



New South Wales

Legislative Assembly

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Sixth Parliament
First Session**

Wednesday, 24 August 2016

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 24 August 2016

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

The SPEAKER read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

[Notices of motions given.]

Motions

CENTENARY OF ANZAC

Debate resumed from 11 August 2016.

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore) (10:13): By leave: In my contribution to debate on 11 August 2016 I recognised Corporal Joe Stratford. Today, I pay tribute to Private Patrick (Paddy) Joseph Bugden. He feared nothing, and said so in a letter that he penned to his mother, Annie, from the battlefields of the Western Front. In life Paddy's fearless actions in the heat of battle earned him the respect of his mates and fellow soldiers. In death it earned him one of the highest military honours, the Victoria Cross [VC], and placed him among the bravest ever to serve their country. He won the posthumous award for something Australians are renowned for: standing by their mates. This citation is taken from the *London Gazette* of 26 November 1917, which detailed Private Bugden's heroic and selfless acts. One of the men he saved from enemy capture, Corporal Alf Thomson, wrote to Private Bugden's family:

The whole episode... took place under very heavy shell, rifle and machine gun fire, so you can understand the debt I owe to Paddy Bugden for his bravery in rescuing me. I am exceedingly sorry to say that Bugden got killed by a shell a couple of nights later. I am glad to say that the authorities are recognising the heroism of poor old Bugden as he did some magnificent work beside what I have related. He is, I believe, getting the VC which he richly deserved.

From Alstonville, Paddy enlisted to serve his country at Lismore on 25 May 1916 and stated his occupation as hotel keeper. He was born in Gundurimba, just outside of Lismore. The son of Thomas and Annie, he was educated at the local public school and spent all of his life on the North Coast until his enlistment. A memorial to Paddy Bugden, VC, was dedicated in 1997 at Alstonville. An extract from a letter to his mother dated 9 January 1917 appears on the memorial and reads:

We are going into the firing line tomorrow. If by chance anything happens, I feel that I shall gain a place of happiness for I have never done a deed that I am ashamed of so I fear nothing.

Sadly Paddy was killed on 28 September 1917 when he was just 20 years of age. I now pay tribute to two brothers from Murwillumbah in the northern part of my electorate. Robert and Henrietta Goodrich were like many other young couples with a large family trying to carve out a living in a newly federated land. Times were tough and plenty of hard work needed to be done with at least 11 hungry mouths to feed. The Goodrich's pioneering typified the dogged determination which helped forge our national identity in those early years of the Commonwealth.

The event which had the most influence on shaping Australia's ideals, mateship and spirit was the Great War of 1914 to 1918 and particularly the Gallipoli campaign of 1915. From a population of fewer than five million, 416,809 Australians enlisted, of whom more than 60,000 were killed and 156,000 wounded, gassed or taken prisoner. Many families lost sons and for some the heartache was doubly hard to bear. Chiselled into the marble plaques of the Murwillumbah War Memorial at Remembrance Place in Tumbulgum Road are the names of four brave brothers: Arthur, Floreston, Oswald and Seymour Goodrich. When Robert and Henrietta—known as Hetty—bade farewell to their sons, they did not know that they would never see two of them again, as Floreston, 24 years old, and Oswald, only 22 years old, were both killed doing their duty for God, king and country.

A farmer, Floreston sailed out of Brisbane on the HMAT *Commonwealth* with the 7th Infantry Brigade, 25th Infantry Battalion and 10th Reinforcements on 28 March 1916. After time in the Suez and Alexandria, Floreston arrived at Marseilles, France, on 7 June 1916. He was reported missing on 6 August during the final stages of the Battle of Pozieres, a two-week struggle for the French village of Pozieres and the ridge on which it stands, during the middle stages of the Battle of the Somme. It was not until a court of inquiry on 20 October 1917 that the worst fears were confirmed: Floreston had been killed on the day he was reported missing.

Oswald, a police constable, left Brisbane on HMAT *Warilda* on 5 October 1915. Sadly, after solid service which gained him a promotion to corporal, he was killed in action by a shell splinter on 12 October 1917 and was buried, his remains later reinterred at Tyne Cot Military Cemetery two kilometres from Passchendaele, scene of the Third Battle of Ypres in Belgium—one of the bloodiest and muddiest battles of the Great War. Light Horseman

Arthur Goodrich returned to Australia on 21 July 1918, having spent almost three years abroad, while Seymour, a sapper with the 5th Division Field Company Engineers, came home on 4 December the same year, welcomed back by their relieved, yet heartbroken parents.

Tenterfield is enriched with so much history in the western part of my electorate and I pay tribute now to Tenterfield digger Frank Curran, a keen sportsman who could catch and throw a ball and play football with the best of them. He loved a contest and gave it his very best every time when challenged. Nothing changed when he signed up for duty in January 1915 and sailed off to war. His strong character and competitive spirit would ensure that 100 years later we are remembering and paying tribute to a true hero.

Corporal Francis Patrick Curran landed at Gallipoli with the 7th Light Horse Regiment in May 1915 and soon found his niche in the trenches as a bomb thrower. He never expected his skills on the sports field would prove so valuable on the battlefield. The Turks would lob bombs into the Australian trenches and, with unbelievable daring and courage, Frank Curran would catch them and throw them right back. He had just seconds to react. His bravery became legendary across the peninsula for a skill and task laced with such danger. When bombs were not caught he would sandbag them or flick them over the parapet.

Frank was awarded a Distinguished Conduct Medal for his unique work at Gallipoli, earning him the title "The Bomber" by his comrades. Frank and the 7th Light Horse Regiment were not going to be part of the Western Front war in Europe, instead taking part in the Sinai and Palestine campaign. He was not satisfied with this and left his unit to join a regiment headed for action on the Western Front. Initially taken under escort for "illegally leaving his post", Frank returned to the Light Horse Regiment and sadly met his fate in the Battle of Romani. He was killed in action while heroically rescuing several wounded soldiers on 5 August 1916.

Kyogle has a long and proud military history so it is no surprise that 91 veterans who fought in the wars were born in the town. Woodenbong is located in the shadow of Mount Lindesay in the Border Ranges of northern New South Wales, but its residents were not overshadowed when it came to representation per capita of population in the enlistment rolls of World War I. The village's magnificent Roll of Honour has individual plaques of the 28 who died, the other 91 who enlisted, and even the 16 who were willing to go to war but were rejected for one reason or another. The name of Edward Gammon of Urbenville appears on the list of the men who answered the call but never made it home. His name is also memorialised on the Menin Gate Memorial, Ypres, Belgium, as one of 6,000 missing Australians whose names are engraved there.

In Lismore the role of the company runner in World War I was made famous by actor Mel Gibson's character Frank Dunne in the big screen blockbuster *Gallipoli* back in 1981. A Lismore lad, Frank Dunne played out a role in the Great War worthy of any star's title page. He was a true Aussie patriot, by name and by nature, and he was awarded a Military Medal to prove it. Private Australia Rangy Jerome Clarke was a 24-year-old farm labourer from Lismore when he enlisted in the army on 12 August 1915. He sailed from Brisbane on HMAT *Itonus* on 30 December 1915 and was awarded the Military Medal for his gallantry during the August offensive of 1918.

Whilst I pay tribute to these specific individuals, I do not want to diminish the contribution of anyone who represented Australia in these wars. It would be impossible to provide a complete history or record of the Great War of 100 years ago. I have simply tried to encapsulate some of the contributions of men and women from across the electorate of Lismore and to pay tribute to the thousands from the area who lost their lives. Whilst we are recognising the Centenary of World War I, this year we should also remember all those who took part in the Vietnam War, especially those who were at Long Tan, it being 50 years since that battle. I particularly want to pay tribute to Private Graeme Davis, Lance Corporal Ken Jolley—those two gentlemen are from Lismore—and Private Ian Campbell from Murwillumbah, who has just been recognised for an award some 50 years later. I also want to thank the students and young people of today who have not only recognised but also have reinforced what the Anzac legend is about and who will continue to recognise the Anzacs and all the people who have represented this country.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

Lest we forget.

Debate adjourned.

*Bills***SCRAP METAL INDUSTRY 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) (10:27): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce into the Parliament today a bill which we believe will, if enacted, make a serious difference in helping to prevent property crime across New South Wales, whether it be opportunistic or well organised. In introducing this bill, I acknowledge the presence in the Chamber of the shadow Minister for Justice and Police, and member for Fairfield. The Scrap Metal Industry Bill 2016 provides for the regulation of scrap metal dealers in New South Wales. As the name suggests, these are businesses which purchase—generally for cash—all manner of metal objects which are sold as scrap and then crushed and recycled. I am advised that there are currently in the range of 600 to 700 scrap metal businesses operating across New South Wales.

Up until now, this trade has been largely unregulated and undocumented, making it extremely attractive to criminals as a way to make some quick cash. Police tell me that this might lead to, for example, the same people dropping off cars they have stolen to scrap metal yards week after week, someone offloading a dozen hot water systems they have illegally ripped out of a new development as scrap or a bulk load of stolen copper piping or wire which might, until recently, have been part of an operating rail line or the copper plumbing infrastructure of a local school hall. A scrap metal dealer offers a few hundred bucks each time for the metal, no questions are asked and a person is quickly on his or her way again, off to score some drugs with the money or whatever is done with the ill-gotten proceeds.

The victims of crime, whether it be a builder, the Government, a contractor, a low-income family, a community group or, worse still, some of the most vulnerable in the community—our aged population—are left to deal with the mess and somehow find a way to carry on while they make an insurance claim, if indeed they have insurance at all. The impacts of metal theft may well be widespread; we believe that is so. For example, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported on 25 August 2015 that would-be thieves were lucky not to have electrocuted themselves as they attempted to steal copper wire from Ausgrid power poles on the Central Coast. The would-be burglars sawed through a pole with a chainsaw in a paddock in Doyalson, bringing down a pole-top substation and live power lines across a property, which then cut power to some 800 homes and businesses on the Central Coast, according to the information provided by Ausgrid. The resultant sparking could have started a bushfire, and it took Ausgrid 3½ hours to repair the damage.

It is the Government's view that the regulatory model proposed through this bill will help to significantly prevent property crime in three major ways. First, it will close off scrap metal dealers as a source of quick cash. Secondly, it will ensure that the sales of stolen scrap metal to dealers are able to be traced through the keeping of clear records. Thirdly, it will provide powers of entry and inspection for police officers. I make it clear that the proposed legislation will not impact on anyone legitimately looking to offload scrap metal. For instance, people who enjoy scavenging on council clean-up days with a view to making a few dollars or who find it necessary to move a rusted car chassis—I have one in my backyard—can still do so in the normal way but will no longer be paid in cash and will need to prove their identity. That is not too onerous.

As evidenced by the bill, its intention is to regulate the activity of scrap metal dealers and not the backgrounds, conduct or competency of those running or working in scrap metal yards. The bill ensures that the scheme is easier to administer and comply with whilst at the same time directly addressing the practices that continue to drive property crime in New South Wales. We also know that a similar scheme in place in the United Kingdom has already proven to be successful, with the number of metal theft incidents falling significantly in the scheme's first year of operation.

I will now turn to the provisions of the bill in detail. Clause 3 outlines a range of key definitions which highlight the scope of the proposed scheme. Definitions of "motor vehicle", "scrap metal" and "scrap metal yard" are expressly provided in clause 3. Part 2, division 1 of the bill sets out the registration requirements for scrap metal businesses. This makes it clear that registration is automatic. Police cannot refuse an application for registration but it is an offence for scrap metal businesses not to register. Businesses will be supplied with a certificate of registration and police will keep and maintain a publicly accessible register of scrap metal businesses.

We see the register as providing multiple benefits. First, it will make it easier for police to know how many scrap metal yards are operating in their local areas and to pay them a visit from time to time should the need arise.

I am told that currently some businesses could almost be said to be operating covertly. The frequency of police visits to scrap metal yards will be driven by the volume of property thefts in a given area and the strength of relevant criminal intelligence or reports of suspicious transactions from scrap metal dealers. The register will also provide prospective customers with an assurance that they are dealing with a business that is operating within the law. It will be useful for other Federal and State government agencies such as the Environment Protection Authority and the Australian Taxation Office, which have an interest in making contact with scrap metal businesses to ensure that these businesses are, for example, paying their taxes and levies, and disposing of waste appropriately. Those agencies will also benefit from the records that scrap metal businesses will be required to keep under the proposed new scheme.

As I have previously flagged, clause 12 provides that scrap metal dealers will be prohibited from paying for scrap metal in cash or in kind with goods and services. Businesses can pay their customers via an electronic funds transfer at point of sale [EFTPOS] transfer or a cheque. This will ensure there is a record of the transaction and will remove the incentive of receiving an anonymous cash payment for a car or other metal items acquired through theft. More and more businesses are relying on those types of payments, so this is not considered onerous. It will also remove the need for scrap metal businesses to keep large volumes of cash on hand, which could also be a security risk for them. Clause 16 outlines the transaction records scrap metal businesses will be required to keep under the proposed new scheme. They include key identification details for the seller of the metal, a description of the scrap metal and its quantity or weight, and in the case of motor vehicles, the unique identifiers. This is designed to ensure that each transaction can be traced should it be necessary for police to do so in the investigation of property theft.

Part 3, division 1 provides for interim and long-term closure orders. The Commissioner of Police is empowered to make an interim closure order provided certain criteria are met. The order is proposed to last for 72 hours unless it is repealed or revoked sooner. More than one interim order closing the same premises may not be made within a seven-day period. Police may also apply to the Local Court for a long-term closure order. A court may order closure of a specified premises for a period or until such time as a court considers appropriate, provided certain conditions are met. This will help police to manage instances of ongoing non-compliance, or where serious criminal offences have been, or are likely to be, committed at or in connection with the subject premises. Part 3, division 2 outlines the police powers available to officers seeking to administer and ensure compliance with the provisions outlined in the bill. This includes the power of entry without a warrant to a scrap metal business for the purposes of determining whether there has been compliance with, or a contravention of, the Act.

Any part of the premises which is used for residential purposes only is excluded from this provision because it relates to the business and not the residence. In addition, whilst on a premises that has been lawfully entered, a police officer may carry out a range of actions, as listed, which are all geared towards gathering the evidence required to establish a contravention of the legislation. Those actions include seizing a document or other thing that the police officer believes, on reasonable grounds, is connected with an offence against the Act or supporting regulation, or taking photographs, films, audio, video or other recordings as the police officer considers necessary. A supporting regulation will be drafted, which will be ready to commence concurrently with the legislation in early 2017. This will, amongst other things, prescribe penalty notice offences and will outline a schedule of fees, including the fee for a three-year registration certificate, which is likely to be less than \$300 for the length of that three-year registration.

Finally, it is proposed that the Act will be reviewed following three years of operation to determine whether its policy objectives remain valid and whether the terms remain appropriate for securing those objectives. This regulatory model is designed to prevent property crime that is opportunistic, organised, large or small-scale crime. The model proposed in the bill strikes the right balance; it does not interfere with business but ensures that police have the powers and records they need to investigate property theft. The bill will close off an avenue which allows for the quick and anonymous disposal of stolen property such as cars, hot water systems, building materials and parts of critical infrastructure. In so doing it will better protect victims from such theft. Businesses that presently keep reasonable records will not notice much change to the processes at all. I recognise Commander Murray Chapman, Paul Skuratowski and Con Galea from the Property Crime Squad within the State Crime Command for the commitment they have shown in developing this proposal and for their ongoing efforts to drive down property crime across New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

RURAL FIRES AMENDMENT (FIRE TRAILS) BILL 2016**Second Reading****Debate resumed from 9 August 2016.**

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (10:41): I speak in debate on the Rural Fires Amendment (Fire Trails) Bill 2016 and note that the aim of the Rural Fires Amendment (Fire Trails) Bill 2016 is to create a system for the purpose of establishing, maintaining and protecting fire trails throughout New South Wales. The Labor Opposition is opposed to the bill and will move an amendment to refer it to the appropriate committee for inquiry in the other place. Fire trails and fire access points are vital for the prevention, maintenance, fighting or containment of bushfires. The New South Wales Labor Opposition consulted with the NSW Rural Fire Service Association [RFS], the Volunteer Fire Fighters Association [VFFA], NSW Farmers and the Nature Conservation Council of New South Wales. Together with the Colong Foundation for Wilderness, those organisations expressed their views and concerns about this legislation.

An area of concern that arose repeatedly throughout the consultation period concerned new section 62W. Every member in this House would agree that enhancing our fire trail network would be of enormous benefit to our communities and to the safety of our firefighters. However, this Government intends to place the financial burden of the construction and maintenance of fire trails on private lands onto private landowners or occupiers. When the fire trails are constructed they must be done in accordance with fire trail standards. The landowner or occupier is expected to fork out the money to do that. Any and all costs associated with the construction and maintenance of the fire trails fall on the shoulders of landowners or occupiers; that is the crux of new section 62W.

The real kicker is new section 62Y. This section provides that a fire trail management officer is permitted to issue a written fire trail rectification notice. A fire rectification notice may be issued to any owner or occupier when it is believed that the fire trail has not been constructed or maintained to the current standard. All notices that are issued must provide a minimum of 28 days for the works to be completed. Should the owners or occupiers fail to complete the works within this allotted time they may be liable for a maximum of 20 penalty units or imprisonment for two years.

If the owners or occupiers are a corporation or a public authority, the maximum penalty of 220 penalty units applies. The Government is not only forcing private landowners to construct and maintain community assets but also if the works do not meet current standards or individuals do not have the means to complete the works within the allocated time frame, the owners or occupiers could face further financial penalties or imprisonment. Proposed section 62K provides for the commissioner to set fire standards, which would include the structure and form of fire access and fire trail plans; the classification, length, width, gradient, signage and construction standards; and maintenance of fire trails.

All access and fire trail plans must conform to these standards. However, changes to these standards only need to be published in the New South Wales *Government Gazette* and on the NSW Rural Fire Service [RFS] website whenever they are enacted. Once again, it is the duty of landowners or occupiers to stay on top of things to ensure they are not issued with fire trail rectification notices. Landowners or occupiers who have fire trails running through their lands should receive notifications that the standards have been changed by the same means as they would receive a notification if they were being issued with a fire trail rectification notice.

Fire access and fire trails may change once new plans have been submitted and approved within the specified five-year period. This highlights the enormous and ongoing financial contributions an individual may have to make in order to avoid hefty penalties or jail time. It is also worth noting that under proposed section 62Z a person may object to a fire trail rectification notice. A fire trail manager must either confirm, modify or withdraw the rectification notice within 28 days.

Proposed section 62ZA enables a person's objection to a notice to be appealed in writing. Any appeals made this way must be considered by the NSW Rural Fire Service Commissioner, who must deal with the appeal within a reasonable time frame and take into account all relevant circumstances surrounding the appeal. Proposed section 62ZC provides for the NSW Rural Fire Service Commissioner to carry out works which were subject to a fire trail rectification order and which were not completed by the due date. Following completion of the works the commissioner may then recover the costs incurred in undertaking the work from the landowner or the land occupier.

It will be clear to anyone who has been following this debate that the Government really wants individuals to be financially responsible for community assets. Proposed section 62ZE states that any damage to land caused in good faith by any fire trail rectification works is to be considered as fire damage, within the meaning of any fire insurance policy covering the damaged property unless the damage existed prior to any entry onto the land for the purpose of the rectification works. The onus is placed on the landowner or occupier to have the relevant

insurance to cover any damages caused to the property as a result of any rectification, maintenance works or use of the fire trail.

This places an additional and unfair burden on landowners or occupiers as they will be subject to excess payments in the event that an accident occurs, with the possibility of increased premiums as a result of any claims they need to make. I point out also that public liability insurance is a concern as it is unclear who is responsible for this insurance during the construction, maintenance and use of a fire trail. This bill will give the commissioner the ability to terminate the registration of a fire trail, or a part of a fire trail, either on his or her own initiative or as a result of an application.

New section 62ZK permits an owner or public authority to apply in writing to the commissioner to terminate the registration of a fire trail. Any person who closes or incites the closure of a designated or registered fire trail without reasonable cause may be penalised up to a maximum of 20 penalty units or two years imprisonment, or a maximum of 220 penalty units for a corporation or public authority. Proposed section 62X enables the commissioner to authorise persons to carry out any fire trail rectification works on unoccupied Crown land or managed land. Proposed section 62L provides for the commissioner to give written direction that a fire trail be established and maintained on public land. This must include its location and it may apply to a new or existing fire trail. Once this direction has been provided and the trail has been established, it will then be designated as a fire trail.

Proposed section 62ZQ provides that land which has been designated and registered as a fire trail will be unaffected by any change of ownership or occupation of the lands. As such, any lands that contain a designated and registered fire trail will also be subject to all former maintenance and establishment agreements for as long as the fire trail remains a designated fire trail. This is also true for any instances where land changes ownership between private and public lands. We believe that the establishment of a fire trail on any land should be stated in the sale of contract to ensure that future property owners are aware of its existence on the property. Given the significant financial responsibilities placed on landowners or occupiers with regard to maintaining fire trails to the standards set out by the commissioner, this is not an insignificant detail, especially when the land is changing ownership.

Proposed section 62M permits the commissioner to enter into agreements with the owners of private lands to put in place written agreements for the establishment of a fire trail. These agreements may apply to a new or existing fire trail. In an instance where an owner of the land is not the occupier of the land, the occupier of the land must provide written consent to enter into any new agreements. It is also worth noting that, should any fire trails not meet the fire trail standards, owners or occupiers of the land or adjacent lands will have the ability to lodge a complaint with the commissioner. All complaints of this nature must be put in writing, identify the complainant and set out his or her reason for the complaint. The owner or occupier of the land will subsequently receive a written notice of the complaint and its grounds as soon as practicable after the complaint has been made.

Proposed section 62S sets out the requirement for the commissioner to investigate a fire trail complaint as soon as practicable. However, he or she does not need to investigate if the complaint is considered vexatious, misconceived, frivolous or lacking in substance. Proposed section 62ZP grants the commissioner or a member of the RFS who has been authorised by the commissioner to enter a person's land, other than the dwelling, for the purpose of an inspection to determine whether it meets the standards set out in proposed section 62K. We all agree that access to land is incredibly important, but this raises privacy concerns. This legislation will allow any authorised representative to access any part of the person's property except his or her home or dwelling.

We believe permission needs to be sought from landowners or occupiers prior to accessing their lands. Providing unrestricted access to any location on someone's property, excluding the home or dwelling, under the guise of inspection of a fire trail is a pretty hefty invasion of an individual's privacy. The inception of this legislation will establish bush fire management committees [BFMCs], which will comprise members from the existing RFS and volunteer firefighting brigades, as well as a number of relevant agencies. Those committees will serve as coordinators and inspectors of fire trails access and fire trails in their designated areas.

Schedule 1 amends section 51 and section 52 of the Act to set out the requirement for bush fire management committees to prepare draft fire access and fire trails plans for each of the respective areas. Bush fire management committees also must report to the bush fire coordinating committee [BFCC] on the implementation of their fire trail access and fire trail plans. The bush fire coordinating committees already have been established under section 48 of the Rural Fires Act 1997 and they have carriage of planning for bushfire prevention and coordinated bush firefighting across the State. Bush fire coordinating committees will be responsible for the establishment of the bush fire management committees, which will operate as forums for cooperative and coordinated bush fire management within their allocated area of responsibility.

Each bush fire management committee will consist of representatives from relevant agencies with invaluable knowledge of their local area. They will include the NSW Rural Fire Service, Fire and Rescue NSW, the NSW Police Force, the Office of Environment and Heritage, Forestry Corporation NSW, the Department of Industry—Lands, the NSW Farmers Association, Aboriginal land councils, local councils, and the Nature Conservation Council. The key roles and responsibilities of bush fire management committees will include the preparation of a draft bushfire risk management plan and a draft plan of operations with a coordinated response to bushfire for their respective area. Bush fire management committees must submit their initial plans to the bush fire coordinating committees within three years after commencement of the amended Act.

