outlined that the move ensured better accessibility to the Salvation Army for the community. The new premises on Bong Bong Street, Bowral, had been planned for four years and was under construction for roughly 12 months. The Salvation Army has had a long history in the Southern Highlands since its beginning in Moss Vale in 1885. I was honoured to be asked to speak at the centre's opening day, which comprises the Salvation Army store and facilities for community assistance as well as the new church. I wish the Salvation Army all the best with their new centre, and I look forward to working closely with them in the future. I note that their fantastic volunteers, many of whom I met on the day, do a great job.

#### **TRIBUTE TO NICK KATRIS**

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale) (16:03):** I acknowledge the long and dedicated service of former Kogarah City councillor Mr Nick Katris. In September 1995, Nick was elected as the Labor Party councillor for North Ward, where he served up until the recent proclamation to amalgamate Hurstville City Council and Kogarah City Council. Nick was one of those unfortunate victims of amalgamation and is the community's loss. He was also outstanding as mayor of Kogarah City Council during 2007 and 2008.

Nick has made excellent representation on many local government boards and committees during the 20-plus years he served his community. I had the privilege of working with Nick on many community-based issues and I cannot adequately express my appreciation for the experience and knowledge I gained in the area of civic service while working with Nick. Nick has sacrificed much of his professional and private life in order to serve his community with great distinction. I thank and congratulate Nick on his tremendous contribution to the community. Nick's work ethic and commitment whilst serving as a councillor at Kogarah City Council is a fine example for all who seek to serve in public office.

#### **TRIBUTE TO JOHN TAPLIN**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, and Assistant Minister for Planning) (16:04):** I congratulate John Taplin, who was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia [OAM] in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for his service to the community of Cronulla through charitable organisations. John became involved with the Rainbow Club 20 years ago through his son William, now 24 years old, who has Down syndrome.

Ron Siddons, OAM, MBE, formed the Rainbow Club in Cronulla in 1969. He was a lifeguard who saw the need to teach children with a disability how to swim. The mission statement of Rainbow Club Australia is to give children with a disability the opportunity and confidence to extend their abilities through swimming. John

Taplin has been a board member of Rainbow Club Australia since 2008 and has seen the organisation expand to where it is now, teaching more than 500 children across New South Wales to swim, including 100 in the Sutherland shire. He has been involved in many other community organisations including Assisted Pilgrimage Services and Down Syndrome Association of NSW. I congratulate John on this outstanding achievement.

#### **JERRY AND MAY TOWNSEND SEVENTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (16:05):** I am delighted to recognise the amazing milestone of Jerry and May Townsend of North St Marys who are celebrating their seventieth wedding anniversary. Jerry and May first met in 1946 when Jerry was on a short service leave from the Navy and went out dancing in Katoomba where he first met May, who was out that night with a friend. Later that year they married and 70 years later are celebrating this wonderful achievement together. Despite all of life's challenges, their commitment and love for each other has seen them persevere together against the tough times. I was delighted to have my office assist with arranging special messages for this special day. I congratulate Jerry and May on their 70 years of marriage and I personally wish them happiness through many more years together.

#### **GRAFTON CITY BEARS HOCKEY CLUB**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (16:06):** Today I offer my congratulations to the City Bears Hockey Club of Grafton which, for a relatively small club within the Grafton Hockey Association, is producing a wonderful array of representative players. Michael Russ has won a silver medal at the FIH Masters World Cup in the over-50s Division, Hugh Cameron has earned his maiden selection in the NSW Country Open side to play in the Australian Country Championships in Darwin, and former City Bears Club members Nathan Butterick and Jacob Purser have been selected in the NSW U21s squad for next year's Australian Championships. This is a wonderful achievement for City Bears and one they should be extremely proud of. I wish President Peter Fysh and his executive team and the many volunteers within the club continued success into the future.

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

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (16:07):** I recognise the work of Surf Life Saving Far North Coast and congratulate all the nominees and winners at the Awards of Excellence function, which was held last Saturday at the Byron Bay Services Club. The main purpose of the night was to recognise the hard work of the many surf lifesaving volunteers and to celebrate the organisation's contributions to surf sports and education. I presented the award for Cadet Lifesaver of the Year to Bryce Holmes from Brunswick and the President's Award went to a very worthy recipient, Gary Meredith, who was honoured for his many decades of service to surf lifesaving.

In the past year the branch patrolled for 44,000 hours and had more than 200 out-of-patrol-hours call-outs for assistance and rescues. There were 181 reported rescues. Surf Life Saving Far North Coast is a vibrant volunteer and community service organisation with more than 4,000 volunteer lifesavers providing the Far North New South Wales coast with world-class water safety for 300 kilometres of coastline. It has a proud record of never having recorded a drowning between the red and yellow flags whilst on patrol since its establishment. I commend this organisation to the House.

#### **PITTWATER SAILING CHAMPIONS**

**Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Planning) (16:08):** Today I recognise four young fearless sailors from my electorate of Pittwater who will be representing Australia at their first International Sailing Regatta event, the world championships to be held on 23 July in Germany: Antony Hawke, Nathan Bryant and brothers Boston Cortis and Logan Cortis. They all sail out of Royal Prince Alfred Yacht club in Newport, live locally and go to local schools. All four seadogs have put in countless hours of training before and after school and on weekends. Their dedication, enthusiasm and love for their sport is inspiring. They will be competing in a fleet of 400 sailors from 36 countries. I wish the boys the best of luck and let them know that all of Pittwater is cheering them on and wishing them all the best at the International Sailing Regatta event.

#### **QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS RECIPIENTS**

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (16:09):** I am pleased to acknowledge Gilead resident John Russell on being awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia [OAM] in the recent Queen's Birthday Honours List. For more than 30 years John has served the Campbelltown community as a local chemist as well as serving in multiple roles in the community. In 1994 John built the Hurley House centre to cater for the need for intellectual disability services in the Campbelltown region. John was also the founding chairman of Focus on Families, which assists families in need; Stepping Stone Community, a homeless youth service; and Cottage Family Care Centre, which helps families in need. John is currently the honorary treasurer of Campbelltown Uniting Care, a role he has served in since 2002.

I cannot think of a person more deserving than John Russell to receive the OAM. His dedication in service to the Campbelltown community is an inspiration to us all and a great example of the good nature of our people and our community. I ask the House to join me in congratulating John on receiving this medal and I thank him for his service to our community and to the broader Macarthur region.

#### STATE REPRESENTATIVE AWARDS RECIPIENTS

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (16:10):** I congratulate Sienna Doolan, Flynn Doolan and Keellan Milinkovic from Kirrawee High School who are the recipients of the New South Wales Government State Representative Awards. Sienna and Flynn from Jannali both started skiing at the tender age of three, moving on to snowboarding before they were 10. They have both represented New South Wales in many competitions, including the 2015 Cardrona Junior Nationals in New Zealand and the State Interschools Snowsports Championships. Since they began competing in 2011, they have made incredible achievements and between them have placed in the top three more than 20 times.

Keellan Milinkovic represented New South Wales at the 2015 Trans-Tasman Challenge Waterpolo tournament, displaying incredible talent. His dedication is evident. He wakes for 5 a.m. training sessions at Sydney Olympic Park five days a week and trains 11 times each week. Keellan has received a sporting scholarship with the NSW Institute of Sport. He is currently preparing for the European tour of the World Youth Waterpolo Championships in Montenegro and strives to compete in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

#### TRIBUTE TO NEWCASTLE CITY COUNCIL LIFEGUARDS

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (16:11):** A few weeks ago New South Wales was ravaged by an east coast low that left much of the State devastated. It is in times of hardship that heroes shine through. On 5 June two Newcastle City Council lifeguards braved huge seas to rescue three board riders off Stockton. Lifeguards Paul Bernard and Scott Hammerton launched a jetski from Horseshoe Beach to steam through the heads to Newcastle harbour in the heaving seas generated by the east coast low on the Sunday afternoon. En route to the three surfers the duo checked on another surfer inside the harbour who had been swept out past the breakwall. They then proceeded out into the bight to the three huddling together 600 metres off Stockton Surf Club after they had been swept out past the Stockton breakwall by the powerful currents. The experienced lifeguards safely delivered the three men back to shore near the Stockton Beach Holiday Park. Sea conditions were extremely dangerous and I am very proud of the courage and professionalism they showed in performing such a difficult rescue. They are a testament to the importance and skill of surf lifesaving across New South Wales.

#### CANREVIVE

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (16:12):** On Saturday 18 June CanRevive celebrated its twenty-first anniversary of providing care and service to Chinese Australians living with cancer. CanRevive is an organisation that has a holistic approach in assisting patients and their families. Whether through patient support programs or living with cancer programs, CanRevive is true to its motto that no-one should face cancer alone. Unique to CanRevive is its approach to supporting patients and their families with practical, useful information and services. It is for that reason the New South Wales Government is providing \$60,000 to CanRevive to carry out renovations on their office space so that they can continue with their extraordinary work. I thank the Minister for Health for providing this funding. The New South Wales Government recognises the important role CanRevive plays in assisting newly diagnosed patients, people living with cancer and those in remission and their families. I thank all those involved in organising the twenty-first anniversary celebrations and wish CanRevive and all those who use its services the best for a healthy and strong future.

#### QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS RECIPIENTS

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (16:13):** I congratulate five Maitland people who were recognised for their contributions to the community in the Queen's Birthday Honours List 2016. Firstly, Major Carl Christie of Ashtonfield, was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his voluntary involvement over the past 20 years at Fort Scratchley, helping to preserve the history of our nation and region. Mr John Hakes of East Maitland was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his involvement with the St Vincent De Paul Society over 20 years, especially the innovative and award-winning Coachstop Caravan Park project in Maitland, which provides care and support to some of our most vulnerable residents.

Mr Doug Pyle of Bolwarra Heights was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his regular contribution to Maitland's cultural and entertainment life over a remarkable 70-year period. Mr Frank Higgs of East Maitland was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his extensive involvement in the Mai-Wel Group to support people with disabilities over a number of decades. Mr Barry Palmer of Bolwarra Heights became an Officer of the Order of Australia for his involvement with Lions International, through global leadership and domestic executive roles.

### TRIBUTE TO RON ROBINSON

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (16:14):** I inform the House that Forster resident Ron Robinson is a skilled and passionate model wooden boat builder with most of his boats relating to the maritime history of the Great Lakes. Now in his eighties, Ron became fascinated with model boats when his father built and raced them on the duck pond in Sydney's Moore Park. Years later, after his retirement as a French polisher, Ron has plenty of time to create intricately detailed scale models which require much patience. Two of Ron's models are featured in the Tuncurry Museum. One of them, named "Lake Wallis", was used to transport groceries to residents at Coomba Park before a sealed road was built. The other was used to transport timber up and down the coast. Ron's hobby has been the subject of a short film which was made to capture Ron's genuine, generous and humble character and his attention to the fine detail of a lost era in maritime history.

### LAKES DISTRICT RURAL FIRE SERVICE

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (16:15):** When a bushfire razes a community, words cannot describe the devastation that is felt by those affected. Like any disaster, it resonates throughout the country on television and in the papers. In the wake of that disaster, it is sometimes easy to forget those who risk their lives to help others and do it for no reward. Last month I was honoured to attend the Lakes District Rural Fire Service Volunteer Awards Ceremony at the Doyalson RSL and to meet those local volunteers who have staunchly served their communities in such times. Those volunteers from the Swansea electorate had collectively served more than 200 years with the Rural Fire Service [RFS]. In particular I acknowledge Adam Caruana, David McInerney, Joshua Myers, William Gregoric, Peter Murphy, Wayne Neal and Steven Tindall. Allan Minslow has served 42 years as an RFS volunteer. In acknowledging these volunteers, I also extend my sincere gratitude. We see the work they do and we are grateful for their help in keeping us safe. Thank you to the RFS and the Lakes District.

### GLENAEON VILLAGE THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (16:16):** Last Thursday I attended an afternoon tea to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of Glenaeon Village in Belrose in my electorate of Davidson. Glenaeon Village is a large retirement village located in natural bushland overlooking the Oxford Falls valley. The complex accommodates more than 200 residents and employs numerous staff who provide dedicated service. I was acknowledged at the celebration last week by Michael McKenzie, the new manager of the village and Winston Watts, president of the residents' association. Margaret Green, a resident for 29 of the village's 30 years, appropriately cut the cake to great applause. Glenaeon Village provides a happy, safe and comfortable village environment for residents in their more senior years. I commend the village operators, Lendlease, on continuing to provide a friendly and reliable service in Belrose over the least 30 years. I also thank the friendly Glenaeon residents for warmly welcoming me, as they always do. It is a wonderful local community.

### MACARTHUR COLTS LITTLE LEAGUE BASEBALL TEAM

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (16:16):** I ask the House to congratulate the Macarthur Colts Little League baseball team on winning the 2016 NSW Little League State Championship. The under-13 boys side put in a tremendous amount of work during the 2015-16 series. It was a hard-fought season, at the end of which they faced a determined Manly outfit in the grand final. However, much like in this place, Manly was all talk and not much else, in terms of football. Two weeks ago the Colts played in the National Championship in Lismore. Competition was fierce and unfortunately the Colts will not proceed to the World Series after finishing in eighth place. I commend all of the Colts players for their outstanding result. It is my pleasure always to see young athletes in the Campbelltown community achieving their best. I ask the House to join me in congratulating the Macarthur Colts and wish them every success in the future.

### TRIBUTE TO HEATHER HUNTER

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (16:17):** As we know, we have six million Australian volunteers throughout the country and many of them are from the Central Coast. One volunteer that I applaud today is Heather Huntington who has volunteered for Delphis Australia for seven years and who now retires at the sprightly age of 88. Heather Huntington is an amazing woman whose resilience and energy have contributed to her genuine concern and compassion for the wellbeing of others, especially those living with dementia in our Central Coast community. Heather is a unique woman. She likes to inspire others and is a role model for many of the younger volunteers across the Central Coast. Heather is a tireless worker in our community. I pay tribute to her dedication and commitment to the people of the Central Coast and wish her well in her retirement.

### MEN'S HEALTH WEEK

**Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) (16:18):** On Tuesday 14 June 2016 I visited the Men's Shed at Bonnyrigg, in my electorate, to raise awareness in Men's Health Week of the health issues that men face. Men's

Health Week is a great time for organisations to hold activities, events and promotions to encourage men to have a conversation that can make a huge difference to their health. Events like the one at the Men's Shed create the right setting for conversations on topics that men may feel embarrassed to talk about. It is important that men speak out about health issues. Australian Bureau of Statistics information on the leading causes of death shows that the rate of death from heart disease, chronic lower respiratory disease, diabetes and suicide is higher for men than for women. I encourage men to speak up about the health issues that they may face. I thank the Men's Shed at Bonnyrigg for hosting the event.

#### **TRIBUTE TO ALEX MCGEE**

**Ms LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie—Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education) (16:19):** I acknowledge 15-year-old Alex McGee, a year 10 student at Port Macquarie's St Columba Anglican School, who recently took to the skies on his first solo flight. Alex took the 15-minute flight over Port Macquarie recently, on his fifteenth birthday, making him the youngest student to fly solo in the Hastings District Flying Club's 60 year history. Alex landed the plane perfectly. In describing his first solo flight, he said:

You feel free ... the winds were perfect and it was like the stars aligned.

Chief flying instructor Ray Lind said:

Alex is enthusiastic, learns quickly, flew the plane very well and performed a beautiful landing.

Alex has big dreams of becoming a commercial pilot and has received a Recreational Aviation Australia scholarship to help advance his aviation dreams. I congratulate Alex on his solo flight and wish him success in his future training and progression.

#### **BALLINA COUNTRY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (16:20):** I pay tribute to the Ballina Country Women's Association [CWA]. I recognise the great work of the association, which held International Day on 8 June. The day was organised by international officer Wilma Austin and focused on East Asia. I was hosted at the event by Ballina branch president Lyn Davidson. The Ballina CWA, of which I am a proud member, is part of the Far North Coast Group of the Country Women's Association. It is made up of 18 branches and extends from Tweed Heads to Evans Head and west to Urbenville and Tabulam. Crafts made by the CWA are given to charities such as the Cancer Council and to premature babies in hospitals. Money raised by the organisation is used for projects in local communities. I commend the work of the Ballina Country Women's Association to the House.

#### **QUEEN'S GUIDE AWARD RECIPIENT ELLA KETO**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (16:21):** For any youth member of the Girl Guides the Queen's Guide Award is the peak achievement to aspire to. The Queen's Guide Award provides the opportunity to grow and develop brilliant young minds and pioneering leaders in our community through a range of emotional, physical and intellectual challenges that test the skill and capability of all applicants. It is with much pride that I congratulate Senior Guide Ella Keto on receiving the Queen's Guide Award in a ceremony attended by David Hurley, Governor of New South Wales, on 21 November 2015. Ella has the honour of being the first Guide in the Pennant Hills District since 1977 to receive the award—that is, the first in 38 years. As the twenty-first recipient in the Pennant Hills district, Ella has been the inspiration for many other youth members of her Senior Guide unit to undertake the challenge. The Queen's Guide Award has two central components: the Gold Endeavour and the Interest and Focus section. Ella was a junior leader for two years with the Pennant Hills Pre-Junior Guides and helped at St Matthew's West Pennant Hills youth club for primary school children. She attended sailing school and learned to sail. She also kept a self-development diary and participated in both a youth leadership course and a personal development course.

It is significant that in 2016 Pennant Hills Girl Guides celebrates 80 years of empowering young women in the local area. Guiding is an invaluable experience and gives every girl a life of skills and learning. Ella's achievements in her guiding journey speak for themselves. She embodies all of the values of leadership, compassion, fortitude and independence cherished by Pennant Hills Girl Guides. I take this opportunity to not only congratulate Pennant Hills Girl Guides on their eightieth anniversary but also thank them for motivating and supporting incredible young women like Ella.

#### **SWANSEA BELMONT SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (16:22):** I know I talk about surf life saving clubs a lot, but that is because my community has some of the best beaches in New South Wales and some of the most talented and dedicated surf life savers. This season I was blown away by the achievements of members of the Swansea Belmont Surf Life Saving Club. The club has about 620 members and sent a very competitive team to the Australian Surf

Life Saving Championships. I acknowledge the following people who were placed or were finalists: Angela Leadbetter, Melissa Thurlow, Hannah Trypas, Renee Gregory, club president Graham Burge, Nat Gregory, Amelia Johnson, Josh Murphy, Andrew Leadbetter, Georgia Muri, Taylor Gregory and Marilyn Clarence and Dale Mowbray, who absolutely cleaned up, winning six and four gold medals respectively. These people give up their time to keep our beaches safe. I am so proud that my community has some of the best. Well done, Swansea Belmont.

#### **MODEL UNITED NATIONS ASSEMBLY**

**Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (16:23):** I extend my congratulations to year 10 students Mabel Chalmers, Georgia Smith and Sharyn Budiarto of the Southern Highlands Christian School, who took part in the regional round of the Model United Nations Assembly. The girls were successful in that round and were invited to the House of Representatives in Old Parliament House, where they had the opportunity to prepare speeches and engage in debate with students from across New South Wales, Tasmania and Victoria. The girls also had the opportunity to speak with Gary Quinlan, who was Australia's Ambassador and Representative to the United Nations. The girls competed against 26 teams. I congratulate them on their amazing work. I also thank the Berrima Rotary Club for hosting the regional stages of the Model United Nations Assembly.

#### **AUSTRALIA-PHILIPPINES RELATIONS**

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (16:24):** I ask the House to acknowledge the seventieth anniversary of Australian-Filipino relations and the valuable contribution that the Filipino community makes to the Campbelltown region. Australian relations with the Philippines date back to the 1940s, when Aussie soldiers fought alongside Filipino soldiers during World War II. After fighting together, diplomatic ties between the two countries formed. Today the Filipino community in Australia gives so much to our community. Last year I had the privilege of welcoming to Parliament dozens of members of the Filipino community of Campbelltown and saw firsthand the contribution they make to our region. The Campbelltown region has one of the most vibrant and diverse communities in the country and the Filipino community plays an important role. The strength of that community shows that the relationship between Australia and the Philippines is alive and well in Campbelltown. I ask the House to join me in celebrating this anniversary of relations between two great nations. I thank the Campbelltown Filipino community for all that they do.

#### **DEATH OF JO COX, MP, UNITED KINGDOM**

**Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Planning) (16:25):** I acknowledge the strong connections between my constituency and the House of Commons in the United Kingdom. I note that the seat was named after a former British Prime Minister. I acknowledge that two current serving members of that Parliament, Peter Heaton-Jones in North Devon and Catherine West in London, Conservative and Labour respectively, have strong connections to Pittwater. On behalf of the people of Pittwater, I express great sorrow at the passing of Jo Cox, member of Parliament for Batley and Spen. I think I speak on behalf all of us in this House when I say how horrified and outraged we were at the manner of her demise. Her horrific death was an attack on freedom and on the freedoms of Parliament. We as members of Parliament acknowledge our colleague and the wonderful way in which she served her community. We send our best wishes to her family.

#### **TRIBUTE TO PAUL MURPHY**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (16:26):** I acknowledge Paul Murphy of Illawong, whose kindness helped to save the life of a man at Cape Solander. Paul was recognised for his actions with the Miranda local area commander's commendation award at the police central metropolitan region awards presentation in Sutherland on Thursday 16 June. Paul had been whale watching with his family when he had a chance meeting with a young man. Tragic circumstances had led the distraught young man to the cliffs at Cape Solander that day. Paul instinctively realised that the young man was upset. He intervened by asking the young man whether he was okay. As an insurance broker, Paul is used to looking out for risks and helping business owners to navigate problems. When Paul was in his twenties he attended Bible college. His pastoral training undoubtedly helped him to deal with the seriousness of the situation. He calmly talked to the young man until emergency services arrived. That selfless and brave act saved the young man's life. Paul, your kindness and compassion are heroic and inspirational. I thank you, on behalf of our community.

#### **OATLEY ELECTORATE CHINESE COMMUNITY**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (16:27):** I congratulate the New Business China Association for hosting the Chinese event The Voice. I acknowledge the talented contestants who thrilled and entertained us last Thursday night. In my electorate of Oatley almost 18 per cent of the population are of Chinese background. I am very aware of the enormous contribution the Chinese community has made in my electorate and across Australia. Events such as The Voice showcase the talent of the Chinese Australian community and strengthen the diversity and

multiculturalism that is at the heart of our community. I am delighted that the New Business China Association sponsored this event. I appreciate the great work of Sam Chang, Lily Goh and the entire team involved in staging The Voice. Organisations such as the New Business China Association strengthen our relationship and offer a platform for cultural exchange between Australia and China. Thank you to the contestants. I wish them the best of luck on their journey as they represent Australia and I look forward to cheering on their many successes.

#### TRIBUTE TO MURRAY DOUST

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (16:28):** This House congratulates Murray Doust, who performed brilliantly at the State masters rowing competition in Penrith. He won three events and finished second in another two. He also gained selection to the men's quad crew and will represent New South Wales. Doust is one of the best rowers the Manning has ever produced. He is a member of the Greater Taree Sporting Hall of Fame. In 1980, when he was still at school, he won the European under-23 championships in Germany, then the unofficial world title. He also has a string of national championships to his credit. At 54 years old he is the oldest in his age group. He will shortly move into another age division, when he turns 55. I congratulate Murray Doust.

#### TRIBUTE TO DANE ATCHESON

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (16:28):** This is an amazing story of courage and quick thinking that saved the life of another man. Dane Atcheson of Copacabana on the Central Coast had just competed in the North Curl Curl surf tour when on his way home he decided to stop at the Turrumurra service station for a quick snack. Mr Atcheson walked into the store to find that a customer had collapsed on the floor. He quickly performed CPR on him for nearly 15 minutes until emergency services arrived to take over. Dane Atcheson had just completed his first summer as our local council life guard and this was the first time he had performed CPR. Thanks to all his training, and his brave actions, this story had a very happy ending.

#### TRIBUTE TO ALEXANDER KNIGHT

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (16:29):** This week I highlight some of the excellent talent that the Hornsby community has to offer, and someone the Sydney Arts Guide has described as a "striking, compelling baritone of enormous range and power". Young baritone Alexander Knight of Normanhurst has won a year-long contract with the Hessisches Staatstheater in Wiesbaden, Germany. Germany is one of the most prestigious locations at which to not only study but also to perform opera. Alexander began his career playing the piano at the age of five. He began singing when he was only 13.