A plan must be submitted within each successive five-year period. Bush fire coordinating committees may either approve the plans or revoke or vary other existing plans that relate to the area that the plans cover. New section 54A sets out the criteria for the content of the draft from fire access and fire trail plans. The draft needs to address the appropriate means of accessing the land to prevent, fight, manage, and contain bushfires. This may be done by providing appropriate identification of suitable existing or proposed trails. I note that although the Labor Opposition supports the inception of an enhanced fire trail network throughout New South Wales, we do not believe in shifting the costs associated with doing so onto an individual whose land would be used to construct a fire trail.

We believe that it is the role of the Government to adequately fund such vital pieces of infrastructure that will support countless communities throughout New South Wales. Additional support should also be provided to support landowners and occupiers whose land has been used for a fire trail to combat land erosion and pollution that may occur as a result of a fire trail and its use. Labor Opposition members are all for supporting our firefighters and providing greater support and regulation through this House. However, we cannot turn a blind eye to a blatant push by the Government to shift the costs of such an enormous project onto private landowners and occupiers throughout this State.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) (10:58:0): I support the Rural Fires Amendment (Fire Trails) Bill 2016 and welcome its introduction by the Minister. The bill will provide a system for the establishment, maintenance and protection of fire trails for the purpose of preventing, fighting, managing or containing bushfires. The bill does that by providing for fire access and fire trail plans, fire trail standards, directions for the establishment of fire trails on public land, agreements for the establishment of fire trails on private land, certification of fire trails as to compliance with the fire trail standards, registration of certified fire trails, inspection of fire trails, and the issuing of notices of rectification work for fire trails.

This bill is welcomed, particularly by landholders who generally have a very good relationship with, and are members of, the NSW Rural Fire Service [RFS] and give many hours of dedicated voluntary service to protect our communities. The bill offers greater certainty that access will be provided to the dedicated volunteer firefighters of the RFS when fire events inevitably occur. We are a land of flood and fire—Dorothea Mackellar got it right in that regard. The bill seeks to engage with community and to set out fire trail standards in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

The bill states that the standard, as far as practical, will provide for a practical network of fire trails across the State; may relate to the structure and form of fire access and fire trail plans; may relate to the classification, length, width, gradient, signage, construction standards and maintenance of fire trails; and will require fire access and fire trail plans to include a treatment register for fire trails approved by the NSW Rural Fire Service Commissioner from time to time. The bill gives the commissioner the opportunity to do certain things. It is necessary that those who have the responsibility to provide this kind of infrastructure are able to make decisions about the network, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders listed in the bill. The Minister said that this will provide a very consultative approach and bring about a most necessary and long overdue solution to the fire trails issue.

The shadow Minister, and member for Fairfield, was unnecessarily alarmist about the bill. It is quite clear that he does not understand its intent. In relation to new section 62W (4), he said that a cost would be incurred by landholders. That is untrue. It is clear that the Government will provide funding and that landholders do not need to carry out construction works or maintenance of a fire trail if they do not want to, nor do they have to pay the cost of constructing or maintaining a fire trail. Some \$2 million in recurrent funding has been allocated to the NSW Rural Fire Service to support the delivery of fire access and fire trail plans and associated management, half of which will be used to appoint dedicated personnel to work with bush fire management committees [BFMCs], agencies and landowners, and to respond to complaints. The remainder will be used for construction and maintenance of fire trails on private land where the commissioner has entered into agreements with the landowners for the establishment of those trails.

There are no greater supporters of the RFS than landholders, who want their properties protected. By providing this infrastructure we will protect firefighters. Fire trails are used not only to ensure the safety of

firefighters during back-burning operations but also to afford access when a fire occurs. Firefighters need clear ground on which to park their vehicles in order to be assured of the best protection if a fire turns on them and they are trapped. If that protection is not available, firefighters are put at risk. When I attend award ceremonies at Rural Fire Service units and also in my capacity as Parliamentary Secretary for Corrections and Veterans Affairs, I assure volunteers that their safety is paramount to this Government. The Government wants them to come home safely, and it thanks and values them every day for their work as volunteers. We thank their families for the time that volunteers give up to protect our community. Providing simple fire breaks is one way this Government can help to ensure that those volunteers return home safely.

In addition to the funds provided for fire trails on private land, the RFS has been allocated \$20 million for bushfire mitigation work, of which approximately one-third is generally assigned to fire trails. Public land managers remain responsible for the cost of construction and maintenance of fire trails on their land. Land managers are able to apply for funds to assist in the construction and maintenance of fire trails from the Rural Fire Service grants program, consistent with existing arrangements. The RFS seeks advice from the BFMCs as to local priorities for funding requests in those areas. The fire access and fire trail plans will facilitate this process. This will be done on a priority basis so its rolling out will be built to the new guardian system. The network will be established on a priority basis, starting with the most needy areas.

When the RFS commissioner determines that there is a strategic requirement for a fire trail on private land, the RFS will enter into a negotiated agreement with the landowner and will assist with the establishment and maintenance of that trail. Where the trail is used by the landowner for a purpose additional to firefighting, the commissioner will negotiate an appropriate cost-sharing arrangement with the owner. The trail may be used as an access road to the property of the landholder, a homestead or other infrastructure. For example, if the owner wants to upgrade or differ from the fire trail standard the landholder and the commissioner will come to an agreement about the costs of additional improvement the landholder seeks to make to the fire trail that is above the agreed standard.

I make that clear to the member for Fairfield and that being an alarmist about such a simple bill is non-productive. The guidelines will be developed in consultation with and welcomed by landholders, the wider community, the RFS and any other groups that support the RFS, such as the State Emergency Service, volunteers and landholder organisations that have been crying out for a coordinated approach to maintenance of long-neglected fire trails. My area encompasses part of the Snowy Mountains, Tumut, Batlow and forestry areas, some of which are planted with pine forests, and access is vital to protect not only the lives of individuals but also very valuable assets. We have enormous timber export industries, including the biggest paper mill in the Southern Hemisphere and the largest softwood timber mill, the Hyne Timber Mill in Tumbarumba. I welcome the bill and urge Opposition members to support it, as clearly they are misguided by the shadow Minister at present.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (11:08): I support the Rural Fires Amendment (Fire Trails) Bill 2016. I pay credit to my friend the Minister for Corrections, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Veterans Affairs and his staff for drafting this overdue and necessary amending bill. I acknowledge the presence of Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers in the gallery and thank him for his hard work. I also recognise the incredible hard work of all his volunteers across New South Wales. As the member for Terrigal I have the great honour of having seven Rural Fire Service [RFS] brigades in my electorate.

Mr Geoff Provost: Name them.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: I will. We have the Avoca Beach, Copacabana, Empire Bay, Killcare-Wagstaffe, Macmasters Beach and Matcham-Holgate brigades. Last but not least, we have the fantastic group at the Wamberal Rural Fire Service. Those volunteers risk their lives to protect people and property on the Central Coast where, unfortunately, bushfires are an inevitable part of life—just like the east coast lows. We fear and dread them but we realise that the great people of the Rural Fire Service are there to protect us. This bill sets out the framework to provide the necessary safety measures for people on the Central Coast.

I welcome the greater certainty that this bill will provide for all dedicated volunteer firefighters in the Rural Fire Service, especially on the Central Coast. The bill will ensure that when firefighters need to access a fire front to extinguish a raging bushfire that threatens lives or homes or when they need to carry out hazard reduction burns to prevent bushfires from becoming raging firestorms they will have a reliable and safe means to get where they need to go and perform those vital duties. The bill also provides for the implementation of a new fire trail network that will be supported by the new fire trail standards. That is incredibly important.

The bill states that the standards will, as far as practicable, provide for a practical network of fire trails across the State. The standards may relate to the structure and form of fire access and fire trail plans. They may relate to the classification, length, width, gradient, signage, construction standards and maintenance of fire trails. The standards will also require fire access and fire trail plans to include a treatment register for fire trails that is

approved by the Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service from time to time. The fire trail standards will establish how the network will be implemented in practical terms. I am advised that once developed and approved by the NSW Rural Fire Service Commissioner the standards will be published on the NSW Rural Fire Service website.

I think every person who lives in a fire zone on the Central Coast has the Rural Fire Service app on their phone or on their computer at home. I know I do. Once the weather starts to warm up my first port of call is the Rural Fire Service website because it is a great source of information that everybody who lives in a high-risk fire zone can access as a reliable and up-to-date source of information. Members opposite have said that not enough information is being provided to residents. I urge them to look at the Rural Fire Service app and website. All those who live in and around high fire risk areas use them.

The standards will also cover matters that need to be addressed in both the local fire access and fire trail plans and the register of fire trails that will be built into the new guardian system. The current Bush Fire Coordinating Committee policy on fire trails will be used as a starting point for developing the fire trail standards. The policy incorporates best-practice guidelines for the construction of fire trails. The standards will be developed by the NSW Rural Fire Service in consultation with key stakeholder agencies, some of which currently have responsibility for existing fire trail networks and include the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Office of Environment and Heritage, Department of Primary Industries, Forestry Corporation NSW and Crown Lands.

The NSW Rural Fire Service's consultative approach in rolling out the new fire trail network is important to ensure that a range of views are represented in the new standards and that they are as robust and effective as possible. It will also ensure that environmental and other responsibilities are taken into consideration within the fire trail standards. I note that this consultative approach also extends to the dealings of the NSW Rural Fire Service with private landowners on the establishment of new fire trails. The member for Wagga Wagga articulately outlined that in great detail as he highlighted the scare tactics employed by members opposite.

This bill requires the establishment of fire trails on private land to be undertaken by agreement between the NSW Rural Fire Service and the landowner. That is an important and appropriate amendment. The fire trail standards and the consultative implementation process will both help to ensure that fire trails do not have an adverse impact on the environment, as I outlined earlier. Fire trails will be established through the bush fire management committee process. There are bush fire management committees across New South Wales, each with responsibility for a specified area of the State. The NSW Rural Fire Service will work with the bush fire management committees to establish fire trails within each of those areas. High-risk areas will be targeted first, with the bush fire management committees in those areas required to develop their fire access and fire trail plans as a matter of priority.

Fire trail management officers will have a key role to play. They will work closely with public land managers on establishing the best fire trail networks. They will also provide specialist advice to bush fire management committees on the appropriateness of fire trails. In addition, the fire trail management officers will be responsible for conducting inspections of fire trails and investigating fire trail complaints. The Government will provide \$2 million in recurrent funding to the NSW Rural Fire Service to enable the strategic network of fire trails to be created. Half of that funding will be used to appoint fire trail management officers. The other half will be used to provide financial assistance to private land managers who agree to construct and maintain fire trails on their land.

As I said earlier, people who have lived on the Central Coast for any period have experienced either one or multiple bushfire incidents ranging from minor to almost catastrophic. Those of us living in properties that back onto national parks that already have fire trail access will work constructively with the Rural Fire Service because it is in our best interests to do so. We know that we are protecting not only our property but also the lives of those who protect us. As home owners we take that responsibility very seriously. Members opposite would be hard pressed to find anyone on the Central Coast who would not leap to support this bill because it provides the necessary infrastructure, protection and ongoing maintenance that our Rural Fire Service volunteers need to do their job efficiently and—more importantly—safely. As their families know, they risk their lives when they give of their time to protect us and our assets. These amendments to the Act are a great start. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (11:18): I make a contribution to debate on the Rural Fires Amendment (Fire Trails) Bill 2016. It would be pertinent at this point to acknowledge the hard work of our Rural Fire Service staff and volunteers. No-one in this place would object to praising them for their commitment, dedication and desire to help their communities. I take this opportunity to acknowledge Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers, who is seated in the Speaker's gallery with members of the hardworking staff of the Minister for Emergency Services. As a member of Parliament I have had the pleasure of recognising the service of many Rural Fire Service [RFS] members—for example, one gentleman from Bathurst who had exceeded 60 years of service

with RFS. He started off with a hessian bag on a stick and a bucket of water and ended his service with some of the greatest firefighting equipment and training in this country.

The bill is an important means of protecting people in bushfire-prone areas from the catastrophic risks that bushfires can pose—risks that are all too familiar in Australian life. For instance, 2009 there was a significant bushfire in the great electorate of Tweed and our local controller David Cook—commonly known as "Cookie"—supervised a large number of Rural Fire Service volunteers. I attended a public briefing and the air was filled with smoke. I recall the look of horror on people's faces. There was soot and ash everywhere and about six or seven helicopters were water bombing the perimeters of the town. The Rural Fire Service kept everyone calm, there was no loss of life and minimal damage to buildings. It was a credit to the professionalism of that service. On the Far North Coast we have three fabulous services: the Bilambil Rural Fire Brigade, of which my son was a member; the Cudgen Rural Fire Service; and the Tweed Coast Rural Fire Service.

The bill will provide greater clarity about accessing fire trails. In my electorate there are large areas of private property. In 2005 there was another significant fire in the Tweed and because fire trails were not maintained our volunteers had limited access to fight the fire. This resulted in the loss of approximately 60 koalas in one of our few remaining koala habitats. Before that time the Rural Fire Service had been responsible for conducting low-intensity burns, which controlled the fuel load and prevented larger fires. But, as I said, because our fire trails had not been maintained we lost 60 koalas over two days.

The bill amends the Rural Fires Act 1997 to provide for the development of fire access and fire trail plans by bush fire management committees, and the approval of those plans by the bush fire coordination committee—as the member for Terrigal said, there are just over 60 of those committees across our State. The bill also provides fire trail Standards, which set out features of fire trails, including their structure, form, classification, length, width, gradient, signage, construction standards and maintenance requirements. My electorate is slightly different from most because many new rural owners have come from the city—I think down south they call them "blockies"; we have different terms for them up our way.

Mr Adam Crouch: Terms of affection.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: I acknowledge that interjection. The bill defines what a fire trail is, and this will bring the newer community closer to the Rural Fire Service. It also sets out clearly the steps to be followed if there is a disagreement between landowners and the Rural Fire Service committees. Importantly, this will allow transparency and fairness on both sides as often there are differing views in the wider community. It also provides directions to establish fire trails on public land; agreements to establish fire trails on private land; and the requirements for the certification of fire trails and for their registration and the termination of their registration. The common cry in regional areas about conducting hazard reduction burns is often not heard in the city. Indeed, without hazard burns we run the real risk that given the right climatic conditions we will have a catastrophic fire. That is what we are trying to prevent.

All too often we have experienced the effects of catastrophic fires—massive loss of life and property. We have also seen the devastating effect that bushfire has on wildlife and on domestic animals. Indeed, there is nothing more horrific than seeing domestic animals that have been severely burnt being put down. As I said earlier, in my area we lost more than 60 koalas and, although a lot of conservation work is being done, that koala population has never really recovered. The bill also provides a system to deal with complaints regarding fire trails that may not comply with the standards; and the responsibilities to construct, maintain and rectify fire trails, including the issue of fire trail rectification notices. Once again, this will provide an open and transparent process for landowners, whether of private or public land, and the great Rural Fire Service volunteers. Finally, the bill provides for offences relating to the failure to comply with fire trail rectification. The inclusion of landowners in the loop with the Rural Fire Service is a positive move.

I am advised that a proposed memorandum of understanding will shortly be signed with our counterparts in Queensland. This is very important to my electorate, where cross-border issues rank very highly. A section of the memorandum will deal with emergency services. There is a direct correlation between the Rural Fire Service of New South Wales and that of Queensland but, as a parochial citizen of New South Wales, I believe our service is better trained, equipped and supported than its Queensland counterpart. That is probably reflective of certain governments across the border. In fact, I am led to believe they must hold chook raffles in order to raise funds to attend fires in Queensland. This bill will clarify for Rural Fire Service committees, local councils and landowners just who is responsible and what the conditions are. It also outlines a dispute resolution process in the case of any disagreement. In conclusion, I support the Rural Fire Service and wish it all the success in the future. Summer is just around the corner and hopefully we will have a good season. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

*Members***LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL VACANCY**

At 11:30 the House proceeded to the Legislative Council Chamber to attend a joint sitting to elect a member to fill a seat in the Legislative Council vacated by Dr John Kaye, deceased.

At 11:48 the House reassembled.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): I report that the House met with the Legislative Council in the Legislative Council Chamber this day to elect a member to fill the vacant seat in the Legislative Council rendered vacant by the death of Dr John Roland Kaye and that Justin Field was duly elected. I table the minutes of proceedings of the joint sitting. I move:

That the minutes of proceedings of the joint sitting be printed.

Motion agreed to.

*Bills***RURAL FIRES AMENDMENT (FIRE TRAILS) BILL 2016****Second Reading**

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (11:49): I support the Rural Fires Amendment (Fire Trails) Bill 2016. This is a sensible bill brought to us by a sensible Minister pursuing a sensible policy. Before I go any further I acknowledge the long-term contribution made to my community by the Schofields and Marsden Park rural fire brigades. As many members in the House would attest, people who join the Rural Fire Service and volunteer their time in that way are often extraordinarily generous over sustained periods, and in some cases decades. We have probably all had the opportunity to attend ceremonies where long service medals have been awarded, and it is not uncommon to see the awarding of a 30-year or a 40-year service medal to someone in one of the brigades. I commend those generous people for their consistent contribution to the welfare of our communities.

The Rural Fires Amendment (Fire Trails) Bill 2016 is an example of a methodical and systematic approach being rolled out to fire prevention and management in New South Wales. Over the decades the generous volunteers I speak about have worked extraordinarily well and have learned a great deal in the art and science of fire management in New South Wales, and their efforts have been commensurately augmented and improved by successive governments providing updated materials, expertise and techniques, good training and equipment to ensure that better and better levels of fire protection are available to our community.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): Members who wish to have private conversations should do so outside the Chamber.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: This bill represents a continuation of that process of building on those wonderful foundations to make the protection available to our community even better by enhancing the fire trail network across the State by systematically setting standards, recording the condition of fire trails and putting in place a process of monitoring and upgrading fire trails to ensure that at the time of need, when a fire hits, the trail is available, open and safe for firefighters to access the points they need to get to fight the fires, to assist in evacuations, to protect property and, if need be, to get themselves out of harm's way if things turn really bad.

This bill is a sensible process building on decades of great work in New South Wales. I commend the Minister and the Rural Fire Service for working this proposal up to ensure that on both public land and private land we have the capacity to build this enhanced network of fire trails. The processes, monitoring, standards, regulation and systematic upgrade are a wonderful approach to ensuring that fire trails provide the best possible protection for landowners, residents and firefighters.

I note the contribution of the shadow Minister, and member for Fairfield. I note that the Opposition will oppose the bill until his concerns are dealt with at the Committee stage in the upper House. I trust that those concerns will be resolved satisfactorily. I believe that the detail in the bill can address those concerns, but it is entirely appropriate to ask the questions. It is fundamental to understand that fire trails on private property will become part of this process only as part of a negotiated agreement between the commissioner and the landowner to address specific concerns in each case. That will be accompanied by funding from the Rural Fire Service to assist the landowner to meet the obligations under the signed agreement signed—it will not simply be at the expense of the landowner.

As my colleague the member for Wagga Wagga noted, landowners are often members of the Rural Fire Service. They accept that it is in their interest to have fire trails on their property, which will benefit them and

their neighbours by protecting their assets, their property and their families. The bill provides a number of standards that can be set by regulation to ensure that there is a process by which the adequacy, design, scope and maintenance of fire trails can be measured and maintained to ensure that they will serve the purpose for which they are designated.

Currently, in some areas across the State there are fire trails marked on maps that may not be up to standard and may or may not be able to provide the level of service needed to Rural Fire Service crews in time of need. It is an unsatisfactory situation if we cannot rely on those fire trails when they are needed. Of course, when a fire is burning it is far too late to assess the standard of the trail; that is not the time to do it. It makes sense to build this process so that before a fire hits there is a thorough, methodical assessment of the standard of the trails, there is a trigger for action to upgrade them if required, and there is a process to support private landowners if they are required to do that.

I note that the Minister for Emergency Services has joined us in the House. I have already commended him for this bill. I believe it is an appropriate, sensible measure to build on the very good work that the Rural Fire Service has done over many years in New South Wales to further enhance the level of service that it can provide to protect our communities and to keep them safe. I thank the very generous, loyal and diligent members of the Rural Fire Service, who spend so much of their time keeping New South Wales safe. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (11:56): I support the Rural Fires Amendment (Fire Trails) Bill 2016. I note that the hardworking Minister for Emergency Services is in the Chamber and I acknowledge all of his great work, particularly for the people of Wollondilly during the recent storm event that resulted in more than 100 businesses and homes being devastated. The Minister was in the area multiple times with the Premier helping our community. The bill is an important means of protecting people in bushfire-prone areas from the catastrophic risks that bushfires can pose—risks that are all too familiar and a part of our way of life in Australia.

Summer in Australia is bushfire season. Anyone who lives near the bush knows that and they take precautions to reduce the risk to their family home and to their life. The establishment of an enhanced strategic and well maintained network of fire trails in New South Wales is a critical precaution that will protect many homes and many lives. It is a crucial and sensible measure. I note that the Deputy Commissioner of the Rural Fire Service was here earlier today and I acknowledge all the work that he and his team do.

The Rural Fire Service [RFS] is determined to work with land managers to ensure the enhanced fire trail network that the bill facilitates will be implemented and maintained in the fairest way possible. The bill ensures that fire trails on private land will be established by agreement between the landowner and the NSW Rural Fire Service. The RFS will ordinarily bear the cost for fire trails on private land. This may, however, be varied by agreement if a private landowner chooses to bear some or all of the construction and maintenance costs themselves. In this way, the bill provides flexibility. For example, a road that is used to access certain parts of a property may form part of a fire trail and the owner may prefer to maintain the entirety of the road themselves.

The agreement between the Rural Fire Service and the landowner will be in the form of a contract and will cover all necessary matters to enable the establishment and maintenance of the fire trail. The RFS will engage with private landholders early to outline the options available to enable the fire trail to be established and the implications of each option, explain the roles and responsibilities of each party in developing the fire trail on private land, the terms and conditions of any agreement that may be entered into, including the private landholder's rights under that agreement, and implications associated with a failure to comply with the terms of the agreement.

Options to ensure a fire trail is maintained on private land may include the establishment of an easement. However, this is not the only option and the Rural Fire Service will endeavour to always reach a negotiated agreement with the private landowner. The bill also establishes a complaints framework that ensures concerned owners and occupiers of land adjacent to a property on which a fire trail is located can raise concerns about the maintenance of the trail. It is not difficult to imagine how someone could become concerned if they feel that a fire trail, which is built to help safeguard their property, has fallen into disrepair. However, the bill recognises the rights of the owner or occupier of the land about which a complaint has been made has rights, too, and therefore the bill also provides for objections and appeals to be made, and ensures that owners and occupiers of land about which a complaint has been made are kept well informed about the progress of the complaint.

The bill provides that fire trail complaints may be made by owners and occupiers of land subject to or in the vicinity of land on which a registered fire trail is situated. Complaints can be made in writing to the commissioner. A complaint can be made if a fire trail does not conform to the fire trail standards in any material respect. A non-conformity might include, for example, that it has been blocked or access via the trail restricted in some way that would hinder the Rural Fire Service in the execution of its duties. Complaints must identify the complainant and the grounds for the complaint. The Rural Fire Service will provide the owner or occupier of the

land to which the complaint relates with written notice of the complaint and its grounds as soon as practicable after the complaint is made.

The bill gives the Rural Fire Service Commissioner powers of entry, inspection and investigation. The Rural Fire Service will be able to enter and inspect land, but cannot enter a dwelling house to determine whether a fire trail on the land complies with the fire trail standards. If the RFS finds that the fire trail is non-compliant it can undertake construction, maintenance and rectification to bring the trail up to standard. The commissioner will not need to investigate a complaint that is vexatious, misconceived, frivolous or lacking in substance. The RFS may also issue fire rectification notices requiring the owner or occupier to bring a fire trail into compliance with the fire trail standards.

An owner or occupier will have 28 days to comply with a rectification notice. Failure to do so will be an offence carrying a maximum penalty of 20 penalty units or imprisonment for two years, or if the owner or occupier is a corporation or public authority, a maximum penalty of 220 penalty units. Once an objection is received, the fire trail management officer must confirm, vary or withdraw the rectification notice within 28 days. If the owner or occupier remains unhappy with a decision on the objection, they have a further avenue of appeal to the NSW Rural Fire Service Commissioner.

As one can see, the bill provides a fair system both for owners and occupiers who have a fire trail on their land and for owners and occupiers of adjacent land who benefit from the fire trail remaining open and accessible. I welcome the Rural Fires Amendment (Fire Trails) Bill 2016. It provides a fair system for owners and occupiers of affected land and will assist the NSW Rural Fire Service to reduce the devastating loss of life and damage to property that bushfires can cause.

In conclusion, I place on the record my appreciation of the Rural Fire Service brigades in my community of Wollondilly, made up of both Wollondilly and Wingecarribee shires. I note the presence at the table of the member for Goulburn, our great Minister. We share a shire. I note the devastation that the 2012 Hall Road fire caused through both our shires. Without the fast, hardworking efforts of members of the Rural Fire Service lives would have been lost and much more property would have been lost. I place on the record that I, too, am a member of one of the local brigades. They do a fantastic job. The men and women volunteer their time, often at their own expense. They place their own lives at risk because they want to protect the community not only in times of fire but also in times of adversity.

Recently the main street of Picton, in particular, but also across the Wollondilly electorate experienced a more than a one-in-100 year storm event and the RFS was one of the first agencies to respond. A mate of mine who is also a member of the RFS went above and beyond in his efforts to save lives. He did a fantastic job, even without all the support or backup he may have needed. However, when the going gets tough these guys get going and they did an amazing job. The main street of Picton was under three or four metres of stormwater, with sewage floating down it. These people put their own health on the line to help others. We must remember that these men and women work hard to help others. All members support their local RFS brigades. This is a great amendment and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Corrections, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Veterans Affairs) (12:05): In reply: I am delighted to stand here as the Minister for Emergency Services fulfilling an election commitment. I thank the Parliamentary Secretary, and member for Wagga Wagga, Daryl Maguire, for his contribution. He is only too well aware of the work of the Rural Fire Service and the importance of this place providing every tool possible to the RFS. I thank the Temporary Speaker, in his capacity as member for Terrigal, for his contribution. I thank also the member for Tweed Heads, Geoff Provest; the member for Riverstone, Kevin Conolly; and the member for Wollondilly, Jai Rowell, for their contributions to the debate.

I make special acknowledgement of the constructive comments of the shadow Minister for Emergency Services. They were proof positive that even though we disagree on policies, a constructive dialogue can be had. His attitude should be reflected by other members of the shadow ministry. Unfortunately, I do not think many of them will listen to him. I will make a few remarks on concerns raised by the Opposition and note that the member for Wollondilly addressed many of them in his contribution. I remind the Opposition that its concerns about the lack of funding are unfounded. As seen in the arrangements tabled with the legislation, \$2 million in recurrent funding will be provided to the NSW Rural Fire Service to support the delivery of the fire access, fire trail plans and associated arrangements.

Half of this money will be used to appoint dedicated personnel to work with the bush fire management committees [BFMCs], the agencies and the landowners, and the other half will be used for construction and maintenance of fire trails. That should be made clear to the Opposition, as it may seek to move amendments in the upper House. When the commissioner enters into agreements with landowners for the establishment of fire

trails that money will be made available. Again, I remind the shadow Minister that in addition to the new funds provided for the fire trails on private land, the Rural Fire Service has allocated an extra \$20 million for bushfire mitigation work, of which approximately one-third is generally assigned to fire trails.

The Opposition's funding concerns are unwarranted. I remind members, or anyone concerned about the legislation, that fire trails on private land may be established subject to agreement between the commissioner, the Rural Fire Service and the landowner. It is subject to agreement. The landowner is not obliged to enter into any such agreement. Despite what you hear from the doomsayers, this is a voluntary approach to fire trail establishment and maintenance. As has been stated in debate, it will cover all necessary matters to allow the establishment and maintenance of fire trails.

I conclude by reminding members of this House that where the Rural Fire Service has entered into an agreement with a private landowner, the Rural Fire Service will assist with the establishment and maintenance of that fire trail. It will not be left to chance or to the landowner. Where the trail is used by the landowner for other purposes in addition to firefighting, the commissioner will negotiate suitable costs, which is only fair and equitable, and a sharing arrangement with the owner will be included in the agreement.

The bill delivers on a commitment made by the Government. It is good legislation and is supported by the majority of members of this House as we approach the fire season. I am disappointed that the Opposition has based its concerns on incorrect information, but I am happy for any amendments to be presented in the other place. This bill will make the people of New South Wales safer and allow the Rural Fire Service to do its job efficiently. I thank members for contributing to the debate and commend the bill to the House.

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

The House divided.

Ayes48
Noes32
Majority..... 16

AYES

Anderson, Mr K	Aplin, Mr G	Ayres, Mr S
Barilaro, Mr J	Berejiklian, Ms G	Bromhead, Mr S (teller)
Conolly, Mr K	Constance, Mr A	Coure, Mr M
Davies, Ms T	Dominello, Mr V	Elliott, Mr D
Evans, Mr L	George, Mr T	Gibbons, Ms M
Goward, Ms P	Gulaptis, Mr C	Hancock, Ms S
Henskens, Mr A	Hodgkinson, Ms K	Humphries, Mr K
Johnsen, Mr M	Kean, Mr M	Lee, Dr G
Maguire, Mr D	Marshall, Mr A	Notley-Smith, Mr B
O'Dea, Mr J	Patterson, Mr C (teller)	Pavey, Ms M
Perrottet, Mr D	Petinos, Ms E	Piccoli, Mr A
Piper, Mr G	Provest, Mr G	Roberts, Mr A
Rowell, Mr J	Sidoti, Mr J	Skinner, Ms J
Speakman, Mr M	Stokes, Mr R	Taylor, Mr M
Toole, Mr P	Tudehope, Mr D	Upton, Ms G
Ward, Mr G	Williams, Mr R	Williams, Ms L

NOES

Aitchison, Ms J	Atalla, Mr E	Car, Ms P
Catley, Ms Y	Chanthivong, Mr A	Crakanthorp, Mr T
Daley, Mr M	Dib, Mr J	Doyle, Ms T
Finn, Ms J	Foley, Mr L	Greenwich, Mr A
Harris, Mr D	Harrison, Ms J	Haylen, Ms J
Hoenig, Mr R	Hornery, Ms S	Kamper, Mr S
Lalich, Mr N (teller)	Lynch, Mr P	McDermott, Dr H
McKay, Ms J	Mehan, Mr D	Minns, Mr C
Park, Mr R	Parker, Mr J	Robertson, Mr J
Smith, Ms T	Warren, Mr G (teller)	Washington, Ms K

NOES

Watson, Ms A

Zangari, Mr G

PAIRS

Baird, Mr M
Fraser, Mr A
Grant, Mr T
Hazzard, Mr B

Hay, Ms N
Mihailuk, Ms T
Barr, Mr C
Smith, Ms K

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

POPPY INDUSTRY BILL 2016

Second Reading

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (12:20): On behalf of Mr Anthony Roberts: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

As this bill was introduced in the other place on 11 August 2016 and is in the same form, the second reading speech appears at pages 38 to 41 in the *Hansard* proof for that day. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (12:21): I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Poppy Industry Bill 2016. I acknowledge that this would normally be the domain of my good friend the member for Cessnock, who is unfortunately out of action at the moment. He is probably watching this on the live stream webcast and twittering a critique of everybody's performance. He was watching from his hospital bed and sending us messages until the early hours of this morning. Primary industries in New South Wales face many challenges. Despite this, our nation and our State are uniquely placed to capitalise on the many opportunities for primary industries in the Asian century. As the middle class grows in Asia, demand for opiate-based medicines will grow significantly. In recognition of this, Tasmania has created a \$290 million alkaloid poppy industry.

Victoria, the Northern Territory and South Australia have also moved to capitalise on the expected growth in international demand for opiate-based medicines. New South Wales needs to be alert to these opportunities, to ensure that we are ready and able to capture the employment and economic benefits of this important and growing market. Australia is well placed internationally to meet the growth in demand due to its stability, its strength of regulatory controls and its sound compliance history.

I refer to the Minister's comment in his second reading speech that, if present demand trends continue, New South Wales could have a \$100 million industry in 10 years. Although that is optimistic, the benefit of such an industry to employment and economic outcomes in rural New South Wales is clear. The Opposition understands that one of the current producers in Tasmania is interested in establishing an industry in New South Wales. The Labor Opposition, through the shadow Minister, welcomes this interest. The Poppy Industry Bill 2016 establishes a regulatory framework for the development of an alkaloid poppy industry in New South Wales to supply material for the manufacture or production of therapeutic goods and for scientific research, analysis, education and training. Importantly, the bill provides safeguards for the storage, production and distribution of the material derived from alkaloid poppies.

The objectives of the bill are, first, to establish a licensing scheme to authorise activities related to alkaloid poppies or materials derived from them. Secondly, it will ensure authorised activities are limited to those that support the manufacture or production of therapeutic goods or for research and education. Thirdly, it will regulate authorised activities to ensure poppies and the derived materials from poppies are secure and not diverted for unlawful purposes, as well as ensure that the activities are not harmful to humans or the environment. The implementation of this will be a key challenge, ensuring that the legalisation of regulated poppy farming is carried out in a sensible and safe manner and that our community is informed and aware.

We need to inform the community of the rationale for and dangers of the production of poppies. The alkaloid poppies to be grown are not those from which opium is derived but those from which thebaine is produced. Thebaine contains similar properties to strychnine but will not produce a high. On the contrary, it can kill a person. Sadly, even in the relative isolation of the existing poppy industry in Tasmania and despite the security precautions this has happened to some misinformed people. As the Hon. Mick Veitch, shadow Minister for Primary Industries, pointed out in the other place:

Consuming the poppies to be grown in this State will not produce a "high"—it may in fact cause death. As such, the Government must direct resources to ensuring not only that security is tight but also that communities where alkaloid poppy farming is introduced are aware of the inherent dangers.

The shadow Minister sought the Minister's advice on whether resources have been set aside to ensure that the legislation of poppy farming is accompanied by education campaigns and on-ground advice from officers of the Department of Primary Industries. The Hon. Mick Veitch also asked whether funding would be made available for these campaigns. He stated:

Ongoing cuts to the Department of Primary Industries and Local Land Services budgets are not good indicators that the Government is prepared to back up legislation with the boots-on-the-ground advice required.

The Opposition is worried about that. Another issue that the Opposition has raised is that security for workers on site needs to be strict. The bill makes provisions for police background checks for a number of key persons associated with the production of the material. We understand that the regulations will provide for further background checks of all workers associated with on-site production. We welcome that. The shadow Minister sought the Minister's guarantee that the regulations will ensure an appropriately high level of security for anyone entering a poppy farm. The shadow Minister also asked for a clear timetable for the development and gazettal of the regulation.

The bill provides for both a cultivation and a processing licence, which will cover the entire production and supply chain. The Opposition acknowledges that the bill provides for strict oversight of the granting and renewal of any poppy licence. Clause 23 of part 2 provides that the secretary of the department must refer each application for the granting or renewal of a poppy licence to the Commissioner of Police, who must then investigate and provide a report to the secretary. This is crucial. The Opposition believes that we cannot be too strict in ensuring appropriate oversight of and background checks on any persons wishing to obtain a licence to grow alkaloid poppies.

Security around the production and supply chain needs to be as high as possible. The Opposition backs the provisions giving power to authorised officers to enter and inspect any part of this chain. Currently, there are only two processing plants in Australia—both in Melbourne. We understand that risk management plans will need to be prepared to deal with any security risk from the field through to transportation. As the shadow Minister said, we can never be too careful in these matters. The Opposition is reassured that the NSW Police Force was consulted in the preparation of this bill and is satisfied with its provisions on security, intervention and enforcement. The Hon. Mick Veitch noted that there will be no trials of opium production. The industry believes that commercial production can commence where there is sufficient interest from farmers. The Opposition takes the Minister at his word that trials are not required but will be keeping a close eye on the rollout of alkaloid poppy production in the State.

The shadow Minister pointed out that the Opposition consulted a range of stakeholders in relation to this bill and notes the support of the NSW Farmers Association. We must ensure that this industry is carefully managed and that the expectations and concerns of stakeholders including, most importantly, the community, are addressed through information and dialogue. We agree with the Minister that we are well placed to supply what could be a rising demand for opiate-based medicines both in Australia and abroad. I indicated earlier that the Opposition would not oppose this bill.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (12:29): I support the Poppy Industry Bill 2016 which provides an historic opportunity to establish a new and highly valued agricultural industry in New South Wales. For many years I have visited that lovely apple isle—Tasmania—and witnessed its poppy production and noted the security measures that have been put in place at its growing and processing plants. I believe that the poppies grown in Tasmania generate enough morphine to supply half the world. Unfortunately, a poppy blight has lowered the value of Tasmanian crops, but Tasmania is a good example of how to control, secure and manage poppies.

The Minister for Primary Industries in the other place said that the bill would create economic opportunities for rural communities and enable New South Wales to enter an expanding sector in which Australia already enjoys a reputation as a high-quality supplier. Currently, the Australian poppy industry produces about 50 per cent of the world's supply of licit opiates. At its peak, poppies contributed up to \$290 million annually to the Tasmanian economy alone. Three of the eight firms in the world that are licensed to process poppy straw

operate in Australia. Interest has already been expressed in expanding investment into New South Wales due to rising global demand and crop issues in Tasmania. As global demand for opiate-based medicines increases, there are strong prospects for growth. The projected value of the New South Wales poppy industry is \$100 million by 2026, which is not insubstantial.

Because poppies need to be grown in a cool climate they flourish in Tasmania. I am sure that the member for Wollondilly would be interested in attracting the poppy industry to the southern regions of this State. In the past the North Coast was renowned for growing drugs but we would like to see poppies grown elsewhere, for example, in the south. In 2015 the United Nations International Narcotics Control Board found that three-quarters or more of the world's population had no access to proper pain relief. As we improve our economic outlook the demand for pain medication will increase. At a national level Australia's aging population has increased the demand for opiate-based medications, both for pain relief and for palliative care, and the poppy processing industry expects these trends to continue. Global demand for opiates is predicted to increase threefold over the next 10 years.

If the poppy industry in New South Wales is successful it could account for 20 to 40 per cent of the anticipated growth. In addition to the broader economic benefits, this industry will benefit regional communities in a number of ways. First, the poppy industry will stimulate economic activity in regional areas through the establishment of a new high-value crop, improved farm-gate returns and new investment in science and research. Secondly, the industry will create new employment opportunities in rural communities through on-farm and off-farm activities. These could include new jobs on farms, in processing plants and in transport and research. The fences around the poppy fields near Launceston in northern Tasmania are not very high but the fences around the processing plants remind me of the Katingal supermax prison at Long Bay.

Thirdly, the alkaloid poppy industry will provide employment opportunities in agricultural support services throughout rural New South Wales. I commend the Minister for Primary Industries, his staff and the department for value adding in our regional economies and for taking advantage of world trends and advances in science and agricultural science. We can no longer ride on the sheep's back as we have in the past. We have seen the effects of droughts, fires and floods and many new agricultural products have come onto the market. As members would be aware, there has been much discussion about medicinal cannabis. I believe that a number of areas in New South Wales, including Nimbin, are putting up their hands to grow these medicinal-based products.

In the long term, a vibrant poppy industry in New South Wales will lead to the establishment of opiate processing and other medicinal industries, which will provide further economic benefits for New South Wales. This industry will be based on strong foundations. Australia is a trusted and reputable source of alkaloid poppies because of the strength of its regulatory controls and its sound compliance history. Alkaloid poppies have been successfully grown in Australia since 1971 when the industry was initially established in Tasmania. New South Wales has the benefit of leveraging this success and learning from other States while establishing a strong and safe new industry. The protocols in this bill are based on well tested and reputable protocols that have already been implemented in other Australian jurisdictions, including Victoria, the Northern Territory and Tasmania.

The bill establishes a strong and robust licensing framework that is consistent with our national and international security and compliance obligations. With the passage of this bill I am sure Tasmanians will no longer share the same positive view and we may be viewed as potential competitors in this lucrative market. The Poppy Industry Bill provides New South Wales with an opportunity to participate in this important industry. The Department of Primary Industries and the Minister's office are looking at other potential sources of income to value-add and create employment in our rural sector, which is hard to do. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (12:38): The Poppy Industry Bill 2016 establishes a strict regulatory framework that will facilitate the development of an alkaloid poppy industry in New South Wales while guaranteeing the safety of our community. The regulatory framework is modelled on those operating successfully in other States. Australia is a trusted and reputable source of alkaloid poppies because of the strength of its regulatory controls and its sound compliance history. New South Wales has had the benefit of learning from other States to ensure we establish a strong and safe industry.

Controls on entry to the poppy industry will be strict. No individual or company will be able to commence the cultivation or processing of poppies without meeting stringent licensing requirements. Provision has been made for various interventions to prevent the involvement of unsuitable persons in any future poppy industry such as: applicants for poppy licences must be deemed fit and proper by the secretary before a licence can be issued; applicants and their associates who have, for example, been found guilty within 10 years preceding the application for a serious offence will not be issued with a licence; the applicant must have suitable financial standing to meet the strict requirements around security of their property or premises; and their reputation and character must be of sufficient standing. An applicant's close associates will also be required to meet stringent tests. This will ensure that the applicant is not closely associated or linked to anyone with a questionable criminal history. All licence

applications will be reviewed by the police commissioner, and the secretary will not be able to issue a licence unless it is supported by the police commissioner.

Applicants will also be required to develop a comprehensive risk management plan that details how they will maintain security of the crop or poppy material and minimise the risk of diversion for illegal purposes. Risk management plans will need to be approved by the secretary before a licence is approved and will be regularly audited by NSW Department of Primary Industry compliance officers. There will be strict measures in place to maintain a chain of custody from the initial planting of seeds through to harvest, transport and supply for approved purposes. A cultivation licence will not be granted unless there is an existing contract in place with a licensed processor who intends to receive the proposed harvest. Similarly, processors will be required to have relevant manufacturing or export approvals in place before they can secure a licence.

To further minimise the risk of diversion, the precise volume of poppy material that may be cultivated or processed and the area of land permitted for use will be stipulated in the licence. Licensees will be required to report on actual volumes handled and there will be regular audits to ensure that no excess material enters the market. In addition, there will be conditions in place to ensure that any residue material or unintended regrowth is destroyed. Licensees will also be required to maintain strict security measures and to control access to licensed premises and land. The regulation will require that employees will need to undergo background checks and only those suitable will be able to be employed by a person who holds a poppy licence.

All employees will be issued with identification cards that must be displayed at all times while working. Any authorised visitors to the property will need to be accompanied and any unauthorised persons will need to be reported immediately to the NSW Police Force. Licence holders must take necessary precautions to prevent unauthorised persons from accessing the poppy crop. Licensees will be required to maintain the security of the property and ensure there is appropriate signage and locks along boundary fences and gates. To ensure these compliance measures are enforced and maintained the bill will provide authorised officers with extensive investigation and enforcement powers. These include powers: to enter and inspect premises; to seize any equipment or other thing for analysis; to require persons to produce documents or other records; and to interview persons over suspected compliance issues. Authorised officers will also have the power to conduct audits of licence holders.

In addition to standard audits there may be random audits at any time for the purpose of assessing compliance with the bill. These may not necessarily be announced and licensees are obliged to cooperate with authorised officers during the conduct of any such audit. The secretary also has the power to suspend, cancel or amend a licence should there be any concerns regarding compliance. For any serious breaches or evidence of criminal activity the police will be engaged to assist with compliance and enforcement activities. Information-sharing arrangements will be in place so that the police can notify NSW Department of Primary Industries if any information relating to a licensee or his or her associate comes to light that may be relevant. Not only will the strict compliance measures in the bill prevent the diversion of alkaloid poppies for illicit purposes; measures have also been designed to ensure consistency across jurisdictions.

New South Wales has consulted carefully with other jurisdictions in the development of this bill. The consistency in our regulatory arrangements will assist in minimising the risks of illegal activity and reduce the regulatory burden on companies operating across jurisdictions. We will continue to work closely with other jurisdictions to ensure regulatory consistency and address any emerging issues as they arise. The member for Tweed said that Wollondilly might be an appropriate region in which to grow poppies. I agree with him. The Wollondilly electorate covers thousands of kilometres and its residents engage in many agricultural pursuits. We would welcome having this industry in our backyard under these stringent conditions. I know that the Minister and the staff in the gallery have carefully considered the measures contained in this bill. We are all a bit tired after a long sitting night but this is important legislation. I am confident that this bill will provide the framework for a robust and—most importantly—safe poppy industry in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) (12:45): I make a contribution to debate on the Poppy Industry Bill 2016. Alkaloid poppies are an important ingredient in many medicines, including those used for pain relief, palliative care, treatment of drug addiction and cough suppression. We have an historic opportunity to become part of this industry which can contribute jobs and opportunities to the people of New South Wales. The industry can also contribute to the quality of life of people around the world. The member for Wollondilly said that his constituents would welcome the poppy industry in his electorate.

I suggest that many electorates have environments suitable for the cultivation of poppies and those communities would also welcome and encourage investment in this industry. While the benefits of the industry are significant, it is undoubtedly true that there are some risks associated with the growing and supply of alkaloid poppies. This bill sets out a robust framework to establish a licit poppy industry in a way that will manage these risks and ensure the safety and security of the community. The bill sets out strong measures to ensure that the

cultivation and processing of alkaloid poppies in New South Wales is for medical or research purposes and that the risks of illicit use or diversion of poppies is minimised. The licit opium poppy industry is strictly regulated under international law, national law and this bill.

As a signatory to the United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, Australia is required to carefully control and supervise all stages of the growing and production of opium poppies as well as the import and export of narcotic material. Australia is a reputable source of alkaloid poppies because of the strength of its regulatory controls and its sound compliance history. This gives the United Nations confidence that the risk of alkaloid poppies being diverted for illicit purposes is well managed. The protocols set up by this bill are based on the well-tested and reputable protocols already implemented in other Australian jurisdictions. The poppy industry is already operating in Tasmania, Victoria and the Northern Territory. South Australia has also recently passed legislation to establish a poppy industry. In Tasmania the industry has been operating safely since 1971. The Victorian and Northern Territory industries have been operating since 2014. The licensing, compliance and enforcement framework set up by this bill will address and mitigate the risks associated with the industry.

The bill implements measures to maintain a chain of custody from the initial planting of seeds through to supply of the poppy material for therapeutic and research purposes. Relevant contracts and approvals must be in place before a licence will be granted. A grower must have a contract with a processor before any planting can commence. Similarly, a processor must have relevant State and Commonwealth manufacturing or export approvals in place before he or she can receive any poppy material. This will ensure a clear chain of custody throughout the supply chain. Under this bill there will be rigorous checks on every person or corporation that applies for a poppy licence. All licence applications will be submitted to the police commissioner for review. This review will help to determine whether applicants or their close associates have a history of criminal activity.

A licence can be granted only with the support of the Commissioner of Police. Applicants must also demonstrate that they, and their close associates, meet the fit and proper person test. The fit and proper person test will involve a comprehensive assessment of the applicant and their close associates to ensure that there are no criminal linkages, previous criminal history or character matters that may increase the risk of theft or diversion of the poppy crop. The fit and proper person assessment will also consider whether applicants have the financial capacity to undertake the activities under the licence. Where the applicant is a corporation, the fit and proper person test will require that there are appropriate corporate structures in place before a poppy licence is granted.

These tests will ensure that only suitable and appropriate persons will be issued a poppy licence and are consistent with the robust tests implemented in other poppy-growing jurisdictions such as Victoria. Not only will there be strict character and financial checks and tests for all licence applicants, but also licences will be issued only where a risk management plan has been submitted, assessed and approved. Licensees will be held to account to abide by their risk management plans. The risk management plan is a key pillar of the licensing regime. The risk management plan must detail how risks associated with the activities will be managed and how the licence holder will ensure that the poppies are not diverted for illegal purposes. This will cover everything from training and hiring employees, maintaining security of the crop to minimise the risk of diversion, to transporting the crop.

There will also be strict conditions around the security of the property where the poppies are grown or stored. Licence holders must implement sufficient security measures in and around that property. This will include requirements for locked gates, signage and fences to prevent animals or unauthorised people entering the property. Anyone caught illegally on a property that grows or stores alkaloid poppies must be reported to New South Wales police immediately. Authorised inspectors from the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries will undertake regular audits to make sure that the premises are suitable and the security arrangements are robust. Administrative arrangements will also make sure that the location where poppies are grown is suitable—for example, poppies will not be able to be grown near schools or densely populated areas. There will also be strict reporting requirements in place to allow tracking of exactly how many poppies are grown, transported and processed.