Now a graduate of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, Alexander was awarded the 2016 German-Australian Opera Grant in August 2015. He has performed with many of Australia's premier ensembles, including the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, the Sydney Chamber Choir, the Adelaide Chamber Singers and The Song Company. He recently took a lead role in the Sydney Chamber Choir's rendition of Carl Orff's much-loved *Carmina Burana*, which was performed at Angel Place. I know that his parents, Margie and Steve, and his brother, Chris, are all very proud of Alexander's amazing achievements. I congratulate Alexander, and I wish him all the best as he starts this new and exciting adventure in his career in Germany. He is a remarkable talent who I am sure will be a household name in the near future.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** It being 4.30 p.m. the House will now consider a petition signed by 10,000 or more persons as listed on the *Business Paper*.

#### *Petitions*

#### HILLSBOROUGH ROAD SAFETY

##### Discussion

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (16:31):** I speak on the petition relating to the Macquarie Road, Hillsborough Road and Medcalf Street intersection at Warners Bay. On 28 April residents from Lake Macquarie, Newcastle, my electorate of Charlestown and the wider community mourned the tragic loss of young Jade Frith. Jade passed away due to injuries sustained from being hit by a car on Hillsborough Road two days earlier. I was lucky enough to have met Jade. I know that, at only 15 years of age and with a growing reputation as a competitive swimmer, she had a bright future ahead. Such a needless loss of young life resulted in a heartfelt outpouring of grief. There is nothing more devastating than having to say goodbye to a child. I cannot imagine what Jade's family and friends are enduring, and my thoughts remain with them at this very sad time.

Hillsborough Road, one of the Hunter's busiest roads, is a choke point for traffic and offers little access to safe pedestrian crossings. This particular section of Hillsborough Road has always been an accident waiting to happen. This notorious stretch of road needs to be fixed before tragedy strikes again. In the past two decades, this long road joining Charlestown with Warners Bay has become an increasingly busy thoroughfare. There are major

shopping and entertainment destinations on both sides of a road that empties into the equally busy King Street and Macquarie Road, through an often-congested roundabout. It is a stretch of suburban road that has struggled to keep pace with the area's growth, development and expansion. On one side of the roundabout is Warners Bay High School and on the other a McDonald's restaurant. Despite all the pedestrians and traffic, the only safe place to cross from one side of the road to the other is a set of pedestrian lights 400 metres back up the hill.

The petition before us reflects the community's frustration at the lack of action taken in recent years. Community concerns have been ignored for too long. Something has to be done. The thousands of signatories on this petition are calling on the Legislative Assembly to take immediate action to improve the dangerous conditions at the King Street, Macquarie Road, Hillsborough Road and Medcalf Street intersection. They are calling for the roundabout to be removed and for traffic lights, with a four-way crossing, to be installed. This will enable students of Warners Bay High School as well as the general public to cross the road safely.

Collecting signatures is not easy; it is hard work. Many people worked tirelessly collecting signatures at night after they finished work and school, and in their valuable time on already busy weekends. In particular I have to thank and commend Nicole, the organiser of this petition, and the many other volunteers for their dedication in collecting signatures over the last month. They exceeded the target of 10,000 signatures, with over 15,000 signatures tabled and with hundreds more still coming into my office. I have some more to table today. It is a true reflection of the strength of our community and the importance of the matter before us. I acknowledge that Roads and Maritime Services is in the process of conducting a \$4 million traffic study. The results of this study were meant to be released in the second half of 2015. I understand that the study has been extended to include all State roads between Warners Bay and Charlestown. It is now scheduled to be finished this year. However, the Government, especially in light of the recent tragedy, needs to do more.

I was deeply disappointed that this Liberal Baird Government refused my request to release information on the studies into fixing the road. I requested the information under the Government Information (Public Access) Act [GIPA]. The public has a right to know what is being investigated and studied, and they want a solution found before another life is taken. Denying the public access to information on how the Government plans to fix the Hillsborough Road problem shows again a lack of transparency by this Government. It is just another example of the arrogance of the Baird Government towards the people of the Hunter.

Students from Warners Bay High School are risking their lives every day by darting across the road. A short-term solution is also needed. So I wrote to the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight requesting a barrier be installed on the median strip to prevent pedestrians crossing where it is clearly not safe to do so. I was pleased to find in Tuesday's State budget that \$350,000 has been allocated to the installation of median safety barriers and pedestrian fencing on King Street, from Walker Street to Myles Street, Warners Bay.

But no further commitments were made to funding the Hillsborough Road upgrade and the findings of the \$4 million traffic study. I understand an upgrade will be expensive. But a Government's primary responsibility needs to be to ensure the safety of the people it represents. The message to the Minister and the Government today from the thousands of signatories could not be clearer—commit to funding the Hillsborough Road upgrades to improve safety and to prevent the loss of another precious life.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (16:36):** I was deeply saddened to hear of the tragic death of 15-year-old Jade Frith at Warners Bay. Jade was hit by a car on her way to swimming practice, and tragically died later in hospital. I extend my sympathies to the Frith family, her friends, her classmates and the local community for their loss. The New South Wales Government takes road safety very seriously. Any death or serious injury on our roads is one too many. Since the crash, Roads and Maritime Services has completed improvements to the pedestrian refuges near Warners Bay roundabout on Hillsborough Road, Medcalf Street and Macquarie Road. Hand rails and signage have been upgraded to improve visibility for road users. The New South Wales Government provided \$150,000 to Roads and Maritime for more targeted safety improvements, including pedestrian fencing, relocating existing bus stops on Hillsborough Road and Medcalf Street near Biddabah Public School, and installing an additional traffic signal arm on Medcalf Street to increase visibility for approaching motorists.

In March last year, the New South Wales Government announced \$4 million for planning along Hillsborough Road. Roads and Maritime is also continuing the Charlestown to Warners Bay corridor study and the Lake Macquarie Traffic Study. Roads and Maritime is part-way through a traffic study for Lake Macquarie, which was extended in August 2015 to include all State roads between Warners Bay and Charlestown. The scope was also widened from a traffic study to a corridor study, so that issues such as road safety, public transport, and pedestrian and cyclist amenities are also considered.

The Charlestown to Warners Bay corridor study will provide recommendations on short, medium and long-term priorities for this road network, and will be used to support future funding requests. A range of options

are being considered as part of the study, such as widening and providing additional lanes along Hillsborough Road, installing traffic lights at Chadwick and Crockett streets, and upgrading the Warners Bay and Newcastle inner city bypass roundabouts. The draft Charlestown to Warners Bay corridor strategy is expected to be displayed for community feedback later this year.

Roads and Maritime has also started the Lake Macquarie Traffic Study, which will investigate upgrades to improve traffic performance and reduce congestion across the Lake Macquarie Local Government Area. Roads and Maritime has completed some preliminary investigations into replacing the Warners Bay roundabout with traffic lights. The study has found that the footprint for traffic lights at the intersection would be larger than the existing roundabout, as the intersection would require dedicated turning lanes. Replacing the roundabout with traffic lights would be a large and complex project and would include potential property acquisitions, flood mitigation works, road widening and significant civil works. Community consultation is expected to be carried out on this traffic study in the coming months. I appreciate and understand the concerns of the community in this important matter and reassure them that the New South Wales Government is looking into this issue.

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (16:39):** In contributing to this debate I wish to first reflect on the tragic death of Jade Frith and put on record once more my condolences to Jade's parents, Melissa and Matthew, and her brother, Josh, for their loss. There is no doubt that this incident changed many lives forever, including that of the driver of the car which, without any fault, struck Jade. The term "senseless loss of life" so frequently used is very appropriate in this case. Jade was loved by the many friends she had made, particularly through school and through her swimming. Jade was vibrant, well liked, and was clearly on the cusp of something great in her swimming career, let alone what she would have achieved in other areas.

Jade's death was tragic, and brought into sharp relief the need to upgrade a section of road that has been a problem for many years and which is becoming increasingly so with a growing number of road users and businesses located along much of its length. Jade came from Coal Point in the Lake Macquarie electorate and the section of road in question is shared by the electorates of Lake Macquarie and Charlestown. I am therefore pleased to be able to support the member for Charlestown in this debate. No doubt many if not all of the more than 10,000 people who signed the petition we are debating would have had some level of concern about this road and would have believed it needed upgrading. They are right, whether it is at the roundabout, other intersections, pedestrian refuges, or at nearby locations such as where Jade was struck.

We know, the Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] was in the planning phase of improvements to Hillsborough Road at the time of the accident and that recommendations on this road corridor are due to come down later this year. RMS is of course rightly looking at a number of locations, and I am particularly keen to see the inarguably dangerous intersection with Crockett Street addressed as well. While the ultimate solution to problems around the Hillsborough and Macquarie Road intersection is likely the installation of traffic lights, in my opinion, or other significantly expensive measures, I believe that a number of interim safety measures are called for. RMS staff are not immune to the impact of such tragedies. I know they are also upset. When I contacted the Regional Manager, Anna Zycki, soon after the accident, she informed me that her staff were already looking at interim measures that could be taken.

Those measures include a pedestrian barrier fence on the median strip. This would have taken away the chance for Jade to risk crossing at that point, but it would still not properly address the undue risks for pedestrians crossing at the roundabout. While these are welcome short-term measures, which I would implore the Government to ensure are implemented quickly, the bigger picture will need significant upgrade to traffic management at the Hillsborough, Macquarie Road and Medcalf Street intersection. Traffic lights as called for by this petition seem an obvious way to maximise traffic efficiency and pedestrian safety, and I support those calling for them unless it can be shown that there is a supportable better solution. In closing I thank Nicole Antony and those who worked to raise the more than 15,000 signatures on this petition and once again offer my sincere condolences to Jade's parents, Matthew and Melissa

**Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour) (16:42):** I extend my deepest condolences to the Frith family, Jade's mum and dad and her brother Josh and other relatives. I grew up in Kahibah and I know Hillsborough Road well. In fact, my twin brother, Malcolm, my young brother, Simon, and a friend Stephen Heath were almost killed on that road when I was 17 years of age. It has always been a dangerous road. I have often travelled that road and shaken my head at the amount of development at that particular intersection. My brother Simon now has the Jax Tyres dealership in Medcalf Street and I have often walked up to that intersection to look at the shops whilst I have had my car in for repairs of some sort. I really do understand the dangerous nature of that intersection.

As the member for Tamworth has clearly indicated, \$4 million has been allocated for a traffic study. A traffic study will not fix it, but work will. There are temporary works there. But it is not only pedestrians who are trying to get through in flood times or heavy rain, it is also cars when that intersection becomes impassable.

In fact, I would advise the member for Charlestown that my brother has 146 more signatures sitting on his counter at Warners Bay. He travels in trepidation at that intersection not just because of pedestrian safety but also because of car safety. I have witnessed a number of accidents there and regularly see a lot of broken glass or car debris left at that intersection from accidents.

The Pacific Highway saw one death a week. The number of people I have seen die in my electorate over the past 25 years has been horrific, but that number has now halved, thanks to the work of both the Federal and State governments. However, these things do take time. I am frustrated in relation to the Coffs Harbour bypass and the accidents that occur in the town centre of Coffs Harbour because works have not been completed. I know it is a slow process and studies have to be done. I commend the Roads and Maritime Services for doing a study not just of Warners Bay but also right through the Lake Macquarie area because it needs it badly. It is a popular place to live.

I had a block of land at Wangi Wangi and I know the amount of traffic that travels along the Warners Bay waterfront, which is now four lanes with improvements at Speers Point. When I was there it was not four lanes. Jade's death highlights the need for improvements at this intersection. I again extend my condolences to Jade's parents, brother, relatives and friends for such a tragic loss of a young lady because of poor planning of that intersection, which I think has contributed to the accident. More needs to be done and I commend the work that has been done to bring this petition to the House.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (16:45):** By leave: I refer to the discussion regarding the much-needed safety upgrade of Hillsborough Road. I congratulate the member for Charlestown on having worked so hard to get this issue placed on the agenda. There is bipartisan support for this issue and it is one that we want to resolve very quickly. It has been the tragic death of a young woman like Jade Frith that has led to this discussion, a life cut short, a family left to grieve and a community asking why more could not have been done to prevent this loss of life. I pass my condolences onto Jade's family and friends. I know the member for Charlestown has previously raised her concerns about the Hillsborough Road to the Government, and an upgrade to this road has been on the agenda for some time.