These licence conditions will be supported by a robust compliance and enforcement regime. These measures will ensure that the cultivation and processing of poppies is done in a way that guarantees the safety of the community. This comprehensive licensing framework has been designed to ensure the safety of the New South Wales community. It strikes the right balance between effective regulation and industry development. Importantly, the industry supports strict and robust regulation to ensure that only suitable persons can operate in the industry in recognition of the need to protect the community. The poppy processing companies are supportive of this bill. Unfortunately, over the past 40 years there have been a small number of deaths in Tasmania associated with poppies. Those deaths occurred as a result of individuals stealing poppy capsules—the seed head of the plant—to make tea.

The New South Wales Government is acutely aware of those risks and I am confident that the strict regulatory regime set out in this bill mitigates those risks as much as possible. As I have mentioned, this regime

will include restricting planting to isolated sites, and requirements for fencing and clear signage stating that the crop is dangerous and has been known to cause death. The regulatory regime will be supported by education for communities where poppy cultivation licences are granted. This education and awareness campaign will include New South Wales police and health officials. Awareness of the dangers associated with illegally consuming raw poppies has been communicated to the Tasmanian community over decades, and this has helped raise awareness about the risks of consuming raw poppies. The New South Wales Government will work with processors and local communities where poppies are grown to ensure that the community is fully aware of the risks and processes in place to reduce those risks.

Through a combination of strict regulation and community education about risks and benefits, the poppy industry has brought new economic opportunities to rural communities in Tasmania and, more recently, to Victoria and the Northern Territory. The bill can now bring those same opportunities to New South Wales. The regulatory framework set out in the bill mirrors the successful frameworks of other jurisdictions. The establishment of a licit poppy industry will provide a new avenue for economic growth in rural New South Wales. This industry will be well regulated and the risks will be controlled effectively. This framework will allow New South Wales to contribute to the continued supply of critical medications and to make an ongoing contribution to world health. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) (12:49): I state at the outset that I support the Poppy Industry Bill 2016. The member for Wagga Wagga spoke eloquently about the bill. Indeed, I was very impressed by his comments as to how wonderful it is. I do not intend to repeat much of what he said, but I will pick up on a few points. The bill originated in the upper House and I take this opportunity to acknowledge Minister Blair, who does a wonderful job and is a good friend of the electorate of Camden. For example, each year his son competes in showjumping and we very much appreciate the Minister's attendance at the Camden Show. He has also been out to Cobbitty—but I am having a mental block. Perhaps the member for Wollondilly, who is the Chamber, will help me remember. I am referring to the Liz Kernohan—

Mr Jai Rowell: Sydney University.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: That is correct. I am still a bit hazy after last night's sitting—for the record, that is tired hazy, not emotional hazy. On that occasion Minister Blair and I attended an agriculture-related event. It was most inspiring and he did a very good job. I remember thinking to myself what a great supporter of the area he is.

Mr Jai Rowell: Point of order: I am giving the member for Camden 20 seconds in which to regather his thoughts.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: I can remember one thing—but it was not in Camden. It was a Sydney Thunder versus Melbourne Stars game—

Mr Mark Coure: Somewhere in Australia?

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: It was at Homebush and the Minister attended with his son. My son and his son are the same age and they got on like a house on fire.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith): Order! The member for Camden will return to the leave of the bill.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: Before I turn to the Poppy Industry Bill 2016 I will mention some of the Minister's wonderful staff, including Department of Primary Industries Chief Scientist Philip Wright, policy officers Kirsty Cooper, Shagofta Ali, Emma Norrie and Genevieve Halliday, as well as Dr Deb Hailstones. I thank them for their efforts. I turn now to the bill. The contribution of the member for Wagga Wagga was succinct. The bill is about sensible government. It will ensure the industry has the correct safeguards in place and is policed correctly so that it can provide our community with a much-needed service that will not be abused. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (12:59): I make a contribution on behalf of The Greens to debate on the Poppy Industry Bill 2016. We support the bill and believe it is an important opportunity for the agricultural industry and farmers, as has been seen from the success of the industry in Tasmania. For the sake of brevity, I will simply give an overview of why we support the bill; I will not drill down into the legislation. The bill will establish a legislative framework to facilitate and regulate the cultivation, transport and storage of alkaloid poppies in New South Wales to allow for future expansion of the alkaloid poppy industry in this State.

Australia has produced alkaloid poppies for more than 40 years, currently providing more than 50 per cent of the global supply. Only eight companies can process alkaloid poppies in the world, and three of those operate in Australia. Tasmania is historically the main area where poppies have been grown and the industry is worth around \$290 million to the Tasmanian economy. In recent years Tasmania has experienced difficulties in supplying sufficient product, in part due to crop losses from disease, especially downy mildew, and poor seasonal conditions. This has resulted in significant imports of product from Turkey to meet contracts. Enabling legislation has been established in Victoria, the Northern Territory and South Australia. Victoria has granted approximately 50 licences in the past two years, the Northern Territory has granted one licence, and the industry is still in the early stages in South Australia. The Australian Government has oversight of the poppy industry across Australia and wrote to all States, calling for an expansion of the industry to mainland jurisdictions.

Poppies provide opiates for medicines that support our ageing population, including for chronic health conditions and palliative care as well as for anti-addiction treatments. Global demand has tripled since 1994 and is expected to continue to grow, especially as five to six billion people do not have reliable access to pain relief. It is The Greens' understanding that the aim of the New South Wales industry is to gain a share of this global growth and have up to 5,000 hectares of poppies growing within five years. Because of the very strict regulatory controls put in place, it is anticipated that the crops will be grown mostly in areas such as Narrabri and the Riverina as irrigated crops. The Greens support the establishment of the industry with strong regulatory controls to maintain Australia's reputation as a reliable source of alkaloid poppies. We understand that key advisers within the NSW Police Drug Squad have been consulted and that they are satisfied with the security provisions in the bill. We support the bill.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (13:02): On behalf of Mr Anthony Roberts, in reply: I thank the member for Wyong, the member for Tweed, the member for Wollondilly, the member for Wagga Wagga, the member for Camden and the member for Ballina for their contributions to debate on the Poppy Industry Bill 2016. The bill will provide the opportunity for a new rural industry in New South Wales, with the potential to grow into a \$100 million industry over the next 10 years. Expanding the alkaloid poppy industry to New South Wales will support Australia's role as a major supplier of poppy straw to support the manufacture of critical pain and anti-addiction medications.

I start by putting the bill into context and emphasising that the 2016-17 budget delivers significant investment in primary industries, totalling \$1.4 billion. I also illustrate that the budget will see around \$159 million invested in Local Land Services. This demonstrates that both the Department of Primary Industries and Local Land Services are well placed to administer and enforce legislation such as this, with strict safety and security requirements. The bill sets out a robust regulatory framework for all participants in the industry to ensure that there is minimal risk of diversion of the poppy crop for illegal use, and to maintain Australia's strong reputation as a safe and secure supplier of medicinal opiates.

The member for Wyong pointed out that it is vital that the community is informed. I think we all agree that community safety is paramount. I turn now to the point about the importance of education. As noted in the second reading speech, there will be a strong focus on a communication strategy for those communities where poppies will be grown. New South Wales will have an education campaign comparable to the successful communications strategies already being rolled out in Victoria and Tasmania. The Department of Primary Industries will work with local councils and Local Land Services as well as with the NSW Police Force and health officials to ensure that risky or suspicious behaviour in poppy-growing areas can be identified and is reported to the NSW Police Force.

The member for Wyong highlighted the security of employees. I assure the House that there will be strict controls in place. Licence holders will be required to ensure that employees are suitable persons. This requirement will include a criminal check, a referee check and verification that relevant qualifications are held. The requirement to ensure the suitability of employees will be a licence condition. Licence holders will be audited based on an annual return they provide and a program of site visits undertaken by officers of the Department of Primary Industries. Failing to comply with a condition of licence is an offence under the bill.

Unauthorised access to poppy-growing areas is provided for in the bill. I draw attention to clauses 8 and 9 of the bill, which set out licence conditions that prevent unauthorised persons from entering cultivation or processing areas. Cultivators or processors will be required to contact the NSW Police Force immediately if they believe there has been unauthorised access. Risk management plans prepared as part of a licence must include security measures to stop unauthorised access. The bill will provide powers for authorised officers to undertake compliance and enforcement, including powers to enter properties under warrant, and to seize materials and documents.

The bill sets out a clear audit power and offences for contravening licence conditions, impeding authorised officers and cultivating or processing poppy material without a licence. Proposed penalties under the

bill have been set to recognise the relative risks of the industry. They include loss of licence, heavy fines, and, in some cases, a sentence of up to 12 months imprisonment. Regarding offences under different Acts, I clarify that under section 23 of the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act it is an offence to cultivate and supply a prohibited plant—this includes alkaloid poppies. The bill proposes amendments to the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act that make it clear it will not be an offence to cultivate alkaloid poppies if the activity is licensed under the Poppy Industry Bill 2016.

The bill will authorise activities limited to those supporting the manufacture or production of therapeutic goods, and scientific research, analysis and training. Anything outside these limited approvals will continue to fall directly under the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act. For example, a poppy licensee who is licensed for 10 hectares but who grows 11 would be subject to penalties under the Poppy Industry Bill 2016 if the licensee has contracts in place with a processor. However, if the additional cultivation was supplied for illicit use, the licensee would be subject to penalties under the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act. To ensure that the strict security requirements in the bill are operating as intended, I highlight that my colleague the Hon. Niall Blair in the Legislative Council committed to tabling a report in Parliament within 12 months of the bill being enacted that indicates how many breaches of licence or permit conditions there have been and the nature of those breaches.

The Department of Primary Industries will work closely with New South Wales police in administering the Act. Information-sharing arrangements are included in the bill to facilitate strong oversight of the industry. It is our intention that the Act and the regulations will be in place by the end of the year. Everyone will be working hard to ensure that our farmers are able to plant a poppy crop in New South Wales in 2017. Australia has produced alkaloid poppies for more than 40 years, currently providing more than 50 per cent of the global supply. These poppies provide opiates for medicines that support our ageing population, including for chronic health conditions and palliative care, as well as for anti-addiction treatments.

Australia is a reputable source of alkaloid poppies because of the strength of our regulatory controls and sound compliance history. The industry is worth around \$290 million to the Tasmanian economy. In recent years Tasmania has experienced difficulties in supplying sufficient product, in part due to crop losses from disease and poor seasonal conditions. Enabling legislation has been established in Victoria, the Northern Territory and South Australia. Victoria has granted approximately 50 licences in the past two years and the industry is still in the early stages in the other States. The Australian Government has oversight of the poppy industry across Australia and supports an expansion of the industry to mainland jurisdictions.

The New South Wales Government looks after people with chronic pain and end-of-life challenges in managing their pain. A number of years ago this Parliament started the process of allowing the use of medicinal cannabis, and I am proud to say that I introduced Premier Mike Baird to the Haslam family from Tamworth whose son sadly passed away from cancer. He was using medicinal cannabis in the latter stages of his life to give him some form of comfort. As we know, medicinal cannabis is well and truly established on the agenda of the New South Wales Parliament and is helping people right across this great State. Almost 2½ years ago, the Hon. Trevor Khan, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, the late Dr John Kaye, Greens MLC, and I visited Tasmania to look at the developing medicinal cannabis industry and we came across poppy fields.

We investigated further and discovered that the poppy fields belonged to TPI Enterprises. We explored further and met the Chief Executive Officer of TPI Enterprises, Jarrod Ritchie, who took us through the poppy factory, where the poppy product from the fields is made into codeine and morphine to help those most in need—but under very strict controls. The process is similar to the grain-growing conditions enjoyed in regional New South Wales. The product is harvested in a manner similar to grain. It is taken by grain truck to a factory, where it is processed and manufactured into powder to become morphine or codeine for the therapeutic needs of the pharmaceutical industry.

The Greens member for Ballina supports the bill. The late Dr John Kaye was a strong advocate for medicinal cannabis and no doubt would have been a strong advocate for this bill also. So it is great that the bill is progressing. This is good news for farmers and for pharmaceutical companies. The industry will be a tightly regulated, and I am pleased to speak in reply to the second reading debate on behalf of Minister Roberts in this House and the Hon. Niall Blair in the other House. In conclusion, the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government is committed to supporting valuable new industries for our regions, facilitating the supply of material for critically important pain medications and ensuring the safety and security for New South Wales communities. I commend the bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: On behalf of Mr Anthony Roberts: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Community Recognition Statements

LACHLAN CAMERON GREY WOLF AWARD

Ms LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie—Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education) (13:14): I take this opportunity to extend my congratulations to Lachlan Cameron of Port Macquarie Sea Scouts on being awarded the Grey Wolf Award. Lachlan is an 11-year-old student at Port Macquarie Public School who was recently presented with the Grey Wolf Award at a local ceremony. The Grey Wolf Award is the highest award that a scouting cub member can achieve and requires a lot of time, concentration and stamina to complete. In fact, Lachlan is only the twelfth cub in 10 years in Port Macquarie to earn this badge. Lachlan has spent the past 12 months completing challenges, including outdoor and indoor activities and a two-hour hike. I congratulate Lachlan and the Port Macquarie Sea Scouts on their success and this wonderful achievement.

AUSTRALIAN MEN'S WATER POLO TEAM MEMBER RICHIE CAMPBELL

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (13:14): I congratulate Waratah resident Richie Campbell on helping the Australian men's water polo team, the Sharks, score a decisive 8-6 victory over Japan at the 2016 Rio Olympics. Richie is the latest in a long line of Hunter sporting heroes achieving Olympic glory. This is Richie's third Olympics, after making his Olympic debut at Beijing in 2008. Richie was the first water polo player from Newcastle to captain the Australian men's water polo team and to play at an Olympic Games. In 2009 Richie won gold for Australia at the World University Games in Serbia. Richie comes from great Hunter athletic stock. His great-grandfather, Frank Laver, was a wonderful Australian cricket team player. Once again, congratulations to Richie on another outstanding performance in Rio.

YOUNG ARCHIE COMPETITION WINNER ELLIE ARNOTT

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (13:15): I congratulate Ellie Arnott on being selected as the winner of the Young Archie competition. The Young Archie competition is an art competition open to young artists between the ages of five and 18, and Ellie was the winner of the 13-15 category. Her art was subsequently displayed in the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Amazingly, Ellie had not completed any detailed courses in painting before taking the class during which she painted the award-winning portrait. Ellie originally painted the portrait of her sister, Tempe, for a year 10 art workshop. Ellie has stated that she is contemplating submitting an artwork for the 2016 Young Archie competition. I wish her the best of luck and congratulate her on this amazing achievement.

EAST CAMPBELLTOWN EAGLES RUGBY LEAGUE INDIGENOUS DAY

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (13:16): I call on the House to acknowledge the East Campbelltown Eagles Rugby League Club Indigenous Day on 24 July. The day was a great success, with teams across all grades wearing an Indigenous-inspired jersey design. The club held a traditional smoking ceremony, followed by a formal welcome to country and cultural display. The East Campbelltown Eagles is a fantastic multicultural club and plays an important role in bringing together different groups in our community through the great game of rugby league. The club also plays a vital role in providing opportunities for young people to achieve their best in our community. I commend the club for celebrating its cultural diversity and ensuring that events such as the Indigenous Day are a positive step towards acceptance, tolerance and diversity within our wonderful city. I ask the House to join me in congratulating club president, life members, coaches, the executive and, most importantly, the players and supporters of Easts Campbelltown Eagles on a successful Indigenous Day and thank them for the work they do in the Campbelltown community.

LAVINGTON EAST PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) (13:17): Lavington East Public School year 6 student Jorja Scammell arrives at school at eight each morning to help prepare breakfast for about 50 to 60 students. Jorja is one of many volunteers and has not missed a morning since the breakfast club commenced in term two. For her commitment, Jorja has been nominated for the Fred Hollows Humanity Award. I say well done to Jorja. She is certainly an inspiration to her fellow students. Congratulations also to the Lavington East Public School girls Australian Football League team who won the Paul Kelly Cup State Final in Sydney on 15 August. The girls competed against teams from throughout New South Wales to win.

I extend congratulations to team members Abbie Findley, Taylor Howlett, Megan Partington, Montana McGrath, Jasmine Walters, Tenielle Richards, Audrey Smith, Montanah Kenny, Alice Voss, Georgia Martin, Grace Hay, Chelsea McGrath, Kaniesha Turnbull and April Owen, and also the teacher coaches, Torrell Scullin

and Stuart Beveridge, and parent Gary McGrath. What a wonderful achievement. Karen Percy has retired after 30 years of teaching at Lavington East Public School. Karen will be greatly missed by the students and teachers, and we wish her all the best in her retirement.

HUNTER VALLEY ELECTRIC VEHICLE FESTIVAL

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (13:18): I speak today about the Hunter Valley Electric Vehicle Festival—or the EV Fest, as it is known in Newcastle. The event is run by Tim Roberts and his team at the Tom Farrell Institute for the Environment and was held at the Newcastle Kart Racing Club on 13 and 14 August. The festival is based on the development of electric vehicle industries in the region. I was invited to award the Mini EV Prize for primary schools in the area where the students were challenged to build solar-powered cars and race them on a 20-metre track. The show is more than a competition; it is a fantastic event celebrating the latest and greatest in electric vehicles, clean energy and alternative transport to showcase the future of transport in this country. I have a great interest in renewable energy and invited a representative from this group to my Hunter transport roundtable earlier this year. With the group's involvement along with the policy announcement by the Leader of the Opposition about driverless cars in Newcastle, I believe this festival will continue on a larger scale and become more important to the Hunter in years to come.

TRIBUTE TO SHANI LEE BOLT

Ms TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (13:19): Today I recognise the achievements of Ms Shani Lee Bolt, whom I have the pleasure of congratulating on her award as the 2016 Mulgoa Aboriginal student of the year. Shani Lee Bolt attends Glenmore Park High School and was nominated for this award by her principal, Ms Lisette Gorrick. Ms Gorrick highlighted Shani's positive, responsible and mature qualities which have enabled her to mentor and collaborate with the broader school community. As a Gamarada leader, her contribution to and involvement in various programs includes the Penrith Regional Koori Health Organisation, Glenmore Park High School camps and peer support high school transitional programs. Shani also works with the Aboriginal Education Group, NAIDOC, and Close the Gap and supports Sorry Day.

Shani promotes the integration and respect of all cultures and people through her leadership roles, making her a truly stand-out leader. Shani also represents Glenmore Park High School at the Schools Spectacular and in an Aboriginal dance ensemble. I am immensely proud to have a young woman such as Shani in my electorate. She is an inspirational role model. Congratulations on receiving the Mulgoa Aboriginal Student of the Year Award for 2016 and congratulations on continuing to embrace your heritage and culture.

LIONS CLUB NEPAL HIMALAYA CHAPTER TEEJ FESTIVAL

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (13:20): Cultural diversity enriches our local communities and our country. On Saturday 20 August I, together with the member for Campbelltown, attended the Lions Club Nepal Himalaya Chapter's Teej 2016 festival at Ingleburn Community Centre. The club, which was established in 2009, helps to raise funds for various community projects here and overseas. The Teej festival is a Nepali religious and cultural festival celebrating the wellbeing of children and the importance of family relationships. It is also the most famous festival for Nepali women, who are predominantly dressed in red to reflect the colour of the Teej insect. The evening was filled with cultural dancing by young and old—and the two local members—Nepali food and, most important, joy and laughter amongst those in attendance. Community spirit was at a high. I thank Jasaman and his organising team at Lions for their efforts in staging a successful Teej 2016 festival and for their much-valued ongoing contribution to the community.

SUTHERLAND FOOD SERVICES MEALS ON WHEELS

Ms ELANI PETINOS (Miranda) (13:21): I acknowledge the Sutherland Food Services Meals on Wheels, located at Sutherland Hospital, ahead of National Meals on Wheels Day on 31 August. This annual celebration acknowledges the hardworking volunteers who are the backbone of the service and the helping hands in our community. This year many services will celebrate with the Cuppa for a Cause tea party fundraiser to help raise money to support financially disadvantaged clients. From its inception over 60 years ago, Meals on Wheels has grown to become a driving force of care in our community and helps people to maintain their independence and stay in their homes.

Meals on Wheels provides not only nutritious meals but also a connection to our community through contact with the volunteers. In New South Wales, about 4.5 million meals are delivered by 35,000 volunteers each year. The 67 volunteers at Sutherland Food Services Meals on Wheels deliver around 42,000 meals a year to approximately 250 clients. They also work in the kitchens and help in the office. I thank the manager, Susan Green, staff members Virginia Casimatis, Ana Zamora and Marti Carr, and the volunteers who are too many to name.

LAKE MACQUARIE RIO 2016 OLYMPIANS

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (13:22): I inform the House of the silver lining that emerged over Lake Macquarie from the 2016 Rio Olympics. Last Friday morning people from around my electorate cheered home three local champions who won three silver medals in Olympic sailing events. Nathan Outteridge and Iain Jensen raced near-perfect final races in the 49er class to win silver. This follows the gold medals these childhood mates won at the London Olympics. In their small hometown of Wangi Wangi, hundreds gathered at 2.00 a.m. to watch the races live, such is the spirit of this local community and the respect and love held for these two favourite sons. For Nathan, the result is even more extraordinary as in 2005 he spent weeks in hospital with a broken back from a car accident and with doctors fearing that he would never walk again.

The community of Coal Point was also celebrating after Will Ryan sailed across the line to claim silver in the 470 Class. Will, sailing with Matt Belcher, fought off a challenge from Greece and a slip into the water in the final race to claim the silver. These outstanding achievements come through hard work, commitment, sacrifice and unwavering support from those around them. Nathan, Iain and Will are a credit to themselves, their families and their communities, and we salute them.

TRIBUTE TO PAUL AND LEONIE LOMAS

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) (13:23): I recognise a selfless man in Armidale, Paul Lomas. For the past 21 years, he has been helping out at the Armidale showground. For 15 of those years Paul and his wife, Leonie, lived on site in the caretakers cottage performing all sorts of duties, including collecting money from campers on site, looking after the site, painting buildings, and fixing electrical issues. For the six years after moving off site they continued to assist with the smooth running of the showground. Leonie did the books for the showground and helped the trust, the show society and all the user groups. Both of them are selfless individuals who never seek praise and will be embarrassed that I am mentioning them today. It is important to recognise their contribution to the showground and to thank them sincerely for their service to the Armidale community.

SIMON HOFFMAN, AUSTRALIAN SAILING YOUTH TEAM MEMBER

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (13:24): Simon Hoffman from Valentine is a talented young man who is quite literally going places. I know Simon personally through my involvement in the Belmont 16s sailing club, where he has been sailing competitively since he was 10. I was delighted to hear that at just 17 years old he has been selected to be part of the Australian Sailing Youth Team and will represent Australia at the December 2016 Youth Sailing World Championships in New Zealand. Simon, along with skipper John Cooley from Rose Bay, will team up on a 29er, a high-performance, two-person skiff with a single trapeze and lightweight hull. The boys have already proven their skills in a 29er, having won first place in 13 out of 16 races at the Australian National 29er championships last year, and sixth place in the world 29er championships in Wales. I am sure the member for Vacluse will join me in wishing the boys all the best for the upcoming championships. I know that they will do Australia and their communities proud.

TUMBULGUM 150TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (13:25): I acknowledge the town of Tumbulgum and congratulate the village on reaching 150 years. On 12 November the town will throw a big birthday bash. It will mark the milestone with a host of festivities, including a street party to be held as part of the annual Tweed River Festival. Tumbulgum is situated at the confluence of the Rous and Tweed rivers, 818 kilometres north-east of Sydney and 120 kilometres south-east of Brisbane. During the 1840s, Tumbulgum attracted many timber cutters, as Australian red cedar was dominant in the area. By the early 1860s, a small community and river port had been established on the northern side of the Tweed River. The town was originally called Tweed Junction but in 1880 the residents petitioned to have the name changed to Tumbulgum. This was claimed to mean "meeting place of the waters" in an Aboriginal language but others claimed translations included "a large fig" or "wild fig tree". Tumbulgum is now an historic village. Congratulations to the anniversary project manager, Robert Budd. The celebrations will no doubt be remembered.

COMMERCIAL FISHING INDUSTRY ADJUSTMENT PROGRAM

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (13:26): I acknowledge the commercial fishing people who met in the Waratah room this morning to air their views with regard to the Government's commercial fisheries business adjustment program. I thank the more than 100 fishers who attended. I extend special thanks to those who spoke from the Professional Fishers Association [PFA] and the Wild Caught Fish Coalition, including Richard Bagnato from the North Coast, Lucinda Hornby and her daughter Maddison from the Hunter, Suzie McEnally from the Wallis Lakes Cooperative, Paul Heron from Wollongong, Alan Reed from the Central Coast, Nathan Neilly from Stuarts River, Chantelle Walker from the Hunter, and Nathan Croker from the Central Coast. I extend thanks to

Tricia Beatty from the executive office of the PFA and Mary Howard, secretary of Wild Caught Fish Coalition, for helping to organise the event. I thank my Labor colleagues and the Hon. Paul Green, the Hon. Robert Brown, Mr Jeremy Buckingham and the Hon. Justin Field from the other place for their attendance. I note that no Liberal or Nationals members attended. What a shame.

RYAN WOOD, AMERICAN EVENTING SUCCESS

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (13:28): When it comes to eventing, Ryan Wood is not horsing around. Today I am proud to congratulate and commend the success of Ryan Wood of Dural, who has emerged with incredible success in American eventing. Joan Wood has said that Mr Wood has always had a natural connection with horses, starting from when he rode at Dural pony club with his older sister. However, it is not only his natural ability for riding that has carried him to ride internationally but also his incredible dedication and inspiration from other riders.

In May this year, Mr Wood, riding a horse named Powell, won the Jersey Fresh International Three-Day Event and then went on to win the Bromont CCI Three-Day Event in Canada. Furthermore, this year, Mr Wood was the only Australian representative in the 2016 Rolex Kentucky CC14, competing with three very impressive horses. Although Mr Wood narrowly missed out on Olympic selection for Rio, he was highly commended by selectors for his performance and has his sights firmly focused upon Tokyo 2020. I look forward to cheering Mr Wood on at the Tokyo Olympics.

TRIBUTE TO JESSICA SPARKS

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (13:28): Today I recognise the achievement of a young woman in the Illawarra who as an organ donation recipient has inspired many in the local community. On Thursday 11 August, Jessica Sparks was whisked into surgery at St Vincent's Hospital to undergo a complex and highly risky second double lung transplant. On Friday evening, 12 August, after spending the day on tenterhooks, we received the tremendous news that Jessica's transplant was successful. While it is early days in her recovery, surgeons are happy with her progress. Jessica has an unquenchable zest for life. She has achieved so much and is a tireless advocate for organ donation. Despite failing health, she is soon to complete her academic studies. She was awarded the prestigious Robert Hope Memorial Prize at the University of Wollongong only recently. My staff and I are particularly interested in her recovery as she has worked with us during the past couple of years. We look forward to welcoming Jessica back as part of our team as soon as she is able.

DOUG MCCLELLAND NINETIETH BIRTHDAY

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (13:29): Today I wish a very happy ninetieth birthday to a renowned St George identity, former Labor Senator Doug McClelland, AC. Doug was born in Wentworthville, New South Wales in 1926 and went on to have a distinguished career in politics, first elected to the Australian Senate in 1961. Before his extensive career in politics, Doug served in the 2nd Australian Imperial Force, and later became a reporter, which would serve him well during his time as Minister for the Media in the Whitlam Government. However, with his father serving as a Labor State member of Parliament, a career in politics was never far from Doug's reach. During his stalwart career, Doug also served as Special Minister of State and President of the Senate.

Following his retirement from the Senate, Doug went on to serve our country proudly as the Australian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom. His accolades are many, but perhaps one of Doug's most noted achievements was his presentation with the Douglas Wilkie Medal in 1973, awarded after he introduced a points system for television programming. However, Doug's passion for sport did not stop there. He served as club patron for the mighty St George Dragons. He is Robert McClelland's father. On behalf of my community I again wish Doug a very happy ninetieth birthday.

VALLEY HEIGHTS LOCOMOTIVE DEPOT HERITAGE MUSEUM

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (13:31): Today I acknowledge the wonderful Valley Heights Locomotive Depot Heritage Museum team in the Blue Mountains electorate. On 12 August the heritage museum hosted an event to unveil a plaque commemorating Hendrikus Hendrik Trip, known as Rieks, who was a fuel man at the depot in the early 1950s. Rieks was employed by the New South Wales Government Railways. He had one of the dirtiest and most physically demanding jobs at the depot. On 10 April 1953 while walking to the depot along the railway tracks, Rieks was struck and killed by a locomotive.

Rieks' story was unknown to the museum and the Springwood Historical Society until 2006 when an email arrived from two of his nephews in the Netherlands seeking details of the accident. An incredible and comprehensive research story involving many people unfolded from that point. It was moving to have the Consulate-General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and family members of Rieks in attendance. The efforts of

these people to organise a dedication and a memorable day to tell this important story is to be commended: Jeff Russell and Bruce Coxon in particular, and all life members and dedicated volunteers of the museum.

TRIBUTE TO ADAM KELLERMAN

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (13:32): I have spoken previously in this place about Adam Kellerman when he was selected for the 2012 London Paralympics. Currently ranked twelfth in the world and first in Australia, Adam will compete in singles and doubles wheelchair tennis during his second Paralympic Games this September. His perseverance in overcoming bone cancer and depression during his youth has led to an admirable career in wheelchair tennis. He has earned selection for the Australian World Team Cup every year since 2007. In 2014, he claimed a doubles victory with Ben Weekes in the United States Tennis Association International Tennis Federation Desert Classic. He also qualified for the singles quarter-final and doubles semi-final of the 2014 Australian Open Wheelchair Championships. I am proud to acknowledge a sportsman of such calibre in my electorate. I look forward to hearing of Adam's progress as he pursues a podium finish in Rio de Janeiro.

TENANTS' UNION

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (13:33): For 40 years the Tenants' Union has courageously fought for the rights of renters. It has provided frank and independent legal advice to private renters, social housing tenants, boarders, lodgers and residential park residents. It has worked tirelessly to provide housing security—one of our most basic needs—in a climate in which more and more people are being denied it. I was proud to join the "House and Home: Looking back, looking forward" forum at Redfern Town Hall on 15 August. The forum marked the fortieth anniversary of the Tenants' Union.

It was a strong reminder of what still needs to be done to deliver greater housing certainty for all, including: an end to short-term leases; reviewing no-fault evictions to line up with other States; allowing renters to own pets, hang artwork and make minor modifications to make their house truly their own home; and, finally, taking a hard look at the provisions around rent rises to give greater certainty for renters. Ultimately, the biggest difference to delivering balance in the market between renters and home owners will come from tax reform, including changes to negative gearing. I congratulate the Tenants' Union on 40 years of activism, 40 years of engagement and 40 years of making a real difference in the lives of renters.

TRIBUTE TO STEVEN WHITE

Ms LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie—Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education) (13:34): I acknowledge corrections officer Steven White on the recent receipt of his Australian Bravery Award. In January 1996, Steven and another corrections officer were escorting a prisoner to receive an X-ray at Randwick hospital. After being released from his restraints, the prisoner produced a knife-like object. Steven immediately pushed a nurse out of the direct line of the knife and instructed her and other staff to move behind a protective glass wall.

The inmate lunged towards Steven, who lost his footing but managed to draw his service revolver. What ensued was a tense three-hour standoff with Steven keeping his firearm trained on the prisoner the entire time until the prisoner could be safely restrained. Although Steven received a department award at the time, he said to be recognised 20 years later by the Governor-General on behalf of the community was definitely an honour. I congratulate Steven White on his selfless dedication to his job protecting the public and on the awarding of his Australian Bravery Award after decades of service.

DOONSIDE HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL DONNA LOUGHRAN

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (13:35): I congratulate Ms Donna Loughran, Principal of Doonside High School, on being one of 59 teachers accredited for the first time by the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards as lead teachers who have achieved highly accomplished teacher status. Ms Loughran's story is one of triumph over adversity. Growing up in a Department of Housing property in the suburb of Shalvey, no-one from Ms Loughran's family and friends had finished high school or gone to university. Ms Loughran had some tumultuous years at school before some great teachers in her life helped her find her potential, which resulted in her winning a scholarship to study education at the University of Sydney. This accreditation recognises teachers who positively influence the quality of teaching not just in their own classroom but in their whole school and wider community. Ms Loughran has stated, "A postcode does not determine intelligence and a postcode should never determine destiny." She leads by example.

TRIBUTE TO DAVID SQUIRRELL

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (13:36): Today I offer my final farewell to an active and pioneering member of our community and a great friend of mine. David Squirrell senior left us on Thursday 14 January 2016

and is survived by his wife, Wendy, and son, David Squirrell junior. David was a pilot by profession. During his years as a pilot he took on many different roles including crop dusting, aerobatics and sky writing. David was such a proficient pilot that he even became a chief flying instructor. David flew over the mountains of New Guinea and even from the United States to Australia. David junior noted his father's love for literature and his ability to recite many of the world's masterpieces verbatim. I am told that David was also a keen inventor, often building a whole host of electronic devices. He was very actively involved in our community. He will be sorely missed and I thank him for his service to our community. May he rest in peace.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith): I will now leave the chair and the House will resume at 2.15 p.m.

Visitors

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: Welcome back to the member for Newtown, and I welcome the newest member of the Legislative Assembly family, Scarlett. I welcome everybody in the gallery to Wednesday's question time. I welcome Karen Howard, guest of the member for Coogee. I welcome Andy Paschilidis, Kyle Patterson, Joseph Hanna and Peter Zangari, guests of the member for Fairfield. I also welcome the family of the member for Port Stephens: parents Bert and Leslie Washington, husband Andrew and children Avery, Tess and Lily Washington. I acknowledge 51 Public Sector Seminar participants in the gallery. I hope the day has been enjoyable for you. I also welcome members of the Institute of Public Administration Australia to the Chamber. I acknowledge students from the University of Sydney who are observing question time as part of their Parliament and Democracy course.

I extend a very warm welcome to the Vietnam veterans in the gallery today: John Haines, AM; Peter Stephenson, OAM; Stephen Finney, OAM; Greg Read, SC; Rod Holtham; Ian Henderson; Ray James; Patrick O'Grady; Alan Graham; John Lees; Barry Russ; Peter Westwood; Malcolm Botfield; Lindsay Gazzard; Graham Brown; Steve Taylor; and Allan Coleman. They are guests of the Minister for Corrections, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Veterans Affairs, and member for Baulkham Hills. I welcome Robyn Young, president of the Beacon Hill branch of the Liberal Party and guest of the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing, and member for Wakehurst. I acknowledge Owen and Maria Elliott of West Nowra, guests of the Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra and South Coast, and member for Kiama.

Ministerial Statement

BATTLE OF LONG TAN FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Corrections, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Veterans Affairs) (14:23): As the Minister for Veterans Affairs I am proud to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of a number of our very modern day heroes, heroes who were never given the acknowledgement that they deserved. This month, as we mark 50 years since the Battle of Long Tan, a highly significant and arguably the most iconic battle for Australians during the Vietnam War. Today I would like to formally recognise the service of all veterans of the Vietnam War and remember the 521 of our diggers who did not return.

In the early hours of 17 August 1966 the Australian base at Nui Dat was attacked by enemy mortar. There were fears that it could be the prelude to a greater attack—108 men from Delta Company, led by Major Harry Smith, went on patrol in a dense rubber plantation in search of what they thought was a relatively small Viet Cong group. To their surprise, the men of Delta Company were greatly outnumbered that day as they met a force of more than 2,000 enemy soldiers. They fought in conditions of heavy rain and mud. Through their discipline, training and team work the men of Delta Company prevailed that day. This battle exemplifies the dedication and spirit of those represented in the gallery whom I would like to recognise today.

Company Sergeant Major John Kirby, a Lewisham boy, known by his mates as "Big Jack", was one of the men in the thick of the battle. His courageous actions prevented the enemy from setting up a machine gun post near his company's position. While under continuous fire he distributed ammunition and helped evacuate the wounded. Sadly, less than a year after the battle Kirby lost his life in the war during Operation Tamborine when he was inadvertently hit in the chest by fire from the 161st New Zealand Field Battery. Kirby was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal in 1966 for his leadership during the Battle of Long Tan.

Yet while Kirby was recognised for his efforts, at the time many of his fellow soldiers from Delta Company in the 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, or 6 RAR, were not, and we are sorry. The independent Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal has recently reviewed the actions of 13 soldiers from 6 RAR,

including those of Kirby. Although Kirby's honour was not upgraded I am pleased to say that 10 more soldiers from 6 RAR received military honours for their bravery at the Battle of Long Tan.

Among them were New South Welshmen Private Ronald Brett, Private Geoffrey Peters, Private William Roche and Second Lieutenant Gordon Sharp. I also recognise the work of Lieutenant Colonel Harry Smith (Retired), former Commanding Officer of the 6th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, who has campaigned tirelessly to have the acts of soldiers from D Company appropriately recognised. Harry, at 83 years old, still lives in Hobart and is one of our national treasures.

As we commend their efforts and recognise their service, we should also reflect on the service of the 59,000 Australian men and women deployed to Vietnam and the challenges they faced there and at home. The Vietnam War was very different from those that we had seen, particularly those that we commemorate in the centenary of Anzac. Australians witnessed the horrors of war through television like never before. As the war drew on into the late 1960s and early 1970s it increasingly became controversial to the detriment of those who were serving and who returned. Protests against conscription gained momentum over the course of the war and meant men came home embarrassed about their service.

For some, coming home was a difficult process that has left an impact for decades not only for the veterans but also for their families. Some veterans experienced public hostility when they returned home. This was an evil act. Some service men and women started to avoid wearing their uniforms in public, which is not in the tradition of Anzac. The sacrifices made in the service of our nation were great. Australia lost 521 lives and more than 3,000 people came away with physical wounds, while others suffered psychological wounds that have still not healed. Making sense of the legacy of the war has not been easy. We must remember the hardships Vietnam veterans faced. We must recognise the service of the men and women who displayed bravery, dedication, talent and courage. This month marks a decade since Prime Minister John Howard apologised for our collective failure as a society to welcome those who served when they returned from Vietnam. Former Prime Minister Howard pledged some 25 years after the battles concluded that this nation will:

... pay proper regard to their bravery and their service, and their commitment. They did what their country lawfully asked them to do at the time, they did it with distinction, with honour, and with bravery.

Those words still resonate today and I pledge them again in this House. As we reflect on the 50 years that have passed since the Battle of Long Tan I take this opportunity to formally acknowledge the service of the veterans of the Vietnam War, which was overlooked until 1987. I acknowledge the service of not just those who served on the front line but also those who played support roles and those who served for shorter periods. I acknowledge the families of Vietnam veterans. So often the war touched the lives of mothers, fathers, partners and children of veterans. I recognise the service of our Vietnam veterans as equal to all Australian men and women who have served our nation in our defence forces. Lest we forget.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (14:30): On behalf of the New South Wales Labor Opposition and the shadow Minister for Veterans Affairs in the other place, the Hon. Lynda Voltz, I commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan alongside Minister David Elliott and recognise and commend the service of our Vietnam veterans who bravely stepped up and answered the call of duty. Vietnam Veterans Day is commemorated each year on 18 August. Originally known as Long Tan Day, the date was selected to commemorate the valiant efforts of D Company, 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, who fought in the battle of Long Tan on 18 August 1966 when 108 Australian and New Zealand soldiers pitched in and fought against more than 2,000 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops in a rubber plantation not too far from the tiny village of Long Tan.

Supported by artillery, however heavily outnumbered, those brave men fought against the enemy through torrential weather, where they came close to being overrun. But they did not panic; they dug in and gave their all. A timely aerial ammunition resupply and the arrival of reinforcements by an armoured personnel carrier helped shift the momentum and pushed our boys to victory. Heralded as one of the greatest victories of the war, it did not come without a price. We suffered the loss of 18 brave soldiers and a further 24 men were wounded.

In 1969 a cross was erected at the site of the Battle in Long Tan. It is a solemn site that is visited each year to commemorate the fallen. I was pleased an agreement could be made this year for our veterans to visit the Long Tan Cross during the fiftieth anniversary ceremonies. Commemorations were held throughout Australia to honour the fallen, including at the Australian War Memorial, the Vietnam Forces National Memorial, the Cenotaph in Sydney, Anzac Square in Brisbane and the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne. A number of smaller commemorations were also organised by RSL clubs throughout Australia.

Since 2006 the Australian Defence Force has been awarding ADF Long Tan Youth Leadership and Teamwork Awards in high schools throughout Australia. The awards are presented to recognise students who demonstrate leadership and teamwork within the school and the broader local community while also recognising

those who display strong values such as doing one's best, respect for others and mateship. The awards were named after Long Tan due to then Prime Minister John Howard's timely apology to Australia's 50,000 Vietnam veterans for the treatment they received since returning from war.

The Vietnam War was complicated. We are all aware of the controversies that emerged as a result of that war which led to more than two million deaths in conflict that heavily impacted both sides and everyone involved. For modern warfare, it was the first time that a media presence around the battlefield provided the world with images of battles and the effects of war. That raised many questions and a lot of concern and conflict about the matter both at home and abroad. Upon returning from Vietnam our veterans were not embraced with a hero's welcome, nor were they given any recognition for the immense sacrifices they had made and hardships they had endured. For a number of years following their return they were ridiculed, abused and dismissed. Eventually it was as though they were forgotten.

Since the Vietnam War much has been written in song, poetry and stories and shown on film about the events and how they impacted the soldiers, their mates and their families back home. With the indulgence of members I will refer to a special Australian song by Redgum entitled *I Was Only 19*. It eloquently paints a picture of what it was like for many young men who served in the Vietnam War, including during their experience abroad and upon returning home. The immortal lyrics include:

And can you tell me, doctor, why I still can't get to sleep?
 And night time's just a jungle dark and a barking M16?
 And what's this rash that comes and goes, can you tell me what it means?
 God help me, I was only nineteen.
 Then someone yelled out "Contact", and the bloke behind me swore.
 We hooked in there for hours, then a God almighty roar;
 Frankie kicked a mine the day that mankind kicked the moon:
 God help me, he was going home in June.
 I can still see Frankie, drinking tinnies in the Grand Hotel on a thirty-six hour rec. leave in Vung Tau.
 And I can still hear Frankie lying screaming in the jungle.
 'Till the morphine came and killed the bloody row.
 And the Anzac legends didn't mention mud and blood and tears,
 and stories that my father told me never seemed quite real ...

As a young Australian growing up that song really hit me, and I am sure other members, hard. I could only imagine the hardships and trials these young men faced for their mates and for our freedom. The men did not panic at the battle of Long Tan. The soldiers did what the Government asked them to do. They stepped up in the country's time of need, in the same stead as the Anzacs before them. On behalf of all members, I say thank you to every man and woman who has served our great nation. We will be eternally grateful for the sacrifices that have been made for our country and for our freedom. Lest we forget.

Announcements

REORDERING OF GENERAL BUSINESS GUIDE

The SPEAKER: I advise members that, to remove some of the confusion that has occurred, a one-page guide explaining how general business on Thursdays is settled is now available. I want everyone to be clear about the process. I remind members to be alert during proceedings and to speak clearly when seeking the call for these matters.

Question Time

POLICE TACTICAL COMMAND VEHICLE

Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (14:40): My question is directed to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Justice and Police. Will the Deputy Premier confirm that if a terrorist siege were to occur today that there would still not be a specialist police command truck available and equipped to control the response operation?

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Deputy Premier, Minister for Justice and Police, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Racing) (14:41): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Since we have been in power our track record in supporting the NSW Police Force in its acquisition of state-of-the-art equipment to combat crime of any type has been very strong. In 2014-15 we allocated a record \$177.5 million for police capital funding. In 2016-17 that funding was increased to \$178.2 million. In addition to that investment the Government has allocated \$100 million to the Policing for Tomorrow Fund. It is clear that this Government is making law enforcement a priority. This funding allocation provides officers with state-of-the-art workplace technology.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Premier has the call. The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting. I am sure Opposition members would like to hear the answer to the Leader of the Opposition's question.

Mr TROY GRANT: This is an education lesson for those opposite: Government is there to ensure that we support and fund our police force. That is how it works. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition should know that better than most because he is a former police Minister.

Mr Stephen Kamper: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: It is most inappropriate for Opposition members to interject during the Minister's answer.

Mr Stephen Kamper: My point of order is relevance.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Minister is being relevant to the question asked. I refer the member for Rockdale to the standing orders in relation to questions.

Mr TROY GRANT: If you just sit down and shut up, I will tell you.

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order: The manner in which the Deputy Premier referred to the member for Rockdale was unparliamentary.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The member for Fairfield forgets how many interjections I hear.

Mr TROY GRANT: If the member for Rockdale were to close his mouth promptly I would tell him. As I said, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition should know this. It is the Government's job to provide the money, and I have outlined what we have done. Here is the answer: It is then the responsibility of the NSW Police Force, under the Commissioner of Police, to make the operational decisions, including prioritising for the procurement of the equipment deemed necessary, which includes the police negotiator's van.

The SPEAKER: Order! The behaviour of Opposition members is unacceptable and I will not tolerate it. Members will be removed from the Chamber if it continues. Opposition members are not interested in listening.

Mr TROY GRANT: That is why this State went to the absolute biscuit for 16 years—

The SPEAKER: Order! If Opposition members continue their behaviour they will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr TROY GRANT: Those opposite played politics with policing and they would determine where the police resources in this State went. Monsieur Daley and the eight other police Ministers who occupied the benches for 16 years used to say, "We will stick a probationary constable into this marginal seat", rather than letting the police, who know best, put the resources where they needed to go.

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order: My point of order is Standing Order 129, relevance.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is being relevant.

Mr Guy Zangari: The question has nothing to do with the Labor Government. The question is: Where is the police negotiator's truck?

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The member for Fairfield will resume his seat.

Mr TROY GRANT: A new definition of "dumb". Those opposite would rather have us determine where the police equipment goes in New South Wales. Who should have what truck? What sort of car should they drive? What sort of police helicopter should they have? I would rather let those who know what they are doing in the allocation of police resources make those decisions, and that happens to be the Commissioner of Police, you bunch of dopes.

The SPEAKER: Order! There will be outrage when I start to eject people from the Chamber. Opposition members will come to order.

LIVERPOOL PLAINS AND BHP BILLITON COAL LICENCE

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (14:47): My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier.

The SPEAKER: Order! I know that Opposition members are tired and emotional, but they do not need to be childish, particularly considering the guests who are seated in the gallery. Government members are certainly not behaving in that manner.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: How is the New South Wales Government securing the future of farming on the Liverpool Plains in my area?

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Deputy Premier, Minister for Justice and Police, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Racing) (14:48): Good afternoon everybody and good afternoon member for Rockdale. I thank the member for Tamworth for his very important question. The members for the electorates of Tamworth and the Upper Hunter share one of the best parcels of agricultural land in this country, if not in the world—the Liverpool Plains. If one takes a site visit to a town called Caroona, which is located in that neck of the New England between Tamworth and Gunnedah, one will see the most fertile and beautiful country. That rich agricultural land is known as the black soil plains. Those members understand the value that that agricultural land puts back into our State and our national economy. The food and fibre that is grown in that part of the world is simply amazing. When you go there the local landholders ask you to taste the dirt because it is that good. All that was put under severe jeopardy when those opposite, in the way they did business, threw out coal licences and coal seam gas licences all over the State like confetti.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: And on the most productive agricultural soil that we have in this State those opposite issued a coal exploration licence to BHP for the princely sum of \$100 million.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: Those opposite ran a regime in this State in which people could buy a decision, and we have seen that plastered across newspapers and television screens in this State for far too long. That reckless decision and how they operated jeopardised the very productivity and existence of the farmers and landholders of that area. For more than 11 years the Caroona Coal Action Group had been trying to protect the black soil plains despite the deaf ears of those opposite and, quite frankly, despite lousy representation at both the State and Federal levels by useless Independents who did nothing to stop it—they just sat with their hands in their pockets and took the money from the Labor Party to help fund their campaigns. That is all they did when 344 square kilometres was in jeopardy. I thank and recognise the Premier and the Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy for working with BHP Billiton to come to a sensible arrangement to buy back its coal licence in that part of the world.