Hillsborough Road is not alone; it is a Hunter road in need of a long-awaited upgrade. In 2008 I raised the issue that a pedestrian overpass was required and then subsequently one was built across the New England Highway near my home in Thornton after the death of two young boys in early 1990. The overpass cost \$2.5 million, a massive amount of money to spend for that structure, but it was the only way for the Government to overcome the traffic difficulties. I can remember at the time talking to the Federal member for the Hunter, Joel Fitzgibbons, and the then member for Maitland, Frank Terenzini, and asking them what price was life. I told them we needed to invest in it because a new community would be built there with lots of schoolchildren.

Again, like the Hillsborough Road accident that brings us here today. The member for Port Stephens reminded me earlier of the death of a young resident, Reuben Sutherland, in 2015 which led to an increased focus on the Nelson Bay Road corridor study that is currently underway. These are all issues that the shadow Minister for the Hunter, the member for Charlestown and indeed all Hunter members have been following particularly closely. We will be holding the Premier to his commitment for funding these projects.

Unfortunately, in too many road projects from this Government we see the tunnel vision of transport planning. Departments are tasked with building a new road or rail project and give little consideration to how these transport projects will interact with pedestrians, cyclists and other transport users. Labor has long advocated for a Hunter Transport Authority, a standalone section of the Department of Transport to co-ordinate transport planning in the Hunter region for that reason. Too often the concerns of local residents, local members, local mayors are ignored while decision makers in Sydney base their decisions on what will make the best headline, not what local people need.

#### *Bills*

### **APPROPRIATION BILL 2016**

### **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL 2016**

### **STATE REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (BUDGET MEASURES) BILL 2016**

#### **Returned**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** I report the receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning the abovementioned bills without amendment.

Discussion on the petition signed by more than 10,000 persons having concluded, private members' statements will now be proceeded with.

*Private Members' Statements***MOUNT WILSON AND MOUNT IRVINE RURAL FIRE BRIGADE**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (16:49):** Today I speak on behalf of the Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine communities in my electorate. Driving out to "the Mounts" is always a delightful experience. The area is stunning and remote. Recently I had the pleasure of attending the annual general meeting of the Mount Wilson-Mount Irvine Rural Fire Brigade. The executive committee is made up of both administration members and operational members. They are President David Howell, Vice President Henric Nicholas, Treasurer Susie Hope, Secretary Judy Tribe and Elizabeth Montano, who leads the Bowens Creek Road campaign. The operational members are Captain Beth Raines, Senior Deputy Captain Peter Raines, Barry Freeman, who until the 2016 annual general meeting was also a deputy captain, and Graham Tribe from training, Kathleen Oakes from community engagement and Lesley Wilson from catering.

A few other operational members deserve to be acknowledged for their work in the brigade. They are Stephen Dean from maintenance, Deputy Captain Peter Dempsey from fire trails maintenance and Vic Zhukov from fire trails and remote area firefighting. I make particular mention of the brigade's community first responders or CFR team, that provides an amazing service as the first response to a 000 ambulance call in the area. With the community being isolated, time is of the essence when dealing with a medical emergency. The CFR team guide the ambulance to the site of the emergency, having all the paperwork done and the patient stabilised by the time the ambulance arrives. The CFR team is made up of Barry Freeman, Diana Landsberg, Kathleen Oakes, Beth Raines, Libby Raines, Peter Raines and three members who have almost completed their training, being Allen and Robyn Hyde and Linda Raines. I congratulate and thank them all.

The community often thinks that rural fire brigades only attend to firefighting; however, the Mount Wilson-Mount Irvine brigade provides assistance during bushfires, search and rescue operations, motor vehicle accidents and storm clean-ups, and it provides the CFR service. A major issue that has been impacting this tight-knit community for a number of years now is the Bowens Creek Bridge, Bowens Creek Fire Trail and Mount Irvine Road area. I believe the argument that there is a desperate need for an emergency vehicle access route has been well established. The fire trail provides the only emergency egress and access for firefighting and other emergency services. However, it is in a very poor state of disrepair.

I acknowledge Elizabeth Montano, who has advocated on behalf of her community to have this most urgent need addressed. She has done so tirelessly, articulating the key issues with precision, and a sense of purpose and passion. I also acknowledge the efforts of Tim Gow, a former resident of Mount Wilson of 47 years and a former deputy captain of the Mount Wilson-Mount Irvine Rural Fire Brigade. In 2015 Mr Gow said that the fire trail must be part of the defensive strategy to protect the northern and western edges of the upper Blue Mountains. He called on Hawkesbury City Council to urgently work with Blue Mountains City Council in developing a joint submission to State and Federal bodies. Mr Gow went on to say:

To all the key decision makers—please do not let apathy or disinterest prevail; given the recent past of fire behaviour, frequency and intensity in both the Blue Mountains and other areas across Australia, such inaction will only be seen as culpable neglect.

I say in this place, for the benefit of this community and in thanking Tim Gow for his succinct account of the situation, "Hear, hear!" For the Government's benefit I will briefly outline part of the case ably compiled by the wise and industrious Elizabeth Montano. There is currently only one useable road in and out of Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine. It is Mount Wilson Road, a two-lane sealed road that runs from the Bells Line of Road along a very exposed ridge line and through dense bush up to Mount Wilson for a distance of approximately eight kilometres. There is then approximately 10 kilometres of sealed, winding road between Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine. The only access route, Mount Wilson Road, has been cut off during many natural disaster events over the years.

The October 2013 bushfires caused the loss of two houses at Mount Irvine and the loss of fencing and sheds at both Mount Irvine and Mount Wilson. At the height of the fire the road was blocked. Neither residents nor the rural fire brigade fire appliances working in the area could get from one side to the other. Not only could they not assist in firefighting on the other side of the blockages; they also had no escape route. On the day of the snowstorm in October 2014 a machinery accident led to the death of a resident. Had the accident resulted in injury rather than death the condition of Mount Wilson Road and surrounding roads was such that an ambulance would not have been able to get through.

Over recent years the Mounts has experienced a substantial increase in tourism, up to approximately 30,000 visitations per annum. An emergency access route is needed. The Mounts community and the rural fire brigade require a fit-for-purpose emergency vehicle access route. They are not seeking the route to be restored to public road standards or for it to be made available for general public use. This strategically significant project

requires State or Federal funding. It needs it now. Let us ensure that someone does not lose their lives before we act.

### MILTON LIBRARY

**Ms SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast) (16:54):** On Monday 30 May the Milton library began its program of extended opening hours. That was no small feat considering that almost two years ago Shoalhaven City Council had marked the library for closure. The library is located on historic Milton's main street surrounded by heritage-listed buildings such as the Milton courthouse, theatre and post office. When the building first opened in 1872, after four years of community fundraising, it was as the Milton School of Arts. From 1874 it went on to also operate as the council chambers, as well as a billiard club from 1902. It was purchased by the Ulladulla Municipal Council in 1927 and formally became Milton's town hall. It was not until 1969 that the building was occupied by Shoalhaven library.

The fight to save Milton library commenced in 2014 after an evaluation of Shoalhaven libraries tragically recommended it for closure. The review cited replicated services in Ulladulla library seven kilometres away, low usage statistics, high operating costs and reduced opening hours as reasons to close the library's doors and sell the property. Learning that their and my beloved library was in danger the passionate Milton community banded together to establish the Save the Milton Library campaign. The response and support of local residents was remarkable, with more than 3,000 signing a petition advocating to keep the library open.

Shoalhaven City Council received a total of 212 submissions from local residents, high school students, primary school students and seniors—the most submissions that have ever been lodged for a Shoalhaven community consultation. All voiced their concern at the proposed closure, emphasised the integral role the library played within the community and asked that it continue to deliver services. In particular, the tireless Alison Pakes deserves to be commended for her efforts in driving and coordinating the campaign. Alison was heavily involved from the start, first helping with the petition and then writing to the media, giving radio interviews and deputations at council meetings, constantly talking to me, lobbying councillors and organising wonderful rallies. The campaign reached its pinnacle on 4 October 2015 when a crowd of at least 350 people marched along and blocked the Princes Highway in protest of the closure. I was in attendance and happy to add my voice to the chant of "Save our library".

**Ms Melinda Pavey:** What a voice it was.

**Ms SHELLEY HANCOCK:** What a voice that was. It was an illegal march I must point out, but nevertheless. The protesters encouraged the council to preserve what Milton locals describe as the heart of the town. It was truly magnificent to witness and rally alongside such a united and devoted community. By December the council had voted unanimously to retain the library's services and form a task force comprising of Friends of Milton Library representatives, councillors and library staff in order to implement the new library proposal. This was a tremendous win. I thank Shoalhaven City Council, Mayor Joanna Gash and Councillor Patricia White for listening to their constituents.

Milton library is now open three days a week, thanks to a unique arrangement between the council and the Friends of Milton Library. Council provides staff for the library two days a week and for now meets operating costs in addition to continuing to purchase books. For the third day the library is manned completely by volunteers. At present two volunteers, Sara Eastway and Alison Pakes, have completed three months of hands-on training in order to open and run the library. Another five volunteers are also in the process of being trained. Furthermore, the library will offer volunteering opportunities for Centrelink's mutual obligation program of up to 15 hours a week.

However, the fight is not over yet and the Friends of Milton Library continue to fundraise in order to bring to fruition their vision for the creation of a literary, cultural and artistic hub. They have organised a music festival called Libraryfest, which, with the help of local musicians, will raise funds to go towards recreating the library's design to make it more versatile and functional. There are plans to make the library the home for small community interest groups, and introduce a multitude of programs and activities that will increase the use of the space. These include a youth story time, seniors' events, book clubs, creative writing and poetry classes, talks by local groups such as the Historical Society, authors, artists and Indigenous groups, as well as art exhibitions and festivals such as Artfest.

Local schools are also being encouraged to use the space once a month and a pen pal program is being established through a "sister library" relationship with a small library in Dover, in the United States of America. This wonderful building has operated as the political and social centre of the town for nearly 150 years. Now, thanks to the amazing Milton community who fought so diligently, it will be preserved for our children and grandchildren. I am proud to have been involved and showed the New South Wales Government's support for the

Milton Library. I am also proud to represent such a remarkable electorate. The Friends of Milton Library had originally planned an official launch party for 5 June to celebrate the expansion of services and fundraise; however, owing to the severe weather experienced that weekend they were forced to reschedule. Nonetheless, the library is open and we will continue to celebrate its continued opening. I thank all of those involved in this wonderful campaign.

### **TRIBUTE TO BEATRICE SPEAR**

#### **DORRIGO SEWERAGE TREATMENT PLANT**

**Ms MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley) (17:00):** Tonight it is my sad duty to inform the House about the passing of a legendary Nambucca Valley resident. This week the funeral of the late Beattie (Beatrice) Spear was held. She was 88 years old. Beattie retired at the age of 72 from the Bananacoast Community Union. She married Neville Spear in 1949. Neville had been in the air force and after their marriage they moved to Bowraville and then eventually to North Arm, near Taylors Arm. For a while they lived on Whip Mountain where they raised their boys and operated a banana plantation. Beattie did her share of the tough work—lifting bunches of bananas off the flying fox, packing bananas first in boxes and then into cartons.

Neville is one of the legendary founders of the Bananacoast Community Credit Union. He became the manager and Beattie was his secretary, working in a voluntary capacity. Eventually Neville realised that he could not get a better assistant than Beattie and she was put on the payroll. She worked there until her retirement. Beattie was an exceptional lady. She raised a fine family, has numerous grandchildren, 21 great grandchildren and four on the way, who sadly she will never get to nurse. For the past 20 years Beattie has been a volunteer for St Vincent de Paul and for many years attended her husband almost every day at Autumn Lodge, where he is suffering from dementia. She was proud that she still had her licence. Unfortunately, she had a fall and did not recover.

Beattie had a very fitting send-off at Bowraville on Monday with her granddaughter playing the organ and leading the hymn singing. Beattie and Neville's contribution to the Bananacoast Community Credit Union should never be understated. The Bananacoast Community Credit Union provided many local jobs until being moved to Coffs Harbour and it also supported many businesses—not only banana growers. I thank Janine Reed, a former Citizen of the Year of the Nambucca Valley, for providing me with much of that information. Janine also attended Beattie's funeral. Vale Beattie (Beatrice) Spear.