On 16 August I was very proud to join the member for Tamworth and the local farmers, the Caroona Coal Action Group, when the dark cloud of that Labor decision was lifted. There was an unbelievable sense of relief for a whole district and a whole region that they no longer had to live with the burden of uncertainty about whether they could continue to grow and produce the food and fibre in that district on the best farming land in the State. This is a decision and a demonstration by this Government that we understand that we can have agricultural activity as well as mining; the two can coexist. The member for Upper Hunter will know better than most that they can coexist; and they coexist in the member for Tamworth's electorate and in my electorate of Dubbo—Mudgee and Dubbo have agriculture and mining side by side.

But when this Government is making these decisions, which those opposite never gave regard to, it is about coexisting and having a mine in the right place that does not compromise the agricultural productivity and viability of that parcel of land. Coexistence can occur across the State and only sensible, structured decisions made under a policy framework developed by this Government will secure the coexistence and ongoing viability of both the coal and mining industries in New South Wales alongside the agricultural and primary production industries of this State. It has been a long, long road for those in the Caroona area and there is a long, long road for us still to plough to get rid of the reckless legacy of those opposite when it comes to land-use conflict. However, it is a road that we will continue to travel to remove the Labor legacy from this State forevermore. They are a bunch of jokers.

POLICE TACTICAL COMMAND VEHICLE

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) (14:53): My question is directed to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Police. In light of his previous answer, is it the Minister's contention that the Government provided the NSW Police Force with the necessary funds to purchase a police command vehicle and that it was Commissioner Scipione and his senior officers who have failed to purchase the truck for their own officers for the past five years?

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Deputy Premier, Minister for Justice and Police, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Racing) (14:54): Doesn't he get cranky when he doesn't get much sleep?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Premier has the call.

Mr TROY GRANT: Since we have been in government, the funding requested by the NSW Police Force for whatever resources they have required has been given to them. We do not in government then decide

what they buy, where it goes and how it is used—that is completely inappropriate. I am happy to advise the House that a purpose-built negotiators vehicle has been funded by this Government.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: I am advised that the vehicle in question is called a Mercedes-Benz Sprinter, which is a cab chassis truck with a truck base. It has been purchased and is currently being fitted out with state-of-the-art equipment to support negotiators responding to high-risk incidents. In keeping with normal purchasing procedures—the same purchasing procedures used by those opposite, the very man who asked the question, when he was the Minister—the acquisition of the vehicle was considered against other police priorities.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. I remind the Deputy Premier that as at the 2011 election the police had such a truck. It broke down and they have been waiting for one for five years.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will not argue at the microphone. There is no point of order. The Minister is remaining relevant. Stop the clock and we will wait until members come to order. The Deputy Premier has the call.

Mr TROY GRANT: As I was saying, the vehicle was acquired in accordance with the same procurement procedures that have been in place since those opposite were in government. The police have advised that they expect the construction of the pod that goes on top of the cab chassis truck to be completed by the end of October 2016, with the specialised internal fit-out to follow. The NSW Police Force undertook the usual contractual negotiation and development of a platform that suited the local environment. The original negotiators truck was purchased through national counterterrorism funding and was in service between 1994 and 2011. It was struck by lightning and was rendered unserviceable. This Government has made, and continues to make, police funding a priority to ensure that the public is as safe as possible from these threats.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Mr TROY GRANT: We have the NSW Police Force and the Commissioner of Police to ensure that operational matters are handled by them appropriately and that the necessary equipment and procurement occurs as determined by them, not us.

FUTURE TRANSPORT PROGRAM

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (14:57): My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. How is the Government driving innovation to deliver better public transport and is the Minister aware of any alternative plans?

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Infrastructure) (14:58): I thank the member for his question and for his interest in public transport. I say to members of the Government that I was concerned overnight to hear a story that the Leader of the Opposition had asked the member for Prospect to collect 10 dirt files on Government members. I remind the Leader of the Opposition that the member for Prospect does not have an intelligence background. We have our own dirt file, and this is just the summary. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition was at the airport this morning welcoming back the Olympians—while he was out there he was stealing a couple of medals.

Ms Kate Washington: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. I am pretty sure the question related to public transport.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I will, and I apologise for digressing. It was very pleasing to launch the Future Transport initiative as part of the Government's plan to transform transport into a technology business. Overnight I was able to launch a new function as part of an app that can give commuters real-time data about the number of passengers that might be on a bus coming towards their bus stop and allow people to plan their trip. It is a bit like Tinder for buses in a way. One can either accept or reject. It is a bit like Labor's leadership Tinder: Maroubra—reject; Strathfield—reject; Kogarah—too young to be on Tinder; but we know what happens with Jason Clare—accept, accept, accept, accept, all the way down from Sussex Street. What a week those opposite have had. It was summed up in today's *Daily Telegraph*; they have had a cracking week.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: Madam Speaker, I draw your attention to your previous ruling. My point of order is under Standing Order 129. I, for one, would like to know what the Government is doing with public transport.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: We know the only person they accepted at Strathfield, and that was the member for Maitland, who has been out doing her numbers. Other than that, it is a swipe to reject for the member for Strathfield. We are quite prepared, unlike those opposite, to open up data across government—Opal data—to provide real-time data sets, to facilitate development of applications on smart phones for commuters across this city. We are seeing enormous benefits as a result of that effort. We have seen literally hundreds of developers from around the world take this data, start to transform it and allow our community to be able to gain access to real-time information about transport services.

The question asked whether I was aware of alternative approaches. It caused me to reflect on those opposite when in government and their treatment of the developer community when it came to information that fed applications. I was surprised at the time—and I know that the shadow Minister at the time likewise was surprised—to see that the Labor Government was actually prepared to sue an app developer, TripView, for revealing to commuters information about public transport services. Why did those opposite do it? They did it because they did not want to be accountable for services not being on time. Guess who engaged the lawyers? It was the member for Keira, the deputy secretary at the time. The big guy from Keira was on the phone to lawyers working out how to sue the app developer community when it comes to information technology.

This Government is getting on with it. Click and collect has been an enormous success at our train stations and we are going to continue to roll it out, particularly in Western Sydney. Hundreds of customers are benefiting from online purchases of household goods being picked up at train stations on their way home from work. Australia Post likewise has parcel services available at train stations. We are getting on with using technology to transform the transport network. Those opposite are living in the Dark Ages.

LINDT CAFE SIEGE

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (15:03): My question is directed to the Premier. In the run-up to the 2015 election the Premier said, "I worked alongside Deputy Commissioner Catherine Burn throughout the siege." She has now testified that she was not involved in the siege, so what work did he do alongside her?

The SPEAKER: I find it extraordinary that some people think this subject matter is funny.

Mr Brad Hazzard: That is a really serious and dumb question.

The SPEAKER: Nevertheless, members are entitled to ask serious and dumb questions. The Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD (Manly—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) (15:04): Obviously anyone is entitled to ask any question. I will make a couple of comments in relation to that question. First, in terms of the current inquiry, of course an event like that deserves full scrutiny from beginning to end to determine whether we can do anything better. Obviously it has been comprehensive and that is what we have seen. The second relates to the individual to whom the member refers, Catherine Burn. She, along with every other member of the police force involved that day, was doing everything she possibly could to get everyone out alive.

The tragedy was we did not, and I include myself in that. We collectively did not and that is something that will haunt me for the rest of my life, but I am proud of what our police did. I am proud because the officers to whom I have spoken rang their families before they went into that cafe because they did not know if they were coming out. It was an incredible thing to see and hear that an individual in this State, in uniform, was prepared to go into that cafe and risk their life for someone they did not know. As to the concerns the member has raised, the coronal inquiry is looking at the matter, and if we can learn from anything, we will and we will respond to it. But in relation to our police as a collective—everyone, including Cath Burn—I can assure the member from everything I saw through every hour, I was nothing but proud of the intent, and the intent was simple: Let's get everyone out alive.

TAFE NSW AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (15:06): My question is addressed to the Minister for Skills. Ahead of next week's National Skills Week, how is the New South Wales Government helping more people to access training and to get a job?

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business) (15:07): I thank the member for Myall Lakes for a great question. I know he is passionate about vocational education in this State. National Skills Week next week is an opportunity to put the spotlight on vocational education and individual students who are ambassadors of vocational education to inspire more young people to look at vocational education as the first choice pathway to gain skills today for the jobs of

tomorrow. I know the member for Myall Lakes is proud of what vocational education such as TAFE NSW does in his electorate. The North Coast experienced record enrolments in 2016, building on the enrolments of 2015, 2014 and 2013.

TAFE on the North Coast has done a wonderful job in transitioning to the new environment under vocational education. In Taree alone the New South Wales Government is investing millions of dollars in the TAFE campus to bring it up to date so that we can continue to train the workforce of the future. We have seen popular courses such as certificate III in civil construction, early childhood education and individual support for the aged care sector. I know the member for Myall Lakes is passionate. That is why next week, at the start of National Skills Week, he will be celebrating the skills pathway that is vocational education in this State. Last month I announced some wideranging generational and significant change for TAFE in New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Hornsby and the member for Kiama will cease their conversations. Their behaviour is disrespectful.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Not only is TAFE NSW the largest provider of vocational education in the nation, my goal is to make TAFE NSW the best provider in every industry, in every course for every student. The Government's reforms are about finding efficiencies and restoring balance so that more funding goes to training and to education.

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Today I will update the House on enrolments for 2016. In 2015, 429,000 students enrolled in TAFE. As at the end of July 2016 we had already surpassed 2015 enrolments. The budget forecast was 453,000 students in 2016, but in the next few days we will surpass that forecast.

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO: There are increases in the number of apprenticeships and traineeships with more than 33,000 young men and women embarking on apprenticeships and traineeships. The Government accepts that 2015 was a disruptive year for vocational education. I include in that the Federal Government's impact through VET FEE-HELP; the deregulation of the university sector; and greater competition from private providers.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Londonderry will cease shouting. I call the member for Londonderry to order for the first time. I call the member for Londonderry to order for the second time. I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the first time.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: When there is a change of policy such as Smart and Skilled there will always be anxiety in the sector. We have accepted that.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order and cease interjecting.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: These changes have empowered the sector and more students are enrolling in TAFE, and there are reputable private providers. New South Wales offers students a choice. Our funding formula, through Smart and Skilled, is demand driven and enables students to make a decision as to who will provide their training. I have often said in this House that those opposite are the greatest threat to TAFE. If members just listen I will explain why. Throughout the Federal election every Labor candidate and State Labor member campaigned and picketed out the front of TAFE campuses.

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Those opposite are smashing the TAFE brand. Now the Federal election is out of the way—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Londonderry and the member for Swansea will cease shouting.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: As it is two years until the next election, I thought we would have bipartisanship in the promotion of TAFE and vocational education. With the upcoming by-election in Wollongong, the shadow Minister and the Labor candidate for West Wollongong have been photographed outside TAFE and are reported as saying that assets will be sold and that fees will go through the roof—politics 101. They are reported as stating that free scholarships were offered at West Wollongong TAFE. [*Extension of time*]

The shadow Minister, her candidate and the union representative were photographed outside West Wollongong TAFE and they are reported as saying that fees were going up and that scholarships were inaccessible to the community, but free scholarships were available at West Wollongong. But that photograph was not enough; there is another photograph of the shadow Minister standing outside West Wollongong TAFE and scaring students.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting and shouting at the Minister. It is entirely inappropriate.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: The convention in this House is that no props are allowed. I note that the Minister has a pile of props and he should be told not to use them.

The SPEAKER: Order! I acknowledge that convention. The point of order is upheld.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: I am happy to reveal that I am quoting from a statement in the *Illawarra Mercury*.

The SPEAKER: The source has been identified.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: The photograph shows the shadow Minister and her candidate standing at the front of Kingswood TAFE and stating that the Government was going to sell it. The Government has just spent \$27 million on that campus. If the member had looked over her shoulder she would have seen the cranes in the sky and 200 workers.

The SPEAKER: The Minister has sourced the document, so it is acceptable.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Minister has sourced the document and it is no longer a prop in my opinion. Is that the point of order of the member for Strathfield?

Ms Jodi McKay: No. A prop is something that you wave around.

The SPEAKER: Order! Stop the clock.

Ms Jodi McKay: The Minister clearly has a prop in his hand and he is waving it around.

The SPEAKER: A prop is not something that you wave around.

Ms Jodi McKay: What is a prop?

The SPEAKER: A prop is something that will assist you in debate, but for which you have no source. It can be a photograph, a map, a cartoon, a picture or a box. The Minister cited the source of the information, which is a local newspaper; it is not a prop. I note that many members when addressing the House refer to newspaper articles.

Ms Kate Washington: He is waving it.

The SPEAKER: It makes no difference if the Minister waves it around. The member for Port Stephens should just listen.

Mr David Harris: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: I expect something wise from the member for Wyong.

Mr David Harris: Under Standing Order 49 it has been ruled in the past that displaying a document such as extracts from newspaper articles contributes to disorderly behaviour. I think that is what is occurring.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. In and of themselves they do not necessarily contribute to disorder. Disorder occurs when members continue to interject. The Minister will now have two minutes on the clock.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: That was an article in the *Western Weekender*, and I have another article from the *Illawarra Mercury* which has as a headline, "Union cooked up meat claims". The article states that TAFE will be cutting butchery courses in the Illawarra, which is a lie.

The SPEAKER: Order! There should be a full two minutes on the clock.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: They were false claims.

The SPEAKER: Order! Stop the clock.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: I will continue to talk about this issue because those opposite use TAFE as a political football. It is a game we play; it is a battle during question time. Next week is National Skills Week and we now have an opportunity—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: I understand what the member for Maroubra is about to say.

Mr Michael Daley: Fifteen seconds were remaining on the clock.

The SPEAKER: I will seek the Clerk's advice. When I stopped the clock I did not notice how much time the Minister had left and I therefore granted the Minister a further two minutes. The member for Maroubra is correct.

Mr Michael Daley: Did Hansard get that?

The SPEAKER: The member for Maroubra is so gracious in victory. Next time he will not be right.

[Time expired.]

POLICE TACTICAL COMMAND VEHICLE

Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (15:17): My question is directed to the Premier. Given that the Premier stated earlier he wished to learn lessons from the Lindt cafe siege, why more than 600 days since that siege does the NSW Police Force still not have an operational van for negotiation purposes in the event of a terrorist siege?

Mr MIKE BAIRD (Manly—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) (15:18): The police Minister has already answered this question. Operational requirements are undertaken by the police in the areas of resourcing and capital.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier will be heard in silence.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It is right for the NSW Police Force to make decisions as required. It has made a decision relating to an upgrade and it is in the course of being delivered. Opposition members are asking all types of questions. The Leader of the Opposition is correct when he said that I wished to learn lessons from the siege. I say to the Leader of the Opposition and to all those asking similar questions that every member of this House is incredibly proud of what our police do on a daily basis. As I have previously said, while we are sitting comfortably in our electorate offices—

The SPEAKER: Members will cease interjecting.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: —somewhere, on a 24-hour basis, there are men and women who are putting their lives on the line for all of us. Ultimately, we need to ensure that we learn the lessons and do everything that we possibly can to ensure that these events do not happen again and that we are prepared for future events. But let us never forget what our police do on a daily basis. Everyone in this House should be incredibly proud of that.

CONTAINER DEPOSIT SCHEME

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) (15:19): My question is addressed to the Minister for the Environment. How is the Government delivering on its election commitment to reduce litter through the introduction of a container deposit scheme?

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, and Assistant Minister for Planning) (15:20): I thank the member for Drummoyne for his strong advocacy over many years for a container deposit scheme.

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

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: Drink container litter is a major issue for our environment. Although we have an effective kerbside recycling scheme for containers used at home, drink containers are a problem on the streets, on our beaches and in our parks and waterways. By volume, drink containers make up 43 per cent of the litter in those places. That is almost twice the volume of the next largest category. An estimated 160 million drink containers are littered in New South Wales each year. The problem goes beyond visual pollution. It costs our community \$180 million each year to manage and clean up litter.

In February last year the Baird-Grant Government committed, if re-elected, to introduce a cost-effective container deposit scheme by July 2017. In May this year we announced that that scheme would be a 10¢ refund container deposit scheme [CDS], with a 10¢ refund for most beverage containers measuring between 150 millilitres and three litres carrying a New South Wales container deposit scheme mark. Return points will include a combination of collection depots and reverse vending machines. This is the largest litter reduction initiative ever undertaken in New South Wales. It is a key part of delivering on the Premier's priority to reduce the volume of litter by 40 per cent by 2020.

Today we are one step closer to delivering the container deposit scheme, as we opened public consultation on a draft bill. Today we have released the draft bill and a discussion paper. Public consultation lasts for 28 days, finishing on Wednesday 21 September. We are a government that consults. We consulted extensively before announcing in May the form of the container deposit scheme. We received 11,700 submissions, 90 per cent of

which were in favour of a 10¢ refund scheme. The bill and discussion paper that have been released today for public consultation were developed with expert advice from the implementation working group and from six advisory groups made up of industry, waste and environmental experts. The discussion paper will provide information on how different parts of the regulatory regime will work together to underpin the scheme.

The regulatory framework will consist of the bill, a regulation to be made once the bill is passed and contracts between the Minister, the scheme coordinator and network operators. They will be awarded on a competitive and transparent basis to maximise resource recovery and community access to collection points. The framework will also include administrative guidelines which, for example, will lay out how containers can be counted in kerbside recycling and refunds claimed. The discussion paper will provide information and seek community feedback on how the scheme will be coordinated, how the network of collection points will work and how refunds will work, including the potential for contactless refunds using a mobile phone. The discussion paper will also look at how the scheme will interact with kerbside recycling and the roles and obligations under the scheme.

I am pleased to see that New South Wales is not the only State to announce a 10¢ cent container deposit scheme this year. We have led the way and other jurisdictions are following suit. Queensland and Western Australia have announced container deposit schemes. The ACT is considering a scheme. That leaves the Labor State of Victoria as the laggard without a container deposit scheme. I look forward to working with interstate colleagues to make sure that our schemes are as harmonised and as cost-effective as possible. In particular, I look forward to working with my colleague in Queensland to avoid any cross-border issues in the Tweed-Gold Coast area.

The drink containers that will be captured by the deposit scheme are those that are commonly found in the litter stream. Excluded items like plain milk and large fruit juice bottles are usually consumed at home and do not feature prominently in litter. These containers are already captured by council-run kerbside recycling systems. The containers that are eligible for refund in New South Wales will be similar to those in the Northern Territory and South Australia. That simplifies the introduction of the scheme for beverage manufacturers and reduces the opportunity for consumer confusion. What are the advantages of the scheme? It will give every person in New South Wales an incentive to do the right thing and to recycle their container waste. [*Extension of time*]

The experience in South Australia, where a container deposit scheme has been in operation for almost 40 years, and from the many overseas jurisdictions is that these schemes are highly effective at reducing litter. They also provide a great opportunity for charities and community groups to generate revenue. In South Australia tens of millions of dollars are generated for charities and community groups every year. Here in New South Wales, with four times the population of South Australia, a large pool of refunds will be available for those groups. Eligible containers collected through kerbside recycling will be redeemable. That is expected to more than offset any reduction in volume for materials recovery facilities [MRFs].

Over time, the container deposit scheme will complement our existing litter reduction initiatives, such as Hey Tosser and the Waste Less, Recycle More litter grants program. I have great news to announce today, which is that the Government has just received the 2016 National Litter Index figures for New South Wales from Keep Australia Beautiful. In the last financial year there was a 12 per cent reduction in the volume of litter in New South Wales. That means that we have seen a 19 per cent reduction in litter volume over two years, which coincides with our Waste Less, Recycle More litter grants program and Hey Tosser education and enforcement program. This is great news for New South Wales. The legislation and discussion paper are out for consultation. We want everyone to give their 10¢ worth and to have their say. I encourage everyone who is interested in reducing litter in New South Wales and in increasing our recycling rate to read the drafts on the Environment Protection Authority website and to provide comments.

CONTAMINATED LAND MANAGEMENT

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (15:27): My question is directed to the Minister for Planning. Would the Minister advise whether the review of the planning system, with particular reference to State environmental planning policy [SEPP] 55 and the Codes SEPP, will provide for simplification and clarity in managing contaminated lands in New South Wales, and in northern Lake Macquarie in particular?

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Planning) (15:28): I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for his question. I note his persistent, passionate advocacy for his community as it deals with the legacy of more than a century of site contamination in the northern Lake Macquarie towns of Boolaroo, Argenton and Speers Point, around the former Cockle Creek smelter operated by Pasminco. I also note that the member's concern for his constituents led him to investigate at his own expense the measures being taken to manage contamination at Bunker Hill, Idaho, in the United States, which has a similar history.

Obviously, as with all historical legacy issues of contamination, when we are dealing with sites that under current planning and environment laws would never have been able to operate in areas in close proximity to people, we have a challenge in managing those sites in the future. While the site at Boolaroo has been remediated, there are concerns in the surrounding community. Professor Mark Taylor from Macquarie University, a friend of mine, has recently been doing research that has shown there are elevated lead levels in certain residential properties in the vicinity of the former smelter.

While blood tests have shown that lead levels in vulnerable groups are below national guidelines, there are ongoing concerns that with rising property values in the area and the impetus to renovate and redevelop properties threatens disturbing the legacy of contamination over decades. The simple answer to the question asked by the member for Lake Macquarie is that we are looking at ways in which we can simplify and better integrate planning controls around contaminated lands.

As part of the separate review process that I announced last year we have already gone through the current State environmental planning policies created under section 37 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. We have taken out about 16 State environmental planning policies [SEPPs], approximately one-third of the total. Of the two remaining SEPPs, SEPP 33 deals with hazardous and offensive industries and SEPP 55 deals with contaminated lands. Obviously there is an opportunity to better integrate those two SEPPs and to make them work together rather than separately and have an integrated way to deal with this wicked problem—the historical legacy of contamination.

The Government will develop a statewide planning approach for the identification of hazardous and potentially hazardous developments in the past and in the future. We want to ensure that the assessment framework for those developments is appropriate and effective in reducing the risk of harm to human health or any other aspect of the environment such as biodiversity, water, air and so forth. This will involve specifying when development consent is required for remediation work and what considerations are important in assessing development applications for remediation work.

Obviously the response needs to be proportionate. Where there is greater risk there needs to be greater caution, and for a lesser risk there needs to be less caution. Importantly, the existing and future policy framework will not allow complying development to be carried out on contaminated land within the definition of the legislation, the Contaminated Land Management Act, under the commercial, industrial, new buildings and alterations code. Councils can also exclude land based on local circumstances, such as on environmentally sensitive land, for example, biodiversity areas, wetlands, coastal hazard areas and foreshore areas, to name a few.

We will also ensure that remediation work is carried out in accordance with appropriate standards and guidelines. We will ensure that requirements to notify potentially affected parties are appropriate, transparent and meet community expectations. We will ensure we are mandating appropriate measures to be employed to reduce or to minimise the impact of hazardous developments. I am working with my colleague—the new and improved Minister for the Environment—to ensure that the concerns of locals are also addressed.

SPORTING EXCELLENCE

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (15:33): My question is addressed to the Minister for Sport. How is the Government continuing to drive sporting excellence in New South Wales as our Olympians return home?

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Trade, Tourism and Major Events, and Minister for Sport) (15:33): Today the Australian Olympic team returned home from a very successful trip to Rio de Janeiro, and New South Wales was at the forefront of that success. Twenty-eight of the 71 Aussies who returned home with medals are from New South Wales. I make special mention of the fantastic work that has been done by our sailing team, with Tom Burton bringing home a gold medal and our sailing team bringing home three silver medals. I know of one success story that will be of importance to the member for Holsworthy—that is, the outstanding success of a fantastic champion—a new Australian Olympic champion from south-western Sydney—Chloe Esposito, who did an outstanding job in the modern pentathlon. She has kept it in the family as her brother Max also did an outstanding job by finishing in the top 10.

But it does not stop there when it comes to the success of New South Wales athletes. Seven members of our Women's Rugby Sevens team are from New South Wales. They did an amazing job by winning the first rugby sevens gold medal in the Olympics. These amazing women on the rugby pitch are setting a new standard and are showing everyone across our community just what women are capable of on the sporting field. In the pool, Emma McKeon did an outstanding job by winning four medals—gold, two silver and one bronze—during the Olympics. I know that the member for Keira and the member for Kiama are happy as they were strong advocates for Emma to march in the closing ceremony. We now look forward to success at the Paralympic Games.

We are also investing in the future of sport across New South Wales with an additional \$2 million being invested in high performance programs at the NSW Institute of Sport that will allow a number of sports programs to be expanded, and also for sports to return to the institute, which has been such a hallmark of success for a long time. We are also investing in events that will attract many future athletes to New South Wales, with the New South Wales Government partnering with Athletics Australia to bring the Australian Athletics Championships to Sydney Olympic Park in March next year. For the first time both open and junior athletes will compete at the same event alongside able-bodied athletes and para-athletes. It is a fantastic showcase of Australia's athletic excellence.

This Government is also investing in infrastructure that will enable our sporting heroes to come from our local communities. A great example is the New South Wales Rugby League Centre of Excellence at Sydney Olympic Park, the construction of which commenced this week, and which is co-funded by the Government and by New South Wales rugby league. It will be home not only for our State of Origin teams but also for all our representative sides across the State. It will also include training programs for coaches, administrators and particularly those working across volunteer improvement programs in rugby league. It would be remiss of me not to recognise the fantastic work of our female rugby league players who this year won the State of Origin game, beating Queensland for the first time in 17 years.

The good news keeps coming for community sport. After last year's fantastic success in the Asian Cup when the Australian Socceroos did an amazing job to win that tournament, the Government has been able to reinvest the \$4 million surplus that it made back into community sport. New South Wales football clubs will be able to access that new \$4 million Asian Cup Legacy Fund, which will be invested in community facilities across the State. The 11 regional academies of sport, which continue to be one of the foundation stones for our high performance pathways, are often referred to as being at the sub-elite level. Emma McKeon came from the Illawarra Academy of Sport. In this year's budget the Government allocated another \$1 million to regional academies of sport to fund community grassroots sport. The Government has funded high performance pathways and the NSW Institute of Sport and we are seeing greater performances. [*Extension of time*]

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge a unique event that is coming up this weekend. American College Football is coming to Sydney for the first time with the University of California-Berkeley Golden Bears taking on the University of Hawaii Rainbow Warriors for the opening round of the season. It is the only game of football this Friday night in the United States, so the audiences will be massive. The event will be a fantastic opportunity to promote New South Wales as a tourism destination and also to showcase the fantastic support that our community gives to sport.

I know that the university players who arrived in the past couple of days have been blown away by the welcome they have received. We are expecting more than 60,000 people to attend the game at ANZ Stadium. It will be an amazing spectacle. A number of the athletes I was talking to this morning wanted to know what was happening on the other side of the Chamber, because they have heard that Labor members are getting ready for their own Olympics. Have members heard of the dream team, made up of the member for Summer Hill and the member for Kogarah? They are doing synchronised swimming together—actually, it could be the synchronised diving.

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. Until now the Minister has done very well at being relevant. He is now clearly veering away from the question he was asked.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I am eager to hear the Minister's answer because he is talking about the Olympics. The Minister has the call.

Mr STUART AYRES: We are chasing sporting excellence. I know that the member for Maroubra has been training really hard. He is up for the marathon and is in it for the long haul. He has a mortgage on the silver medal.

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: The member for Maroubra and sporting excellence?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I uphold the point of order. The time for questions has expired.

Bills

ADOPTION AMENDMENT (INSTITUTE OF OPEN ADOPTION STUDIES) BILL 2016

Returned

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning the abovementioned bill with amendments. I set down consideration of the Legislative Council amendments as an order of the day for later hour.

*Petitions***PETITIONS RECEIVED**

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**.

South Coast Rail Services

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

Route 389 Bus Services

Petition requesting more reliable 389 bus services, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Social Housing

Petition requesting that the Sirius building be retained and its social housing function be continued, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Pet Shops

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

*Business of the House***BUSINESS LAPSED**

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I advise members that, in accordance with Standing Order 105 (3):

- (1) General Business interrupted second reading speech No. 1 (Plastic Bags Prohibition Bill) and General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) Nos 752 to 769 have lapsed.
- (2) General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) Nos 770 to 779, 781 to 787, 789 and 791 will lapse tomorrow.

INDIAN INDEPENDENCE DAY**Reordering**

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) (15:43): I move:

That the General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice) given by me this day [Indian Independence Day] have precedence on Thursday 25 August 2016.

This motion should be given precedence. Indian Independence Day is celebrated each year on 15 August. It is a national day of celebration marking India's independence from British rule. This year was especially significant because it was the seventieth anniversary of the day. As part of the many celebrations, last Monday I and other members had the pleasure of joining with the Australian Indian community and the Consul General of India to attend a flag-raising ceremony. Hundreds of people attended the event to celebrate the day.

As we know, Australia and India have never had closer links through trade, culture and their people. They are important links. In fact, something like 450,000 people who were originally born in India now call Australia home. The great suburb of Harris Park is home to many people from the Gujarat region. The suburb is known as "Little India" and the most common surname in the area is Patel. Between 2010 and 2015 more than 180,000 Indian migrants arrived in Australia—more than in any other country. We have a fast-growing migrant community that is making a valuable contribution to our State and our country.

India is our largest source of skilled migrants. Indian students make up a critical part of our education sector, being our second-largest source of international students, with more than 53,000 studying in Australia in 2015. Two-way trade in goods and services between our nations totalled some \$18 billion in the 2014-15 financial year. India is now our fifth-largest export market, with goods valued at \$9.8 billion being exported in 2014. The Australian Indian community has been a great contributor to our society. From the fields of medicine and

accounting to information technology and law, the prowess and skills of the Australian Indian community are widely acknowledged.

The Indian community is known for their hard work and entrepreneurial attitude, with many Indians in Australia choosing to operate and grow their businesses in New South Wales. Last week I attended the Western Sydney Awards for Business Excellence along with our great Treasurer, the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian. Adactin, which is a growing business in the Australian Indian community, came away with a well-deserved award for business excellence. Located in Parramatta, Adactin is a quality provider of information technology testing software and processes. I commend the team for growing an Australian business. It is for these reasons that this motion should be given precedence.

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (15:46): My motion must be debated as a matter of urgency tomorrow because the Baird Government can no longer hide the fact that WestConnex is a mess. The Premier has done everything he can to shroud the project in secrecy. Now we know why. We have found out that the Government does not care about the people. It does not care about the residents of the inner west, nor motorists who will be hit with sky-high tolls. It certainly does not care about the hundreds of families who have been ripped off by hundreds of thousands of dollars in dodgy acquisition deals.

Earlier this month we learned that the Government will increase tolls above the consumer price index [CPI]. Motorists understand that paying tolls is a necessary evil when living in a big city, but if CPI is a marker of the cost of living why is the Government hitting motorists above that rate? Motorists already know the answer. They know about the WestConnex cost blowout of \$16.8 billion. They look at the toll gantries on the M4 that the Premier had built as the very first part of the project. They are also aware that the Government is tolling trips that have never been tolled before, including from Auburn to Olympic Park at a cost of \$2.48 each way. They know that the Government is making them pay for its mistakes.

But nothing compares with the burden the Premier has put on inner west residents whose homes were acquired. The Premier offered a mea culpa and apologised for what he called "mistakes" in the process of property acquisitions. He said, "These are personal individual cases where people's homes have been acquired and I think the way we've gone about it hasn't been as careful as it should have been." This week we learned that the Premier knew the acquisitions were unfair and that the process was rigged against residents. He and the Minister for Finance, Services and Property disgracefully sat on a report that showed the process needed to be fixed.

The Premier was intent on making hardworking families who were losing their homes pay and, despite his apologies, he did absolutely nothing to help those inner west families who are being ripped off by a process that we now know was rigged from the start. The Premier's apology was nothing more than crocodile tears from a man intent on making other people pay for his mistakes. Labor has moved in this place for tolling transparency.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. I cannot hear the member for Summer Hill.

Ms JO HAYLEN: Labor has also moved in this place to make sure that WestConnex is covered by freedom of information provisions and this Government has blocked each of those attempts because, when it comes to Baird's WestConnex, nobody wins—not inner west residents, not motorists and definitely not the people of New South Wales.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the motion of the member for Parramatta have precedence on Thursday 25 August 2016.

The House divided.

Ayes47
Noes33
Majority..... 14

AYES

Anderson, Mr K
Barilaro, Mr J
Brookes, Mr G
Coure, Mr M
Elliott, Mr D
Gibbons, Ms M
Hazzard, Mr B
Humphries, Mr K
Lee, Dr G

Aplin, Mr G
Berejiklian, Ms G
Conolly, Mr K
Crouch, Mr A
Evans, Mr L
Goward, Ms P
Henskens, Mr A
Johnsen, Mr M
Maguire, Mr D

Ayres, Mr S
Bromhead, Mr S (teller)
Constance, Mr A
Dominello, Mr V
Fraser, Mr A
Gulaptis, Mr C
Hodgkinson, Ms K
Kean, Mr M
Marshall, Mr A

AYES

Notley-Smith, Mr B	O'Dea, Mr J	Patterson, Mr C (teller)
Pavey, Ms M	Perrottet, Mr D	Petinos, Ms E
Piccoli, Mr A	Provest, Mr G	Rowell, Mr J
Sidoti, Mr J	Skinner, Ms J	Speakman, Mr M
Stokes, Mr R	Taylor, Mr M	Toole, Mr P
Tudehope, Mr D	Upton, Ms G	Ward, Mr G
Williams, Mr R	Williams, Ms L	

NOES

Aitchison, Ms J	Atalla, Mr E	Car, Ms P
Catley, Ms Y	Chanthivong, Mr A	Crakanthorp, Mr T
Daley, Mr M	Dib, Mr J	Doyle, Ms T
Finn, Ms J	Greenwich, Mr A	Harris, Mr D
Harrison, Ms J	Haylen, Ms J	Hoening, Mr R
Hornery, Ms S	Kamper, Mr S	Lalich, Mr N (teller)
Lynch, Mr P	McDermott, Dr H	McKay, Ms J
Mehan, Mr D	Mihailuk, Ms T	Minns, Mr C
Park, Mr R	Parker, Mr J	Piper, Mr G
Robertson, Mr J	Smith, Ms T	Warren, Mr G (teller)
Washington, Ms K	Watson, Ms A	Zangari, Mr G

PAIRS

Baird, Mr M	Barr, Mr C
Davies, Ms T	Foley, Mr L
Grant, Mr T	Hay, Ms N
Roberts, Mr A	Smith, Ms K

Motion agreed to.*Motions Accorded Priority***NSW POLICE FORCE****Consideration**

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (15:55): My motion deserves to be accorded priority because almost 1,700 police officers in the NSW Police Force defend our State against crime and preserve people and property against each and every act in contravention of the law. Indeed, as the Premier said earlier today during question time, serving as an officer of the NSW Police Force is a remarkable act of public service. This Government is doing all it can to support the health, safety and wellbeing of our police officers. In fact, we have made this a priority and over the next four years we will provide \$17.1 million to expand health and wellbeing support for police officers. The infrastructure and police stations in which our officers work must also be of the highest quality.

The Government is committed to equipping our police with the resources and modern facilities they need to keep communities safe. We have a record capital works budget of \$218 million and we are on track to deliver on our commitment to provide officers with state-of-the-art workplaces and technology. In the 2016-17 budget \$57 million has been allocated for new and upgraded police stations at various locations across the State. We are committed to providing our police with accommodation that best suits modern-day police operations. The Government has provided significant funding towards technology and equipment to assist police to do their jobs. My motion should be accorded priority because we need to recognise and say thanks to those police officers who pull on the blue uniform each day, not knowing what they will encounter during their shifts—whether they are at Parramatta, Penrith, Tamworth, Dubbo or wherever.

NEPEAN HOSPITAL UPGRADE

Consideration

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (15:59): Nepean Hospital is the single most stressed hospital in this State. It is at breaking point—and it is no wonder. Western Sydney is in the middle of a population boom. We are shouldering the lion's share of Sydney's growth, but where is the health infrastructure? We have had whole suburbs the size of small country towns built in our areas in the past decade, but what does this Government do? When the hospital, the community and everyone around us is calling for the desperately needed upgrade—the \$360 million upgrade—the Government gives us \$1 million and then builds a \$50 million pedestrian bridge. Where are this Government's priorities? Nepean Hospital has the longest elective surgery list in New South Wales, with just over 3,000 patients waiting and more than half of patients waiting longer than four hours in its emergency department.

Pregnant mothers are being sent to Katoomba to have their babies, and roofs are collapsing. My colleague the member for Blue Mountains and I are both constantly inundated with stories of real people waiting hours and hours for treatment, sick, with their children—putting even more pressure on our overworked health professionals. The situation is so dire that our highly specialised, hardworking doctors are doing nothing short of begging the Government for money. Let us think about that for a moment: Doctors, on their knees, are pleading for funding from the Government for their communities. That is an extraordinary, unprecedented step. "We are absolutely desperate", said Dr Nhi Nguyen, the acting head of the hospital's intensive care unit. But no-one has put it better than the recently retired chair of the Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District, Dr Patrick Cregan, who said:

Would you get on an aeroplane with 102 other people if there were only 100 seats on the plane? Well of course not, but that is what they—

that is the Government—

expect patients to put up with in Penrith. I say go to your piggy bank, you've got \$10.4 billion in it, and spend it out here at Nepean where it's desperately needed.

The people of Western Sydney demand and deserve this upgrade. Hundreds of them will rally on Sunday to call on the Government to fund it. They spoke loud and clear at the recent Federal election about the Government's complete betrayal of the communities that need this hospital. Just ask the newly elected Labor member for Lindsay. If, as with the greyhounds, the M4 tolls and the cruel cuts to TAFE, the Premier refuses to listen to the people of Western Sydney, we will all know once and for all where he puts us—and that is last.

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

The House divided.

Ayes44
Noes34
Majority..... 10

AYES

Anderson, Mr K	Aplin, Mr G	Ayes, Mr S
Barilaro, Mr J	Berejiklian, Ms G	Bromhead, Mr S (teller)
Brookes, Mr G	Conolly, Mr K	Constance, Mr A
Coure, Mr M	Crouch, Mr A	Dominello, Mr V
Elliott, Mr D	Evans, Mr L	Fraser, Mr A
Gibbons, Ms M	Goward, Ms P	Gulaptis, Mr C
Hazzard, Mr B	Henskens, Mr A	Humphries, Mr K
Johnsen, Mr M	Lee, Dr G	Maguire, Mr D
Marshall, Mr A	Notley-Smith, Mr B	O'Dea, Mr J
Patterson, Mr C (teller)	Pavey, Ms M	Petinos, Ms E
Piccoli, Mr A	Provest, Mr G	Rowell, Mr J
Sidoti, Mr J	Skinner, Ms J	Speakman, Mr M
Stokes, Mr R	Taylor, Mr M	Toole, Mr P
Tudehope, Mr D	Upton, Ms G	Ward, Mr G
Williams, Mr R	Williams, Ms L	

NOES

Aitchison, Ms J	Atalla, Mr E	Car, Ms P
Catley, Ms Y	Chanthivong, Mr A	Crakanthorp, Mr T
Daley, Mr M	Dib, Mr J	Doyle, Ms T
Finn, Ms J	Foley, Mr L	Greenwich, Mr A
Harris, Mr D	Harrison, Ms J	Haylen, Ms J
Hoenig, Mr R	Hornery, Ms S	Kamper, Mr S
Lalich, Mr N (teller)	Lynch, Mr P	McDermott, Dr H
McKay, Ms J	Mehan, Mr D	Mihailuk, Ms T
Minns, Mr C	Park, Mr R	Parker, Mr J
Piper, Mr G	Robertson, Mr J	Smith, Ms K
Warren, Mr G (teller)	Washington, Ms K	Watson, Ms A
Zangari, Mr G		

PAIRS

Baird, Mr M	Barr, Mr C
Davies, Ms T	Smith, Ms T
Grant, Mr T	Hay, Ms N

Motion agreed to.**NSW POLICE FORCE****Priority**

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (16:09): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Supports the work of the New South Wales police who work relentlessly to keep our communities safe.
- (2) Congratulates the 208 probationary constables who were sworn in at last week's attestation parade.
- (3) Notes the Government has delivered an additional 900 positions since 2011, with an authorised strength at a record high of 16,706 officers.
- (4) Notes the Government is delivering on its commitment for record numbers of police officers to help make New South Wales a safer place to live.

I will refer to the additional police on the streets to drive down crime and reduce antisocial behaviour in many areas, whether in Sydney or in Cobar, Broken Hill, Tamworth, Broken Bay or even Coffs Harbour. The Central Metropolitan Region has been allocated 75 new probationary constables, the North West Metropolitan Region has been allocated 46, the South West Metropolitan Region has been allocated 53, the Southern Region has been allocated seven while the Western Region has been allocated 27. The Oxley Local Area Command, my area in the Tamworth electorate within the Western Region, received five new probationary constables. It was such a delight to meet them. On Monday we had a welcoming catch-up. They join some of the most highly credentialed and dedicated police officers in the NSW Police Force.

I refer to Inspector Kylie Endemi, Inspector Phil O'Reilly, the crime manager, and Acting Commander Inspector Jeff Budd. That body of knowledge, leadership commitment and dedication, along with that of their colleagues, is the reason the five new probationary constables will be taught by the very best. The numbers are spread right across. Members opposite suggest it is sandbagging some seats. In the South West Metropolitan Region, Bankstown has been allocated five new probationary constables, with Fairfield and Macquarie Fields both being allocated three each, and the list goes on. In the North West Metropolitan Region, Blacktown has been allocated three probationary constables, with another one to Blue Mountains and six to Mount Druitt. I note the member for Mount Druitt is in the Chamber this afternoon.

It is important that police be provided with the very best resources. Our local officers do a fantastic job. I am sure across this great State those police numbers will be most welcome, providing grassroots solutions to local issues. Some of the probationary constables are originally from country New South Wales and they will return. That is the beauty of having country police officers in country New South Wales. They understand the lie of the land. Not only must we provide resources and boost numbers; we must also continually upgrade technology. The Mobile Policing Program will provide mobile technology to frontline officers to instantly access police

systems in the field. Funding will be provided for a two-year project for statewide rollout of enhanced intelligence capabilities to all operational commands, delivering efficiencies in the recording, use and sharing of intelligence.

The Government has allocated \$6 million in 2016-17 to commence the rollout of integrated light armour vests to frontline police officers. We have been pushing for some of the safety equipment that is now being provided. Whether it is a one-man police station in the middle of western New South Wales or a full-on, fully allocated command right in the middle of Sydney, it does not matter. We must provide police officers with the very best equipment. In addition, \$13 million has been allocated in the 2016-17 budget to strengthen police aerial surveillance capability, including the purchase of new fixed-wing aircraft PolAir 8 and the replacement of two ageing aircraft, PolAir 2 and PolAir 6. These are fantastic initiatives by the Government, which recognises that we must pay respect to police and thank them for the great job they do.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (16:15): I support the motion of the member for Tamworth. I like the member for Tamworth; he is a good bloke. The Opposition will support the motion because we support our police.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Fairfield will return to the leave of the motion.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: As we all know, when a matter is accorded priority and we vote, we make it clear that we vote for the motion as we support our police. We regard our hospital in Western Sydney and Nepean as very important but we also support our police. We welcome the 208 probationary constables who will do great work in our local area commands right across the State. As we have said previously in this Chamber, police put their lives on the line every day to protect us and we should thank these men and women who do an outstanding job.

I need to put some perspective to the numbers. I say to the member for Tamworth that we welcome the 53 new probationary constables in the South West Metropolitan Region, but acknowledge that we still have approximately 100 fewer officers. I will put it in context with what is happening in south-western Sydney with the recent spate of shootings and from discussions with police in Fairfield and Cabramatta, who do an outstanding job. When the shooting occurs—and the member for Myall Lakes will know this—resources are diverted to investigate what has occurred. Police tell us that as a result, they are short with calls for service. They have said that in south-west metropolitan Sydney they have 100 fewer police. As of last week in the Sydney Basin there were 512 fewer police. We honour the work they do, but police on the frontline must be resourced. They must have men and women backing them up. When a spate of shootings occur they need people to support them.

I place on the record the great work the former Labor Government did in south-west Sydney—and I am sure they do right across New South Wales—with the intervention in Cabramatta, which has brought our area onto the world stage. Busloads of tourists now travel from around the city and around the State to enjoy the culinary delights on offer in Cabramatta and Fairfield. That was the result of the good work undertaken by the former Labor Government with the intervention in Cabramatta and Fairfield. Labor also built new police stations in Cabramatta, Fairfield, Merrylands, St Marys, Wyong and Kogarah, to name a few, and upgraded Kingsgrove and Bankstown police stations. I place on record also my sincere thanks to Frank Mennilli from the South West Metropolitan Region, who does a great job ensuring that our local area commands work to the best of their ability.

Together with Commander Peter Lennon in Fairfield and Commander Wayne Murray in Cabramatta he does an outstanding job. Each day they accompany their officers into the community to ensure programs such as the White Ribbon initiative and support for refugees are delivered. The Opposition supports the motion. It was necessary to place on the record the direction in which we need to go. Every member realises that the fine men and women who serve us every day need resources to keep us safe night and day.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) (16:19): I congratulate the 208 probationary constables who took attestations to join the NSW Police Force on 19 August. Last Monday I was pleased to welcome five probationary constables to the eastern suburbs Waverley police station. Coogee is an eclectic electorate. It is great to talk to the new constables and explain to them the contrasts within the electorate of Coogee. It is important to thank them for choosing such a challenging career and vocation. I spoke of the challenges they will be confronting and how rewarding and appreciative the people of New South Wales, this Chamber and this Government are.

It is important to note that the New South Wales Government has delivered an additional 900 positions since 2011. As at August 2016 the authorised strength of the NSW Police Force is at a record high of 16,706 officers. The authorised strength increased by 221 during the term of the fifty-sixth Parliament. In 2016 the NSW Police Force recruited five domestic specialists, two counterterrorism and special tactics specialists, seven specialists into child abuse, fraud and cybercrime squads. In May 2016, 13 additional positions were allocated to counterterrorism and special tactics, and the child abuse and fraud cybercrime squads of the State Crime Command.

In December 2015 eight counterterrorism special tactics positions and six domestic violence operative positions were created. In August 2015, 100 additional positions were created in specialist command. This is positive news for New South Wales. The NSW Police Force has increased its strength since this Government was elected in 2011. The Government made an election commitment and it is delivering on that commitment with record numbers of police officers being assigned to commands across the State. I congratulate the 208 probationary constables. In particular I congratulate the nine probationary constables attached to the eastern beaches and the five who commenced in the eastern suburbs on Monday morning.

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (16:23): I support the motion of the member for Tamworth, together with the member for Fairfield and the member for Coogee. Crime is an issue that always has the community talking and sometimes makes the community angry. People want to feel safe in their homes, at work, at school, in playgrounds and on the streets. There is a desire from the people of New South Wales for increased police presence. It is certainly appropriate to congratulate the 208 probationary constables sworn into the Police Force last week.

The Minister yesterday reported that Lake Macquarie will receive 93 new police. I have a list of the local area command allocations dated Friday 10 August and it notes that the northern region will receive no additional police officers. I ask for clarification on my local area command in relation to the entire northern region. In Lake Macquarie the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research rates for the 24- and 60-month trends have been stable or decreasing in all areas over that time. The only exception is fraud over a 60-month period. This reflects the great work of the police within the community to deter crime. Deterrence is a much better option than a hard line law and order approach. Prevention is better than cure.