On 8 June 2016 I was delighted to represent the Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Lands and Water, the Hon. Niall Blair, and join Mayor Mark Troy at the official opening of the state-of-the-art Dorrigo Sewerage Treatment Plant. This modern facility is the result of the collaborative effort between State and local governments, and contractors that recognises the importance of providing the best of current technology in the replacement of the old plant. The plant is an essential piece of infrastructure that will protect public health and the surrounding environment. The original sewerage treatment plant was built in the early 1970s and had reached its design capacity. It was an old trickling filter plant, based on technology originally developed in the 1890s, which was not effective at removing phosphorous and nitrogen from wastewater. The locals said it often released not the most pleasant of smells over the beautiful village of Dorrigo.

The aging plant has now been replaced with a modern facility, which can treat wastewater to a high standard so that it is suitable for continued discharge to the Bielsdown River and, ultimately, the Nymboida and Clarence rivers. I acknowledge that the member for Clarence is at the table. A higher level of treatment from this new plant will deliver a marked improvement to the receiving environment. The new treatment plant is an activated sludge intermittent decant extended aeration-based system. It incorporates chemical dosing for phosphorus removal and ultraviolet disinfection. The facility will meet the community needs of Dorrigo—about 1,100 people—well into the future. It has a design horizon of several decades. The New South Wales Government contributed \$2.27 million towards the design and construction of this \$7.8 million project. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the leadership of Bellingen Shire Council within the community to ensure that this facility was constructed. Indeed, the council took the lion's share of the cost.

The program, managed by Department of Primary Industries Office of Water, has provided financial assistance to many local water utilities in country New South Wales, helping to provide water supply and sewerage services that meet community needs, protect public health and achieve sustainable environmental outcomes. Since 2011 under the Liberal-Nationals Coalition Government the Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Program has provided more than \$148 million for capital works and \$72 million for emergency drought funding to deliver in excess of 100 new water supply, sewerage and emergency drought projects throughout the regions. This scheme highlights the very strong working relationship the New South Wales Government has with councils such as Bellingen Shire Council, through DPI Water, to work together to deliver a successful project. I congratulate all those involved in its construction.

## STATE BUDGET AND SHELLHARBOUR ELECTORATE

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (17:04):** The 2016-17 budget announced last Tuesday was a great disappointment for the people of Shellharbour electorate. They had expected to see some real money allocated to start the delivery of the election promises made by those opposite in the lead-up to the 2015 State election. When the Premier and Minister for Health came to the Illawarra 16 months ago they promised, amid two press conferences, the \$250 million upgrade of Shellharbour Hospital and \$550 million for construction of the Albion Park Rail Bypass. The budget simply confirmed that both projects—investments worth \$800 million to the people of the southern Illawarra—have again been placed on the shelf. The budget papers show that what we are just getting more planning money towards the delivery of these two important projects. This Government has been planning the upgrade of Shellharbour Hospital for six years. The budget simply allocated more money to bureaucratic paper shuffling within the NSW Ministry of Health.

Whenever I raise the issue of funding and delivering on the Government's promise for the upgrade of Shellharbour Hospital, I am told that it will be delivered within this current term. I acknowledge that planning is required before building starts and the people of my electorate also understand this requirement. But is it reasonable for the Government to expect we accept that planning takes six years? Is it reasonable for the Government to expect that budget after budget the only allocation of funds is to bureaucrats within the NSW Ministry of Health? I note that the budget papers indicate that planning for the Shellharbour Hospital is to be completed by 2016. Given this, there cannot be any further excuse by the Government not to start the upgrade in next year's budget. The Government is running out of excuses to continue to delay the allocation of funding for the \$250 million upgrade of Shellharbour Hospital. My constituents are expecting that the Government's election pledge made 16 months ago will be delivered. It will not be good enough to delay this health infrastructure investment again and again.

The same argument applies to the construction of the Albion Park Rail Bypass. The budget papers only show the allocation of planning funds for this vital infrastructure project. Once again we all acknowledge that planning is required for this project. In last year's budget, a line item clearly indicated that \$350 million had been reserved for this project. Interestingly, this year's budget does not include that same reservation of funds. The last formal part of the planning process for the Albion Park Rail Bypass is the approval of the environmental impact statement released last December. This is expected to be approved by the end of this year. Once again the motorists who use the increasingly congested Princes Highway at Albion Park Rail expect this promised road infrastructure to be delivered.

I have been attacked by the member for Kiama for suggesting that the Government could have used this year's budget to start the Shellharbour Hospital upgrade from 1 July 2016. The member for Kiama has similarly attacked me for suggesting that funding for the construction of the Albion Park Rail Bypass should be included in next year's budget. He was so animated in his criticism of me that he told the *Illawarra Mercury* in April that he would be moving a censure motion in this place and I have been waiting for that to materialise. Like the promise of the Albion Park Rail Bypass, the member for Kiama's censure motion has been overpromised and under delivered. It was threatened, it was announced to the local media, and here we wait—month after month—and nothing.

It has been low tide for Kiama's other blow hole. The member for Kiama thought better of his threatened censure motion because the hard heads in the Premier's Office took him aside and said—and you can picture it—the member for Kiama, blood rush to the head, a volcano, being told "Why would you draw attention to a member standing up for their electorate?" You can see him leaving the Premier's office, kicking the carpet, huffing and puffing as he goes. The Government will be very unhappy with the reaction of the media in the Illawarra to its sixth budget. On 13 June, the *Illawarra Mercury* editorial headline was, "Illawarra works need cash, not loose change" and it read:

Despite the commitments, the cogs on some projects are turning slowly.

While we appreciate the need for extensive planning and assessment work prior to shovels being put in the ground, accelerating the money outlay and getting projects moving would be welcome by many in the community.

I can see that I am running out of time so I will end on this note. It is time to get a move on. It is time to put fresh meat on the platter. It is time for the member for Kiama to ditch his cynical political strategy of advising the Government to wait until a few weeks before the 2019 election to stick a shovel in the ground and to deliver on infrastructure investment for Shellharbour Hospital and the Albion Park Rail Bypass. I say to the Premier to ignore Gareth's political advice because the member is already planning to move to Canberra and ditch the Government at the next election. [*Time expired.*]

## LEONAY LADY GOLFERS CHARITY DAY

**Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Trade, Tourism and Major Events, and Minister for Sport) (17:10):** I congratulate the Leonay Lady Golfers on hosting another successful charity day on 25 May to raise funds for OZWAC, the Australian Women's and Children's Research Foundation. I commend all the hard work put in by the 2016 Leonay Lady Golfers committee, comprising Wendy McKean, Helen Sawle, Julie Sutcliffe, Pam Savage, Dawn Young, Dorothy Fawcett, Janina Linfoot, Judith Smith and Trish Manning. The winners of the Four Ball Best Ball Irish Stableford event was a Leonay team. The runners-up were from Dunheved, and the scratch winners were from Wallacia. The Leonay team members were Carolyn Fitzpatrick, Ros Dey, Lois Grassi and Penny Talley—some very talented golfers.

It was my pleasure once again to sponsor the event along with other sponsors. This is a community event that I have been supporting pretty much since I have been a member of Parliament. Other sponsors were the Emu Sports Club, Pilatesworks Penrith, Penrith Veterinary Clinic, Grace Funerals, Property Central, Railway Row Vets, Impact Financial Services, Helloworld Emu Plains, Cain's Glass, Joseph Grassi and Associates, Ian's Pools, The Professionals St Mary's, the Lammey Family and IGA Blaxland—a wonderful group of small businesses across the community supporting women's and children's health and research.

The Leonay Lady Golfers annual charity days over the past three years have raised and donated more than \$10,000 to OZWAC. Founded in 1998 by Professor Brian Spurrett, the head of Women's and Children's Health Services at Nepean Hospital, Dr Chris Kohlenberg and Mr Greg Allchin, OZWAC aims to provide for medical research into the health of women and children. The foundation calls upon community support to raise funds and to heighten awareness of important health issues. Since its inception, OZWAC has supported research at Nepean and Westmead hospitals and other research facilities across New South Wales. Brian and Chris have both since passed away; however, the legacy of their work and their vision continues through OZWAC today, which is so well supported across my community.

The OZWAC board, comprising Simon Gould, Professor George Condous, Dr Sally Poulton, Professor Ralph Nanan, Faith Skinner, Professor Peter Dietz, Sophie Burnett, Maree Yabsley, Justine Milne and Rhonda Willis, offers a wealth of management and medical skill on a voluntary basis. Through donations and events such as golf days, movie nights, annual balls and education seminars, OZWAC has raised more than \$690,000 since 1999 to support its in-hospital research programs.

Numerous individuals and businesses have been supporters of OZWAC for many years by way of donations, sponsorship and fundraising. It is important to recognise many of the long-term supporters of OZWAC across the community. They include Kelly and Partners Pty Limited, Stanton and Taylor Strata Management, Hix Group Pty Limited, Berger Piepers Chartered Accountants, Abcoe, Xparte, 2016 major sponsor S and L Concrete and patron Tara Dennis, who does an outstanding job emceeing and hosting the annual ball. It would be remiss of me not to also acknowledge the many other businesses and individuals who attend these events. Recently, one of the programs assisted with funding through OZWAC has had a breakthrough in the treatment of peanut allergy through Professor Ralph Nanan and his team, helping secure significant additional funding to continue this very important research.

A clinical trial will be led by Professor Dianne Campbell at the Children's Hospital at Westmead, with a large part of the experimental work to investigate the underlying immunological mechanisms conducted at the Sydney Medical School Nepean and in laboratories at Nepean Hospital. Approximately 3 per cent of children have a peanut allergy, and about one-third of those develop reactions on eating peanuts. Australia is a country with a relatively high prevalence of peanut allergy. At their most serious, allergic reactions to peanuts can result in death, so this research is vitally important.

There is currently no cure for peanut allergy. However, researchers will investigate whether desensitisation against peanuts can be made more effective by adding a special dietary supplement developed in Australia by the CSIRO. This is the work that is being supported by the ladies at the Leonay golf day and all of those who support OZWAC and research into the health of women and children. They support a fantastic community throughout Penrith and the western districts of Sydney and they are very strong supporters and passionate advocates of Nepean Hospital.

## NATHAN AND JOSH KATZ, JUDO OLYMPIANS

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (17:15):** I have previously spoken on the achievements of local sports champions but today I have the privilege of speaking on an Australian first. Whilst many play sport for recreational enjoyment, some of my constituents compete in sport at the very highest level, that of the Olympics. Nathan and Josh Katz of Northmead will be the first brothers competing together in judo at the Rio Olympics. Both brothers are highly accomplished athletes with a strong history in judo.

Josh, at just 18 years of age, will be the fourth-youngest Australian judo Olympian ever to compete. Josh has won national and international championships at both junior and senior level every year since 2012. This year he defended his titles and jumped into the top 22 adjusted rankings, earning a spot on the Olympic team. To be ranked and competing amongst the best in the world at such a young age is absolutely incredible. Equally impressive is Nathan's record. At 21 years of age he too has won national championships every year since 2012. Despite initially aiming to compete in Tokyo in 2020, Nathan finished ninth in the 2015 World Judo Championships, which he then improved to seventh in the Tokyo Grand Slam, earning him a spot on the Rio Olympic team.

I am so proud to have such an elite duo from my electorate competing in the Rio Olympics. Nathan and Josh's parents, Kerrey and Robert, must be very proud given that they too represented Australia at the 1988 Seoul Olympics. Thankfully Nathan and Josh will be competing in different categories. I wish them the best of luck in bringing home gold. I highlight the outstanding effect that sports have on our community. Sports are one of the most popular activities in Seven Hills at both recreational and competitive levels. In addition to promoting health and fitness, which are essential to wellbeing, sports provide a place that the community can gather together and unite. I am very fortunate to have a wide variety of sports clubs across many different disciplines on offer in my electorate.

During a recent visit to my electorate, the Minister for Sport, Stuart Ayres, announced a \$5,000 grant to Lourdes Soccer Club under the New South Wales Government's sports grant program. Lourdes Soccer Club will use this grant to buy new uniforms that are suitable for both girls and boys. This is a fantastic use of resources which will serve the players of Lourdes Soccer Club for many years to come. The sports grant program aims to increase regular and ongoing participation in local sports clubs across New South Wales. It has been incredibly successful.

Pheonix Softball Club, which is also in my electorate, has used the program to attain national accreditation for umpires, coaches and scorers. This has allowed more people to become involved in the game and the wider softball community. As a club with a large female membership, it is fantastic to see its engagement expanding and improving the lives of young people and players in the electorate. I am very committed to supporting local sporting clubs and delivering the essential infrastructure they need to be outstanding community-focussed organisations.

The champion Olympians of tomorrow can only flourish and prosper today if government makes a concerted effort to prioritise expenditure at the youth level. This Government understands that. That is why it is backing local sporting clubs in my community and in communities throughout New South Wales. I am proud to be advocating for further investment in these great sporting clubs. I am even more proud that the clubs are making such good use of the funding provided by the New South Wales Government.

### LAND USE PLANNING

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (17:19):** I bring to the attention of the House my very grave concern arising from a decision of Marcus Ray, Deputy Secretary, Planning Services, a delegate of the Greater Sydney Planning Commission, in refusing a proposal by Botany Bay City Council to amend the Botany Bay Local Environment Plan 2013, amendment number 3. The council, at my instigation—my suggestion—sought an amendment to its Local Environment Plan [LEP] to zone the schools within the city of Botany Bay for special uses. In going through the environmental planning process for its city-wide LEP, the council had adhered to a request by the Department of Planning to zone State infrastructure to a zoning similar to that adjoining the infrastructure land. In other words, the zoning for schools. For example the school I was concerned about was my old school, the J J Cahill Memorial High School. If the land adjoining it is residential, then the zoning of the school should also be residential.

The council adhered to the department's request and, accordingly, the school premises has been zoned residential. However, neighbouring councils such as Randwick City Council refused to adhere to the department's practice note and sought to retain its zonings for special uses. The department agreed. The purpose of land use planning and zoning is to set a future use of land within a particular council area. The whole purpose of zoning is to determine land use. Consequently, it makes no sense for a high school to be zoned residential when, in future, it is proposed to be used for a school.

The concern I have in respect of J J Cahill Memorial High School is that, for certain reasons, the numbers were dropping, despite huge increases in the population density in places such as Rosebery and Green Square, so that there had to be some problem in relation to that school. One is always concerned when numbers start to drop and, with a Coalition Government with a sell-everything philosophy, the fear is that it might well use that as an excuse to sell off a public asset. The way to ensure protection was to change the zoning. I am grateful to the Minister for Education who has been cooperative in ensuring that the activities of that school were examined. But

the justification for refusing to change the LEP was that the Department of Education objected and the reason the decision to refuse to change the zoning was that, in accordance with Mr Ray's view, the department is obliged by law to provide access to any student seeking a quality public education and students must be able to attend designated local schools.

That is not a basis for determining zoning. I had hoped that, with a Minister for Planning who is probably the most eminently qualified in generations to hold that portfolio, and with the advent of the Greater Sydney Planning Commission, some level of intelligence might have been expected in decisions of the Department of Planning and the commission in respect of proper land use planning. I have told this House before that the Department of Planning is the greatest obstructor to economic development in this State. It has a history of incompetence and it has not changed in respect of the ridiculous decisions and justifications made by people such as Mr Ray in this particular instance.

I say this to the Minister for Planning, for whom I have the highest regard, "You are the Minister for Planning; you know how decisions like this are supposed to be made. If you want to look at the big picture, but leave to bureaucrats—who have been responsible for the planning mess in this State for some years—to make these decisions, then this is what happens." It is time that the Minister started exercising some control over these bureaucrats so that they start applying proper planning principles. Nothing can justify this sort of stupidity in zoning. Ultimately, they are just suggesting to the Government that it is intended in the future to sell Department of Education land.

### CHARCOT-MARIE-TOOTH DISEASE

**Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (Epping) (17:24):** This evening I wish to raise awareness of a condition that many of us have not heard of—Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease [CMT]. I admit I had not heard about it until a friend who lives in my electorate, Darryl Beitsch, who is in the gallery today, introduced me to Dr Scott Denton. Both men have CMT, although Darryl has a much milder form. After meeting with these two men I was inspired to share some of the background on CMT in this place. Charcot-Marie-Tooth is the most common inherited peripheral neuropathy. CMT is named after Jean-Martin Charcot, Pierre Marie and Howard Tooth, representing the three European physicians who first identified the condition in 1886. It is estimated that one in every 2,500 people will suffer from CMT. It affects around 10,000 Australians and three million people worldwide.

CMT is a genetic disease that damages the peripheral nerves that send brain messages to the muscles. It is not life-threatening but can seriously reduce someone's mobility and quality of life. Symptoms commonly associated with CMT include degeneration of the peripheral nerves in the feet, legs, arms and hands. Muscles are weakened due to the loss of stimulation by affected nerves. The severity of the disease can vary a great deal from person to person. There are more than 50 types of CMT with no known cure. However, significant research is being done in Australia and overseas to find one. Early diagnosis often enhances quality of life by treating and managing physical changes resulting from CMT. Dr Scott Denton, who is a post-doctoral research associate with the University of Sydney, described living with CMT in a recent article:

My sense of touch is greatly reduced and my balance is dependent almost wholly on eyesight. If the lights go out, I will immediately fall down. Physical challenges aside, the biggest challenge I have is how it affects those around me. Living with CMT is always frustrating, at times humiliating, but it won't kill me.

The CMT Association Australia Inc. is the leading Australian charity associated with CMT. It began as a support group in 1988 and was incorporated in 1990 as a registered charity. It provides a vital support network to Australians with CMT and it has a number of valuable information resources online. Darryl Beitsch is a former president of the organisation. With research and increased awareness there is hope. We are fortunate in Australia to have some leading academics contributing to CMT research. Professor Garth Nicholson, Professor Joshua Burns and Dr Ché Fornusek all work at the University of Sydney. Dr Fornusek was diagnosed with CMT when he was six years old. He was born in New Zealand and now lives in Sydney with his wife. He is a lecturer and researcher in exercise and sports science at the University of Sydney, Faculty of Health Sciences. Although CMT is not as well known as some other conditions, it is a serious disease that we must talk about. I hope that in talking about CMT in the House today I can raise awareness on behalf of the 10,000 people who are currently living with CMT and the significant challenges that accompany the disease.

### QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS RECIPIENTS

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (17:28):** Alfred "Bill" Snowden and John Lynch received Queen's Birthday honours this year. They are outstanding residents of the electorate of Myall Lakes. On behalf of the Parliament and the people of New South Wales, I pay tribute to them. Alfred Snowden commenced service with the Tinonee Bush Fire Brigade in May 1971. He received the Australian Fire Service Medal, Rural Fire Service. He has been an active firefighter and field officer since 1971. He retired from his position as group 3 captain with the rank of group captain in May 2015 after 44 years service. His service as a brigade member

continues. He was made Group Captain Tinonee Brigade in 1986 and held the role until the reorganisation and commencement of the Rural Fire Service in 1998. Bill was subsequently re-elected group captain and served continuously in that position until his retirement.

Throughout his service Bill has taken a personal interest in all aspects of brigade management and administration. His training interests included rural fire off-road driving, fire ground safety, mentoring, and the operational firefighting capability of the Manning district brigades he was responsible for. In recent years he was instrumental in the reconstruction of the Krambach brigade. He was an integral part of the senior management team responsible for the training and deployment of 800 volunteer firefighters, comprising 26 brigades, to service 3,753 square kilometres of the Greater Taree District. This involved looking after the safety and welfare of a permanent population of 50,000 that increased markedly during holiday periods, coinciding with the bushfire season.

In an outstanding career Bill has made a substantial and sustained contribution to the security of the general public through his operational expertise and as a member of the local incident management team responding to countless local and interstate fire events, from mundane to catastrophic, by providing considerable support for community safety and by implementing proactive firefighting initiatives to reduce the impact of bushfires. Public safety, community welfare and the preparedness to cope with and survive regular extraordinary bushfires have been the motivations behind his volunteer service.

Bill willingly served interstate when required, in accordance with various disaster plan activations. In 2009 Bill attended the Victorian bushfires. He was recently awarded life membership of Tinonee Brigade. Bill has held the rank of group captain, the highest elected volunteer rank in the Rural Fire Service, for approximately 30 years. That is an exceptional personal achievement and a leadership example with few precedents. It is testimony to his enduring commitment and dedication to the New South Wales Rural Fire Service and to public safety. Equally, it is indicative of the confidence and esteem in which he is held by present and former brigade members. Bill was conscripted into the Australian armed services in accordance with the National Service Act. He reported as directed for military training in April 1955 and was honourably discharged in April 1960 having fulfilled his obligations. His combined military and volunteer service to the State and the nation is approaching 50 years. The brief history I have outlined emphasises the inestimable value and significance of Bill's contribution, which has been given voluntarily and without hesitation, to community service locally and nationally.

John Lynch is a valued member of Marine Rescue NSW. He received the Emergency Service Medal, Marine Rescue. He has a record of exceptional service at both an operational and an organisational level for more than 21 years. Mr Lynch has made a significant contribution to the safety of the boating community during his lengthy membership of the Forster-Tuncurry unit. During his six-year tenure as unit commander he led the development of the Forster-Tuncurry search and rescue coordination centre.

John's contribution has extended beyond his own unit and the marine rescue sector through his responsibilities as the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol [RVCP] Senior Regional Officer North Coast, State Rescue Board Accreditation Team member, RVCP delegate to the Mid North Coast Marine Advisory Committee and Great Lakes Emergency Management Committee member. He has drawn on his operational expertise and professional experience to provide strategic leadership as Mid North Coast Regional Director on the Marine Rescue NSW Board since 2011. Mr Lynch has served with distinction to ensure the safety of the boating community, supporting his fellow volunteers and contributing to the development of Marine Rescue NSW. I thank both Alfred Snowden and John Lynch for their valuable contribution to our community.

### **PRINCE OF WALES HOSPITAL**

**Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) (17:33):** I bring to the attention of the House a campaign being run in my electorate of Coogee concerning the Prince of Wales Hospital. The Federal election is being held soon. The first casualty in an election campaign is the truth, as demonstrated by the Labor candidate for the Federal seat of Kingsford Smith, who is the incumbent member. He is supported by the member for Maroubra and the member for Heffron in conducting a scare campaign about expenditure on the Prince of Wales Hospital.

Over the past few years the Labor Party has campaigned relentlessly, claiming that the Government is downgrading the Prince of Wales Hospital. Nothing could be further from the truth, and the figures speak for themselves. Since coming to power in 2011, the Government has spent more than \$30.7 million just on minor capital works improvements at the hospital. At present the Government is completing the \$114 million Bright Alliance Nelune Comprehensive Cancer Centre on the corner of High Street and Avoca Street at Randwick, which will be one of the world's leading cancer clinics. That nine-storey building, which is nearing completion, seems to have escaped the notice of the member for Maroubra and the member for Kingsford Smith.

We are spending money on revamping the hospital, which was sadly neglected for decades under the previous Labor Government, and its performance has improved incredibly over the past five years. In the January to March quarter of 2011 only 87 per cent of semi-urgent elective surgeries were performed on time. In the January to March quarter of 2016 that figure rose to 97 per cent—almost 100 per cent. In those same quarters 90 per cent of urgent elective surgeries were performed under Labor, but under the Coalition Government the figure rose to 100 per cent.

Record funds are being invested in the Prince of Wales Hospital, and its performance is improving out of sight. Far from downgrading that hospital, the actions of the Government have resulted in many more people presenting to the Prince of Wales Hospital, year in and year out. Last year, 14,355 people presented at the emergency department. This year the figure was 15,323—an increase of around 7 per cent or about 1,000 extra people a year. Total presentations across the hospital continued to rise. There is absolutely no truth whatsoever that the Prince of Wales Hospital has been downgraded. In fact, the Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, and the chairman of the board of the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District, Mr Michael Still, share a vision that it will become one of the pre-eminent medical establishments in the Southern Hemisphere.

The hospital has linked up with the University of New South Wales. The vice-chancellor of the university is a medical doctor from the United Kingdom, and he is working cooperatively and collaboratively with us to join those facilities to create one of the best research and treatment centres in the Southern Hemisphere. To her credit, Jillian Skinner, the great Minister for Health, is coughing up the money to make that happen. We are still at the planning stage, but \$4 million is in the budget despite the scare campaign that is being run by the Labor Party.

### **ST GREGORY'S COLLEGE**

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (17:38):** In September this year St Gregory's College in my electorate of Campbelltown will celebrate its ninetieth anniversary, and I will have the privilege of attending a special mass and dinner to celebrate this landmark in the college's history. I commend St Gregory's College on achieving this laudable milestone. St Gregory's College has played an invaluable and honourable role in the Campbelltown region of south-western Sydney. St Gregory's College was established in 1926 on farmlands, which are now part of the new suburb known as Gregory Hills, through the generosity of Thomas Donovan and his family, benefactors of the Catholic Church.

St Greg's became a Marist Brothers school, with a focus on giving young men the skills to forge successful careers on the land, consistent with the Marist Brothers philosophy of educating young people in rural areas. The foundation principal was Brother Felix, and he was followed by many other Marist Brothers principals over the years until 2001, when Mr Marshal McMahon became the first lay principal to be appointed. He was followed in 2009 by current headmaster Mr Damien Millar.

The school initially struggled to attract enough enrolments during the tough years of the Great Depression, and faced possible closure. However, during World War II the perceived safety of the school's location saw enrolments rise rapidly, and consequently it was set up as a boarding school, with housing available for students on campus. The students came from all over the State. During this time principal Brother Molloy registered the college as an agricultural high school, making it the first Catholic agricultural high school in Australia. This was reflected in the school's motto, "What you sow, so you shall reap". The school continues this proud tradition today by successfully showing cattle and sheep regularly at agricultural events and shows across the State, including at the Sydney Royal Easter Show.

St Greg's has also shown a continuing commitment to sport, fielding teams in rugby, cricket, basketball and other competition sports. However, without a doubt rugby league has always held pride of place at St Greg's, with many famous faces coming through the school's rugby league program, including some who have been our great State of Origin and Australian test representatives. They include Ryan Hoffman, Trent Barrett, Jason Taylor, Jack Gibson, Chris Lawrence and Tim Sheens—to name but a few. They are amongst the honour roll of former students who have forged a career in professional rugby league.

Others have excelled in other theatres of sport, on fields throughout our State and nation at a representative level. St Greg's also places a strong emphasis on public speaking, with students participating in debating and public speaking competitions across the State in all age groups. This, and its emphasis on leadership, is evidenced by the multiple politicians who have graduated from the school, including my friend and Labor colleague the former member for Campbelltown, the Hon. Graham West.

Today the school has more than 1,100 students enrolled, including 180 boarders, and is led admirably by headmaster Damien Miller. It emphasises parental involvement, a sense of community, growing young men into men of character and integrity, and the value of education. It is a beacon of prosperity. The value of the education that is being provided at St Gregory's college is demonstrated by the leadership of the school, and the continued

commitment of the school over the past 90 years. Currently, the school is preparing for the opening of a primary school on its land. It will provide much-needed additional schooling for the fast-growing area of Gregory Hills, Campbelltown and indeed the Macarthur region. The primary school will be a co-ed school, which will for the first time allow girls to enrol at St Gregory's College.

I am sure that all members of the House will join me in acknowledging the importance of this educational institution and the role it plays in our society by providing students with the tools they need and giving them a good education. I congratulate St Gregory's College on its long and honourable history. On behalf of my electorate, and indeed this Parliament, I express my excitement about its future as its progressive co-ed plans come to fruition. I am sure that the college will continue to provide the best education possible, as it has for the past 90 years.

### **BATEMANS BAY FLYING FOX COLONY**

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Infrastructure) (17:43):** Tonight I pay tribute to members of my local community of Batemans Bay. Over the last few months they have banded together to deal with an incredible challenge—that is, an infestation by a colony of grey headed flying foxes. The magnitude of this infestation is somewhat unique in Australia. Never before have we seen this many animals converging upon an urban environment in the way these animals have.

In February-March this year, the gum blossoms provided on an incredible food source for the animals that enable them to migrate to Batemans Bay. The town had a colony of bats for a number of years—in fact, from approximately 2009—but what happened in February-March this year has led some ecologists to believe, based on the magnitude of the problem, that approximately 20 per cent of the nation's total population of grey-headed flying foxes has converged on the town. In essence, Batemans Bay ended up with a roost that was approximately three kilometres long. Given the sheer number of bats that have moved to the area, I do not think projected figures could ever be correct.

The infestation has caused enormous anxiety and, among some residents, depression. I know of examples of people who have picked up respiratory problems because of the stench of the animals. An ongoing problem has been created due to the animals droppings. The infestation of bats is an enormous challenge that is besetting the community as a whole. The animals also present a challenge to the local tourism economy. Enormous costs are being borne by residents as a result of the colony being there—residents who simply want their lives back. For some residents, the infestation has been so nasty that they have become prisoners in their own homes. Very pleasingly, following the visit by the Premier, the State Government committed the necessary funds to support dispersal attempts, which commenced on Tuesday this week.

From the community viewpoint, what has been special is the way in which the community has rallied together. Russell Schneider, AM, has been appointed to lead a task force to assist with ongoing dialogue between the community and the local council. The Office of Environment and Heritage [OEH] has been working alongside the council. At incredible pace, the OEH approved a vegetation management plan and a final dispersal plan, which the council voted on approximately a week ago. I particularly wish to recognise a number of Batemans Bay residents who have rallied together, surveyed the community, represented the community and who are now participating in the dispersal effort.

I apologise in advance if, in singling out a number of the members of the community who deserve special recognition, I omit to mention some other: Caroline Meyn, Brooke Miljenovic, Kim Olofsson, Allison Rowe, Viv Campbell, Dianne West, and in particular Danielle Smith—a young mum, who has suffered greatly as a result of the colony being in her backyard—as well as two councillors, Councillor Liz Innes and Councillor Milton Leslight, who have been tremendous advocates for the community in relation to this issue over a long period. The way in which residents have rallied together has been extraordinary. Between now and the end of August, they will be engaged in an enormous struggle to try to disperse this massive colony of fruit bats.

As I stated earlier, it is unprecedented and unique for such a great number of bats to colonise in an urban environment in the manner displayed at Batemans Bay. The bats have caused problems with electricity including blackouts on most nights, challenges in relation to aircraft and challenges with the rescue helicopter. In terms of problems associated with the colony, the list goes on. Dispersal will be attempted over the next month. I plead with the local community to be patient. I know this will be a testing period and an enormous challenge. Unfortunately, early morning work will be done from approximately 4.00 a.m. onwards, which is when the bats return to their roosts after having fed overnight. That is when disruption will be particularly burdensome for residents. I ask residents to be patient, but, having said that, I recognise residents who have done surveys and who have committed themselves as volunteers in an effort to help their local community.

## OLD MARDI FARM REDEVELOPMENT

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (17:49):** I put forward the concerns of many local community people about a development that is being proposed on the site known as old Mardi farm in the old Wyong shire. This development has been rejected since 1998 by the Department of Planning and Environment and the proposal deemed inconsistent with the Central Coast Regional Strategy, which does not support large scale development of this nature and to limit suburban growth west of the M1 freeway. It was exhibited last year and had strong objection by the community. This development has an interesting history. When I was Parliamentary Secretary for the Central Coast I was involved in discussions about the possibility of such a development. We were told at the time there was no way the Department of Planning would approve a large scale residential development west of the freeway.

Come the 2011 election, and I was no longer Parliamentary Secretary, the proponent went to the new local member and to people on the council, and somehow convinced the council to put through a gateway determination to change what had been policy of the Department of Planning for a long time. Members of the community have raised concerns with me that it got more suspicious when the transcripts were released by the ICAC in relation to funding, that the proponent of this project had donated \$12,500 to the campaign. In the council minutes that followed the application to the Department of Planning, it was noted that the then State member and other local members and council representatives had lobbied the Department of Planning very hard to change this long-term policy.

It is not a hard stretch for local residents to feel very aggrieved when they have seen a paper trail, or a money flow, to find that an area that had been deemed off limits and was not part of the Central Coast Regional Strategy had suddenly come onto the radar. They have been fighting this proposal and I have been assisting them. The residential development is adjacent to the State Forest and Mardi Dam, and will have a huge impact on these precious resources. This development proposes to change the current zonings of this land from RU1 Primary Production, E2 Environmental Conservation, E3 Environmental Management and Water Catchment, to R5 Large Lot Residential, 300 lots on 49 hectares; E2 Environmental Conservation, 168 hectares; and E3 Environmental Management, six hectares. This is a rural area that is predominately made up of large agricultural farms, turf farms, horse and cattle grazing agistment farms and small two, 2½-acre and five-acre hobby farms.

In the past few weeks this plan has been re-exhibited, and what has caused the most concern is the proposed re-zoning from Wyong Council, which has added a disturbing new clause 4.1C. This clause specifies that any lots created could be below the minimum lot size shown on the applicable lot size map, which is 1,800-metre square, and allows a minimum of no less than 500-metre square. The documentation states that there will be 70 per cent of 1,800-metre square lots and 30 per cent of 500-metre square lots, which is not a rural residential subdivision, and would dramatically impact on the number of trees that would be destroyed to facilitate this development.

Estimations show the development could achieve a net density of 9.9 lots per hectare—this is as high an average density as was achieved in new residential release areas in Western Sydney in the 1980s, that is, a typical suburban development. The re-zoning of this development also enables dual occupancy, that is, townhouses and granny flats on small allotments, which is totally unacceptable in a rural environment. Any overflow of sewerage during major floods will find its way to the Wyong River if the developer's fail safe system does not work. I ask the Minister and the new council to look very carefully at this development and realise that it is out of step with the Central Coast Regional Plan, and oppose it, as does the community.

**Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Planning) (17:54):** I thank the member for Wyong for his comments. I had the opportunity to listen to these comments in the Chamber and I will ask representatives of the Department of Planning and Environment to meet with the member to go through his concerns. The Central Coast is a crucial part of our State. It is a growing region with some wonderful communities. We need to be very sure that as the Central Coast continues to grow, we protect its precious environment and secure the agricultural lands that for so long have been a part of the coast and its identity while at the same time ensuring there is room for growing communities.

I respect the member and note that he has raised a number of concerns in his private member's statement tonight. I know that the member for Wyong would only bring matters to the attention of this House if he and his community have genuine concerns. We will make sure that these concerns are thoroughly investigated. I give a commitment in this place that I will ensure that departmental representatives contact the member and there is an opportunity for these matters to be thoroughly investigated.

## HOLSWORTHY ELECTORATE FLOODS

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (17:55):** Today I recognise and acknowledge the amazing and tireless work carried out by our local State Emergency Services [SES] staff and volunteers, particularly those in south-west Sydney, for their help and assistance during the recent east coast low storms, and the clean-up that followed this large event. Households in my electorate were evacuated due to flood warnings, streets were flooded cutting off suburbs and creating traffic congestion, and it ruined what should have been a lovely long weekend to spend with family and friends—but these troubles are small compared to those in our community who lost so much from the storms that occurred.

This storm saw heavy rainfall, strong winds and flooding throughout Sydney and along the coast of New South Wales, with approximately 170 millimetres of rain falling in the Liverpool region in 24 hours. Residents from Chipping Norton and Moorebank were evacuated due to flood warnings in their area to Liverpool Library. I acknowledge and thank Liverpool City Council workers for helping to assist in providing a secure evacuation point for the nearly 500 residents who needed to leave their homes.

Due to the severity of the storm a multi-agency response was organised across New South Wales, including members from the State Emergency Service, Fire and Rescue NSW, the Rural Fire Service, the NSW Police Force and other interstate support agencies. Staff and volunteers from Liverpool SES, Liverpool Police Local Area Command—who incidentally moved into their new premises that weekend, so it was a huge weekend for them—Casula Rural Fire Service, Sutherland Police Local Area Command, Sandy Point Rural Fire Service and Menai Bushfire Brigade all lent a hand to help out our community. I am extremely grateful for their dedicated service to our community, not just for this event, but for everything they did then and will continue to do to make our community a safe place to live.

Their main goal during this storm event was to protect life and property, and ensure the safety of all our residents. Unfortunately, the calls and directions made by the SES to not drive through floodwaters were not heeded by some members of the public, and on the Sunday the SES recorded one flood rescue every five minutes across the State. I do not believe that is acceptable and really it should not have occurred at all. This situation does not just put the vehicle users' lives at risk; it also risks the lives of those who are then sent to save them. That message needs to be heard.

On a positive note, I also commend the Liverpool SES for its excellent communication during the storm event, using many different messaging media, including social media, to make sure that the community knew of any potential dangers and hazards, and also to convey safety messages. Some of the important messages the SES promoted were: secure or put away loose items around the yard or balcony; stay indoors away from windows; move your vehicle under cover or away from trees and powerlines; stay clear of fallen trees and powerlines; never enter floodwater; avoid low-lying areas prone to flash flooding; and call 132 500 for emergency help and only call 000 in life-threatening situations. These are all important messages that should be taken note of, especially if we find ourselves in a situation much like those that occurred during these recent storms.

I was honoured to join the Premier and the Minister for Emergency Services to tour the area around Newbridge Road, in Chipping Norton, that was affected by flooding. Unfortunately, due to the high levels of water, the majority of lanes across the bridge were closed for days after the storms. The Premier and Minister took this opportunity to thank all our local emergency service volunteers for the hard work they had put in over the weekend and the days that followed.

We also thanked the local residents for heeding the warnings and for their patience during the following days. It was hard having one of our main roads closed for so long. The patience of locals was very much appreciated.

On another positive note, coincidentally, the week before the storms hit the Minister for Emergency Services joined me in Liverpool in my electorate to award the New South Wales State Emergency Service [SES] Liverpool unit a \$5,000 grant. The grant will enable Liverpool SES to undertake improvements to the unit's facilities to assist it to train its volunteers more effectively. Training is obviously essential in preparing volunteers for their role in helping the community, especially in severe weather. It is good to make the facility a pleasant place to be. Whether it is responding to floods, storms or other emergencies, the Liverpool community can be assured that their SES volunteers are well trained and equipped and ready to help in times of crisis. I thank all emergency services staff and volunteers in the Holsworthy electorate for their time and their dedication to making our area safe.

## NEWCASTLE LIGHT RAIL

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (18:00):** On Tuesday the people of Newcastle waited with bated breath. The budget was to be announced and we were hopeful that good news was on its way. Would the much discussed cruise ship terminal be funded? Would there be a solution announced for the Adamstown Gates

crossing? What would the next steps be for the light rail? We did expect some light rail funding, following last year's \$400 million budget reversal from the Newcastle Urban Renewal to the Sydney intercity fleet. However, the kicker was that the carriages for the light rail system will not be built in Australia, let alone Newcastle.

That announcement raises many questions. Newcastle has a large manufacturing industry that is in the middle of a downturn. The industry is screaming out for work, crying for contracts. We are watching industry leaders cut staff due to the lack of contracts coming our way. I was talking to Corey Wright from the Australian Manufacturers Workers Union only this morning, who was at Parliament for the steel manufacturing debate in the other place. He said, "There are two rail manufacturers in the Hunter who have lost over 1,800 direct and indirect jobs. We have very high youth unemployment and there is lack of apprentices, and lack of investment in skills and training."

As Corey said, UGL and Downer-EDI, which are both internationally respected companies, are crying out for work. How can the Government be so callous as to take the revenue from the sale of the Port of Newcastle, say that it wants to revitalise Newcastle and then send millions of dollars offshore to Spain and let the workers of Newcastle down? Shipbuilding giant Forgas has slowed down and been sold and the shipbuilding course has been scrapped from TAFE. There is now a perfectly fitting solution for the manufacturing industry downturn in Newcastle but the Government will send the contract off to Spain.

Earlier this week a June report from job search engine Adzuna listed Newcastle as the hardest place in Australia to get a job. Whilst Sydney is the easiest Australian city in which to find work, Newcastle job seekers have the hardest challenge with an average of 15.2 people vying for each position. Adzuna says that the figures have got even worse in the past 12 months under this Government's watch. On a day when it became official that it is difficult to find work in Newcastle, the Baird Liberal Government turned its back on local manufacturing workers with a commitment to purchase the Newcastle Light Rail carriages from Spain, sending millions of dollars offshore. This is despite the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party making a deal with the Government when it voted for the bill to close the Newcastle rail line. It wanted the Government to use its "best endeavours" to obtain tenders from Hunter manufacturers to supply the light rail stock. The Government agreed to this, so what happened to the promise?

In Tuesday's budget the Government also announced that it is still to award a contract to buy 65 new intercity trains and about 520 carriages. Have Newcastle and the Hunter been included in the mix for this contract? Are they going to be considered? Surely that is a lot of work to be done and it should be kept in the State to build a strong economy. Will Newcastle get its fair share? The budget also mentioned the work that the Government is doing on Transport for Newcastle—the experimental, first in Australia fully privatised transport system. Look out Sydney. The Government announced its plans without any consultation with the Newcastle community, which has come out in support of the local workers who now fear for the future of their jobs. The Government also made no mention of that before the last election.

Today Newcastle bus passengers received free rides at the State Government's expense. Drivers took part in protest action over negotiations that are currently underway in relation to the transitional process for these public sector employees going to the private sector. Why are the negotiations for transitional provisions for employees going to the private sector so difficult for these 360 Newcastle workers when the ports corporation and home care sectors were so much easier? Why does the Government waste time and money and not negotiate in good faith? The strike was called off halfway through the day when the Government agreed to come back to the negotiating table. This should not be necessary.

The Baird Government announced the plan to privatise before it spoke to the workers affected and it is continuing with this plan of action. How does this in anyway fit in with Mr Baird's open and transparent government? He needs to talk to these public servants about his plans for the future, not just let them read about it in the newspaper. Why is Newcastle treated differently? When will the time come for Newcastle to get its fair share? Invest in Newcastle; invest in Novocastrians. It is time for their fair share.

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (18:05):** Everyone was excited about the budget. There are surpluses as far as the eye can see, a record infrastructure spend of \$73.3 billion, and our triple-A credit rating confirmed. The commentators are supporting the budget and calling the Treasurer Gladys the Great, except for the member for Newcastle. The member's electorate received a record infrastructure spend, with \$142 million spent on light rail in Newcastle. The member had previously said he did not want the light rail and then he changed his mind. He cannot have his cake and eat it too.

It was a good budget for the people of New South Wales and great for the people of Newcastle. The member claims credit in his electorate for the funding and then comes into this House and cries poor. He cannot have it both ways. The member for Newcastle has not written to the Treasurer or advocated for more funding. He

has got up in the dead of night and made a statement in the Chamber. He will mail out this private member's statement and claim he has done something, when in fact he has done nothing.

#### **WEST HEAD ARMY TRACK**

**Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Planning) (18:06):** On Saturday 14 May 2016 it was a great pleasure for me to open the rebuilt Army track at West Head in the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. The Government has provided \$370,000 to support the project, which has restored access to West Head's historic World War II gun battery site. West Head was a key defence site and played a strategic role in the protection of Pittwater, the Hawkesbury River and the approaches to northern Sydney. Of particular concern was the real threat of German naval activity in 1940 and the vulnerability of the Hawkesbury River railway bridge. West Head was chosen due to its strategic topography and its ability to prevent landing craft from entering Pittwater or proceeding further up the Hawkesbury River.

This is a crucial piece of local military history and helps tell the story of the defence of Australia during World War II. Volunteers have worked tirelessly for more than 15 years to help piece together the history of the site and the National Parks and Wildlife Service staff have also assisted. I would like to thank a few key people who have ensured the vision of restoring this important historic and military site has come to pass. First, I acknowledge the role of Jack "Bluey" Mercer. He was one of the men who served at the battery during World War II and he was there to officially reopen the battery just a few weeks ago. He is an amazing man with an amazing memory and provided everyone who assembled there with an erudite and insightful look into a piece of history. He told us what it was like to serve at this isolated and vulnerable location during World War II.

I acknowledge Rohan Walter, a local resident of Pittwater, volunteer and coordinator of the West Head Awareness Team, and all other volunteers. He is known for his passion and for giving back to the community and he has inspired a passion in those who follow him. I acknowledge David Tribe and all the Chase Alive Volunteers for their assistance and support for the project. I acknowledge Peter Rea and the 4H Research Group and Dora and Victor Rea. The great people at the Gosford Men's Shed worked together to provide an incredibly detailed model to assist people, particularly school children, to get an appreciation of what the site looked like during the height of the Second World War.

I acknowledge Laurie Bimson, a Guringai elder who provided a wonderfully warm welcome to the Guringai Country, and Neil Evers, another Guringai man who provides so much support to our local community. I acknowledge President Deborah Carter and the Pittwater RSL for their support of the event and the project. I acknowledge Peter Hay, Tom Bagnat, Natasha Funke, Kim McClymont, Mark Withford and Lee De Gail from the National Parks and Wildlife Service, whose professionalism, commitment and passion to delivering this wonderful project has been inspiring. This points to the great ethic that inspires the officers of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. I acknowledge local historian, the Hon. Jim Macken, whose book *Pittwater's War* inspired the initial investigation into the role of Pittwater during World War II and the World War II fortifications at West Head.

I acknowledge Broken Bay Marine Rescue Commander Keren Muir-McCarey and his members who provided a flotilla of support at the base of West Head during the opening ceremony. I acknowledge the Royal Australian Artillery Association and the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company for providing colour in period costume and history, as well as pomp and ceremony, at the opening of the track. I acknowledge Patrick Soars, who generously provided his Huey helicopter, with its unique two-bladed whirl, for extra support of the event. I acknowledge Michael Carrodus, a director of Pittwater RSL and secretary of the Royal Australian Artillery Association.

I acknowledge the Royal Australian Navy, particularly the Navy divers attached to HMAS *Penguin*. I also acknowledge the Returned Services League of Australia, New South Wales Branch; Geoff Searl, from the Avalon Beach Historical Society; Jim Boyce, from the Manly, Warringah and Pittwater Historical Society; and the other local RSL clubs that provided support. I am sure there are plenty of others to mention also, but I truly thank all involved for their dedication and hard work in helping to protect this important historical local and national landmark and preserve it for future generations.

#### **TRIBUTE TO FATHER PATRICK MCAULIFFE**

**Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) (18:11):** Tonight I acknowledge Father Patrick McAuliffe for his hard work and dedication to our local community for more than four decades. Also fondly known as Father Mac, he was a great source of inspiration to my local community. Not only did Father Mac perform many church services and wedding ceremonies but he also worked for local organisations and schools in my community. Father Mac spent 42 years of his life at Cabramatta Catholic Church and was ordained as a priest 60 years ago. He has

been an inspiration to many people at his parish. In fact, I have heard that his services were so inspirational that one of his parishioners who moved to Coogee would often return to Cabramatta for his regular Sunday mass.

Besides serving the Cabramatta church, Father Mac was highly involved in the Fairfield-Cabramatta Police Citizens Youth Club [PCYC]. For 25 years he served as president of the PCYC's financial advisory committee. His passion for basketball led him to coach it at the PCYC for more than 30 years. He also assisted young people by providing counselling, guidance and support. He was appointed a lifelong governor at the club for all his support. Every week Father Mac visited SummitCare, a nursing home in Canley Vale. He would often chat and comfort residents as well as conduct memorial services there. He always brought a smile to the faces of the residents and staff. He would often organise people from the church to visit the nursing home and sing to residents on special occasions such as Easter and Christmas. If residents wanted blessings or the last rites to be conducted he was only a phone call away.

Father Mac worked closely with numerous schools in my local area, such as Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School at Cabramatta, the Patrician Brothers' College at Fairfield and the Mary Mackillop School. He was always interested in the welfare of the students and had close relationships with the staff. He gave spiritual support at Patrician Brothers as chaplain to the year groups. He would also make pastoral visits to year 12 students in his parish. His advice was always respected by the students. In addition, Father Mac would perform the oration at the Anzac Day dawn service at the Cabra-Vale Diggers Club. Father Mac's positive attitude and inspirational words were a great source of guidance for those he spoke to. His service to the community has led people to describe him as a man who gave his life in service of the people and to the glory of God. He will be greatly missed by our community. I wish Father Mac all the best in his retirement.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith):** Private members' statements having concluded, in accordance with standing and sessional orders the House now stands adjourned until Tuesday 2 August 2016 at 12 noon.

**The House adjourned at 18:15.**