When Labor left Government crime levels were stable or falling across all 17 crime categories. Robberies without a weapon were down by 13.3 per cent, assaults were down 4.5 per cent and theft from a motor vehicle was down 21 per cent. Labor hired more than 3,100 new police officers. That must be placed in the context of the total number in this motion, which is a force of 16,706. The Opposition recognised the hard work of our police during that time and doubled police salaries. I recognise the community work of Lake Macquarie Local Area Command and the police across the State.

On Friday Lake Macquarie Local Area Command will support Wear It Purple Day, which is a student-run event aiming to eliminate bullying based on sexuality and gender diversity. Yesterday Lake Macquarie Local Area Command organised for Thalia Standley, a young girl injured last year in a terrible dog attack, to take a PolAir helicopter flight for her ninth birthday. I pay tribute to the work that the local area command does on White Ribbon Day and the high visibility they have with NAIDOC Eastlakes and Westlakes. It certainly improves the relationship with local Aboriginal people. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (16:26): In reply: I thank the members who have united to support police across the State: the member for Coogee, the member for Charlestown and my good friend the member for Fairfield. I thank them for the kind words. It is great to see some camaraderie when talking about the people who we respect so much. Last week I attended the Indigenous Police Recruiting Our Way Delivery program [IPROWD] celebration at Campbelltown TAFE in the electorate of the member for Fairfield. The IPROWD program is another way of boosting the ranks. There were nine graduates of the IPROWD program who will hopefully go on to a career in policing.

I will respond to the member for Charlestown's question in relation to the northern region. There were 208 probationary constables across New South Wales: the southern region received seven; the western region received 27; south-west metropolitan region received 53; central metropolitan region received 75; and the north-west metropolitan region received 46. In recent years the Oxley Local Area Command in the western region has struggled to increase numbers. The northern region was having significant problems in relation to crime, so over the past couple of years 90 officers have gone through to the northern region. The members for Myall Lakes and the Tweed can verify their increased resources and allocated strength. On this occasion the numbers were spread: We were thin while you were being bolstered. There are swings and roundabouts. I thank the members for their support. We need to support our police officers.

I thank the 208 probationary constables who were sworn in at last week's attestation parade. I wish them a successful, safe career. We need to remember that when we are running away, they are running in. They do a very difficult job. We are proud of them. They never know what they face when they put on the blue uniform and step outside their home. They kiss their loved ones goodbye, not knowing what they may encounter. I thank the member for Charlestown, the member for Fairfield and the member for Coogee for contributing to debate on this motion accorded priority.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the motion as moved by the member for Tamworth be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.*Private Members' Statements***AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (16:30): I recently had the opportunity to attend the NSW Federation of Housing Associations conference on 28 July. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of the chief executive officer, Wendy Hayhurst, and the chairperson, John McKenna. I thank them for the opportunity to deliver the keynote address. The conference took place over two days at the Sydney Masonic Centre. It posed the question, "What would it take to create 100,000 new affordable housing dwellings in New South Wales?" For my community of Bankstown and for every community across the State this is an urgent question. Many in my electorate have shared with me their concern at how difficult it is to purchase a home in Bankstown, with the median house price in the area sitting at just under \$910,000, and many properties selling for well over \$1 million on a regular basis.

Vigorous conversation about housing affordability—not only affordable housing but social housing—is occurring throughout New South Wales. There is a growing recognition that we are facing a crisis of enormous proportions. Whether in Bankstown or Bondi, Chester Hill or Chatswood, the public is recognising the need for affordability and for equity of access to the housing market. Every week it seems there is a new report or another article that paints a dire picture of the situation we face. Last week the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that Sydney's median price for a three-bedroom unit was now \$1 million. The astronomical rise in the price of housing is leaving more and more people, whether young or old, on a low or average income, unable to rent or buy a home in the community in which they have always lived. Ordinary people looking to start a family and get ahead in life are being forced further toward the fringes of our cities, putting additional pressure on infrastructure and on their personal lives.

NSW Labor is forging ahead with a robust and mature policy debate. We have released a discussion paper on housing affordability. As always, Labor is leading the discussion on housing affordability because it knows housing affordability is a critical issue for this State. It is critical because housing prices are more than just a statistic; they have a dramatic impact on the day-to-day lives of ordinary people. The problem of affordability is more than personal. It has severe implications for the long-term productivity of our State, and productivity growth is crucial if we want to grow our economy and improve living standards for all. The Premier's own Affordable Housing Taskforce told him in no uncertain terms that "a shortage of affordable housing can have negative implications for the State's economic competitiveness". The report makes plain the need for comprehensive policies to address the shortage of affordable housing. As far as leadership on this issue goes, the Government has left us wanting. We have not heard from that task force for some time.

All communities need police and ambulance staff, and the staff who make our public transport system work. No matter where we live in New South Wales, we need teachers in our schools and we need the care and expertise of nurses in our hospitals. Yet all of these workers earn modest wages. A recent report found that 95 per cent of suburbs are unaffordable for a Sydney nurse to purchase a home in. What sort of civilised society would be content to tuck nurses, teachers and police away in areas where there is a long commute to work? That makes their lives more difficult. The productivity of our State, and equitable access to the key services that we all need, depends on these key workers living in close proximity to the jobs and services that we all depend on.

In the discussion paper I released I asked members of Parliament, members of the public and representatives from the housing and planning sectors to provide submissions by the end of August. We are asking what the target for affordable housing should be and how we can reach that target. We invite discussion on inclusion in zoning and the need to audit land. We also ask for input on other housing matters and policy decisions that need to be taken into consideration to ensure that the pressure on key workers and families on an average income is alleviated and to support them in buying a home. I encourage all interested parties to make submissions to the paper. I again thank the NSW Federation of Housing Associations for inviting me to participate in the conference. It covered wideranging topics. Shadow Minister for Planning Michael Daley and Minister for Planning Rob Stokes also attended the conference, as did many in the housing sector. Such occasions provide us with an opportunity to move forward on affordable housing.

TRIBUTE TO BARRY JOHNSTON, OAM

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) (16:35): I pay tribute to a pillar of local government not only in the Northern Tablelands but also across New South Wales. Councillor Barry Charles Johnston, OAM, of Inverell Shire Council has clocked up 42 years of service to his community as a local government representative. Barry will retire at the local government elections on 10 September. Barry moved to the region from the coast in 1966. He was initially elected to public office in 1974 as a councillor on the then Ashford Shire

Council. He then served as a councillor on the amalgamated Inverell Shire Council, serving as president or mayor for a substantial part of that time. For more than half his years in service he led the council.

As a young councillor in Gunnedah in 2004, finding my way in the new world of local government, I found in Barry a strong mentor and adviser. To me he was and will always be Mr Inverell. I treasured his guidance and listened to his advice. For better or worse, he is partly responsible for my being where I am today. I enjoyed my time in local government and was able to serve in many roles due to Barry's guidance and leadership. My time in local government was as fulfilling as it was rewarding. I thank Barry for his advice.

When we look at the record of Barry's service to Ashford and the Inverell Shire, it is the breadth of his experience and know-how that is most striking. He served with distinction on the Shires Association and the Country Mayors Association. I was honoured to follow him as the representative of B Division on the Shires Association executive. I also served as senior vice-president of that association—again, a role that Barry once held. The list of committees and groups he has been a part of over the four decades is a long one indeed. Included are all manner of initiatives: community safety, education, regional and urban development, noxious weeds, festivals, arts and culture, river care, Landcare, economic growth, finances, drug advisory, traffic advisory, planning, crime prevention, tourism, policing and even a committee to develop the Inverell coat of arms. Barry had a finger in every pie.

Barry served through some of the most difficult years for regional New South Wales: the cattle recession of the 1980s, several droughts after that, growing unemployment and tough economic times as Australia faced the recession we had to have in the early 1990s. A visitor to the Inverell district today will find a vibrant community and town. There is industry, a world-class saleyard for livestock and an abattoir that takes in stock from across the region. There is a bustling shopping precinct with unique and boutique businesses shuffling the big multinationals into the back streets. The roads are wide, landscaped and thoroughly inviting.

With strong community and council support—record State Government funding has been secured—the major upgrades to Inverell Hospital is one such project and the associated planning process is currently underway. A large part of the vibrancy is due to the work of my friend Barry Johnston and his leadership to council and the community. He is a champion of the Inverell and district communities. While local government in general will be much poorer for his absence after the September elections, he leaves public service with an enviable reputation and with his head, deservedly, held incredibly high. Inverell Shire Council and the community continues to grow and to thrive. Current councillors and staff have also played their part in carrying on Barry's legacy which in no small part is due to the groundwork that was laid by an old coastie who decided to put down roots all those years ago, making Ashford and Inverell his home. Well done, Barry. Thank you for the support and for the interest that you took in me but, more importantly, your tireless advocacy for your community. You will always be Mr Inverell to many people in Inverell shire, including me. Congratulations Barry Johnston, OAM.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation) (16:40): I pay respects to Mr Barry Johnston, OAM. I do not know Barry Johnston but I know the great member for Northern Tablelands—one of the products of Barry's leadership. The member for Northern Tablelands regards Barry Johnston as a senior mentor who guided and moulded him. As he is an outstanding member of Parliament with leadership qualities it speaks volumes about Barry Johnston. Barry strikes me as one of those old school councillors who has been integrated into the fabric of community life. I thank Barry for his work and for guiding the member for Northern Tablelands into Parliament and for the leadership that he now shows.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: With the indulgence of the House, I cannot let this opportunity go without recognising Barry Johnston, OAM. Recently I had the privilege of attending a farewell for Councillor Col Sullivan, who had served local government for 42 years. Both Col and Barry made a contribution to local government not only in their respective shires and councils but also in this State. Well done, Barry.

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Ms PRU GOWARD (Goulburn—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Medical Research, Assistant Minister for Health, Minister for Women, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (16:41): I bring to the attention of the House the incredible contribution that Highlands Drive Safe—a driver training business in my electorate—makes to people living in communities right across the Southern Highlands. I will share with the House the difference that Sue and Murray Tyler make to a number of people living with special needs and how they are empowered to live happily and independently in the community. This is no simple task, but giving people their independence is what drives Sue and Murray every day.

Over the years local families have approached Sue and Murray for assistance to teach loved ones with autism or Asperger's syndrome to drive. While this has not always been easy, Sue and Murray have been dedicated to their clients with special needs, teaching them to focus on what is happening on the road in front of them,

behind them and with other cars. Learning to drive requires skills and aptitudes that go beyond knowing how to manage the speed of the car and its direction. Driving demands a high degree of what is known as situational awareness. Road and weather conditions and the movements of drivers in other cars are all part of that.

As this year's road toll reminds us, safe driving requires a multifactorial focus that cannot be diminished by taking too strong an interest in the phone in our lap, in the birds that we pass, or in the colour of the car in front of us. That is a huge challenge for people with autism or Asperger's syndrome. Equally, learning how to teach these clients has been a challenge for Sue and Murray. But as is the way with committed teachers, they tell me this has been an extremely rewarding learning curve for them. They have invested heavily in research and have consulted widely to find the best way to teach road and traffic awareness to people without the natural predisposition for awareness most of us have and take for granted.

Sue and Murray are not keeping their new skills to themselves; they have begun developing support and training services for other driver supervisors and instructors and, in the future, hope to offer these services to government staff who interact with drivers diagnosed with autism or Asperger's syndrome. I will give their new website a plug while I have an opportunity to do so—it is www.aspergerdrivertraining.com. Members can also find them on Facebook under the same name.

As autism and Asperger's are much more commonly and easily diagnosed nowadays, Sue and Murray are providing support to organisations in the United States of America, Canada, the United Kingdom and from other States across Australia. Obviously I am a huge fan of Sue and Murray Tyler. Recently I sat down with them to learn more about their business and to appreciate just how dedicated they are to ensuring all sorts of special needs groups are serviced. This might include people with disability, older people approaching their eighty-fifth birthday driving test, and others with cognitive impairments.

Before that conversation, I had never truly understood how difficult it would be for people with these conditions to learn to drive safely and, similarly, how difficult it is to teach these people in a way that makes sense to them. I learnt so much. I was also so proud to know that we have companies like Highlands Drive Safe in regional New South Wales pioneering these sorts of services to empower people to live independent and full lives. We must never forget the importance of driving across the wide brown land of Australia. Driving is literally the key to freedom and, in regional New South Wales, it is very much the key to independence. If we want Australians in all their glorious diversity to live well and independently, Sue and Murray are making a great contribution.

I also draw to the attention of the House an outstanding community organisation in the Southern Highlands called Dignity Limited which is run by the indomitable Suzanne Hopman and Dr Michelle Mulvihill. Dignity has been established to assist people who have become homeless with temporary accommodation and assistance to solve their homelessness with dignity. That includes women escaping domestic violence. Recently I was privileged to be invited officially to launch Dignity, with the launch also serving as a fundraiser to provide support services and essential items for those in need. Suzanne's work is strongly supported by Southern Highlands women who are known for their big hearts and their generous fundraising.

A special thank you to the Moss Vale Girl Guides, who recently gifted Dignity with beautiful beauty bags which include cosmetic items. I know that many highlands businesses and schools are working on similar projects to donate to Dignity which are terrific examples of our community's spirit, kindness and generosity. I proudly draw to the attention of the House our wonderful Southern Highlands community.

BATTLE OF LONG TAN FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (16:47): On 18 August 1966, 108 men from D Company, 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, engaged Viet Cong on a rubber plantation near Long Tan in Phuoc Tuy Province. The Australian soldiers were faced with an enemy force estimated to number between 1,500 and 2,000. The fighting was fierce, but after a pitched battle lasting six hours, 18 Australian men lay dead, 24 were wounded and the North Vietnamese forces were in full retreat. Last week was the fiftieth anniversary of that clash. I take this opportunity to pay respect to all those from my electorate and indeed all those across New South Wales and Australia who served in Vietnam.

The fiftieth anniversary of Long Tan is a chance for us all to reflect on their sacrifices, on the burdens they carried at the time and on the burdens they carry with them still. It has been 54 years since Australia's second longest war began and 41 years since it ended. From 1962 until 1975 Australian service people were in harm's way in Vietnam; wading through rice paddies, trekking through booby trapped jungles, showing great bravery and valour in the face of great danger, and all while working to keep their mates and Vietnamese civilians safe and free. The echoes of this war are still resonating across Vietnam and in Australia. Just two months ago, the remains of 33 diggers—a significant proportion of the 521 men who were killed during the conflict—were repatriated to Australia after being interred in cemeteries in Malaysia and Singapore. I am proud to say they were

welcomed home with open arms. It is easy to forget that not all Australians treated our Vietnam veterans with proper respect. The fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan gives us a chance as a community to make up for those wrongs.

Last weekend I attended the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Day Long Tan Fiftieth Anniversary Dinner Dance at the Wallsend Diggers. Every year a remembrance service and dinner is held. It was great to see so many Vietnam veterans get together again and tell their stories, celebrate their lives and speak about what they went through in the war. Newcastle and the Hunter region lost 19 of its own during action in South Vietnam. Each fallen soldier is represented by a flag that is embossed with their name in gold. The flags are kept in the Newcastle and Hunter Region Vietnam Veterans office in Tyrell Street, Wallsend, and paraded with members on significant days of remembrance. Whenever I speak with Stephen Finney from the Newcastle and Hunter Region Vietnam Veterans, who was here today, he is always insistent about the importance of remembrance.

From my time as a young corporal in UN Company of the University of New South Wales Regiment I remember a man called Terry, who was a regular army soldier who served in Vietnam. He found this time of year very traumatic and difficult. That was in the early 1980s when I was 18 and served as an army reservist in an infantry platoon. It was a tough but wonderful experience. I have sad memories about how Terry felt about his service, although he did not tell us much. The 19 names of the fallen that we know of from Newcastle and the Hunter are listed on the Vietnam Memorial in Civic Park. The average age of those men who lost their lives is 24. We continue to remember the fallen.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (16:51): I thank the member for Wallsend for her private member's statement. A number of Vietnam veterans were with us in the gallery today. I was a member of the Royal Australian Air Force for six years and served as a signals operator in Perth and Melbourne. I also joined the navy in Fiji when a peacekeeping force was assembled and I travelled as part of the air force contingent. I pay tribute and say thank you to all of our Vietnam veterans. In particular in the Tamworth electorate I acknowledge Mr Wally Franklin, who has re-engaged, one might say. This year he has been a rock for his mates as he has helped to bring them together to commemorate the event. We thank them during this fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan.

COALMINING AND COAL SEAM GAS

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (16:52): The impacts of mining in this State on air, water, food, biodiversity and climate change make it an issue of great concern to my constituents, particularly with regard to coal and coal seam gas which are expanding at unprecedented levels. Mines require massive clearing of native vegetation and habitat. They erode air quality and pollute and damage rivers, streams and aquifers through dust, chemicals and cracks in water source beds. Mining poses a risk to endangered species and ecosystems. Mines create visual blights on otherwise beautiful landscapes, especially when they are situated in forests and close to towns. Over tens of millions of hectares of New South Wales land is subject to an exploration licence or mining lease, and more than half of the State's forest and nearly two-thirds of its conservation areas are covered by a coal or gas exploration licence. Rehabilitation after past mining operations has had little success and provides little community confidence. Waterways have been left polluted, native bushland left degraded and voids left open.

The June report of research organisation Energy and Resource Insights entitled "The Hole Truth: The mess coal companies plan to leave in NSW" identifies massive voids left after open-cut mining. Voids can be hundreds of metres deep and kilometres long yet laws do not require them to be backfilled. Little is known about how open voids will behave in the future including in terms of hydrology, effects on surface and ground water, and wall stability. Little post-mine assessment is done of voids. Polluted lakes often form in the voids and flooding can have detrimental impacts on surrounding locations. The report identified 6,050 hectares of voids planned or approved for New South Wales.

Environmental Justice Australia identified a number of measures used by mining companies to avoid rehabilitating sites. Companies can declare that a mine is under "care and maintenance" so that it is not officially closed when operations have ceased. They can continue to run a mine at a loss if it is cheaper than rehabilitation. If they become bankrupt they will not have to rehabilitate the mine at all. Companies argue to the Government that it would be too expensive to backfill a void. Continually expanding a mine can postpone any need to rehabilitate, and selling it to another company cheaply can help a company avoid its obligations. Of course, a company can always apply to the Government for a discount on rehabilitation requirements. Concern about the impacts of mining is growing in this State, with a March ReachTEL survey indicating more than half of people think coalmining is having a negative impact on communities and 84 per cent think farmland, water and the natural environment should be protected from coal and coal seam gas [CSG].

Mining companies are known to exaggerate the employment and economic benefits of their proposals, and governments often accept their forecasts. I acknowledge the Government released new Guidelines for the

Economic Assessment of Coal and CSG Proposals in December, but the mining industry's workforce has been shrinking and mining jobs are significantly under threat from emerging workforce changes that will cause a massive portion of jobs to be replaced by automation. Coal is an archaic form of power supply. It is inefficient, with over 65 per cent of energy lost through heat and more during transmission. As a fossil fuel it is responsible for significant greenhouse gas emissions. Indeed, 400 million tonnes of carbon pollution is released each year as a result of coal that is mined in New South Wales and burned around the world. While coal-fired power continues to dominate energy supply in Australia—

Mr Andrew Fraser: Point of order: As much as I hate to interrupt my colleague the member for Sydney, by tradition private members' statements are about matters within a member's electorate and not things that cover the whole of New South Wales. The member for Sydney is making a policy statement.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH: At the beginning of my private member's statement I indicated that this was of a great concern to my constituents, who have asked me to speak on this matter. That is within the remit of a private member's statement.

Mr Andrew Fraser: I suggest that is a broad-brush approach. If the member were quoting from a letter or an article that came from his electorate, that would be one thing. I think this is walking a very fine line.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Private members' statements should relate to members' electorates. As the member has pointed out, it is a very fine line as to whether this issue actually affects the member for Sydney's electorate. The member's time has almost expired.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH: I seek an extension of time.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no provision to seek an extension of time for a private member's statement. That opportunity is not available.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH: I can seek the concurrence of the House to finish my statement.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: That opportunity is not available. I will take advice. You are seeking leave to conclude your private member's statement?

Mr ALEX GREENWICH: Yes.

Leave granted.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH: It is always fascinating how some Government members do not wish these concerns to be ventilated.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: You have been granted leave to conclude.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH: That is what I am doing. Coal is an archaic form of power supply. It is inefficient, with over 65 per cent of energy lost through heat and more during transmission. As a fossil fuel it is responsible for significant greenhouse gas emissions. Indeed, 400 million tonnes of carbon pollution are released each year as a result of coal that is mined in New South Wales and burned around the world. While coal-fired power continues to dominate energy supply in Australia, it is also on the decline with the contribution from renewables rising. Globally coal is rapidly declining. It is now responsible for just over 40 per cent of the world's supply, with renewable energy recently overtaking gas as the second largest source. Renewable energy already contributes more than 30 per cent of power in South Australia, where targets have been increased to achieve 50 per cent by 2025.

Mining has a future in New South Wales but its rapid expansion is unsustainable and it is putting our food, water, biodiversity and health at risk. We need exclusion zones in law to ban mining on or adjacent to productive agricultural land, water catchments and the waterways that feed into them into high conservation value land and towns. The recent buyback of an exploration licence that would have led to a mine below the Liverpool Plains, following the Planning and Assessment Commission's recommendation to ban mining on this fertile land for around \$220 million, highlights the need for exclusion zones. We need better laws that impose stronger conditions on mining companies to prevent pollution and ensure robust rehabilitation of sites. Mines create risks that must be prevented and on behalf of my constituents I call for stronger regulation of the mining industry that puts public benefits, environmental protection and safety first.

COMMERCIAL FISHING INDUSTRY ADJUSTMENT PROGRAM

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (17:00): This morning I met with many good men and women from the commercial fishing industry in this State. The meeting was instigated by the hardworking member for The Entrance and the shadow Minister for Primary Industries, the Hon. Mick Veitch. At that meeting we heard many moving stories. I have had a number of phone calls and I participated in a number of meetings concerning

this Government's complete mishandling of its adjustment program and reforms of the commercial fishing industry in New South Wales. It is ironic that the meeting was held in this place this very morning. Today is a very dark day for all small businesses in New South Wales because in the early hours of this morning the guillotine was applied to the greyhound industry. It is clear that the commercial fishing industry is suffering death by a thousand cuts and being left to bleed out.

Mr Geoff Provest: Ha, ha!

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: I acknowledge the laughter of Government members. As I go around this State and meet with people from many industries I am constantly appalled at the incompetent and disrespectful way in which this Government is dealing with small business. Hairdressers in every town and village across this State, including Maitland, were being told that they would no longer require the qualifications essential to the health and safety of workers and their clients. The Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation floated a thought bubble that he had not even passed by the Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business, but, thankfully, after a campaign by the industry and supported by Labor, the Minister walked back his announcement. However, that was not before a climate of fear and uncertainty for those small businesses had been created. But let me return to the commercial fishers who have been going through years of pain in their industry.

Through a variety of measures commercial fishers have lost their rights and the current reforms have put them in the untenable position of having to borrow money to continue. In other words, those businesses—some of which have operated in this State for up to five generations—are now at risk of being destroyed at the stroke of a Minister's pen as unviable and they will lose their livelihoods. How will they pay their mortgages on boats, homes or other assets with a measly \$20,000? They are caught between the Government's economic rationalist assurances of increasing share prices for sellers and its lack of care that many will not be able to afford to purchase another stake in this industry, particularly when the new regime will give them less than one-third of their current fishing days to pay off the debt.

For those who have gone into debt and/or sunk their life savings into equipment and gear, boats and facilities, and for their extensive knowledge of the industry, the Government is offering a measly \$20,000 and whatever their shares can get on the open market—that is, if any fishers are left in the industry to purchase their shares at the end of this debacle. This will have disastrous impacts on small businesses as well as the economies of small fishing villages across this State. The proposed reforms will also put the future of co-ops at risk as well as the future of coffee shops, accountants, service stations, grocery stores, butchers, bakers and other small businesses that rely on the income they receive from the fishers to survive. On a more macro level, they will put the tourism, restaurant and gourmet food industry that highlight our fantastic Australian seafood at risk.

Earlier today I spoke to the managing director of a company that has operated for more than 128 years in this State in supplying fishing gear and equipment to the industry. He told me that each year his company spends more than \$250,000 on freight alone. This does not include the many suppliers he pays for telephone, office equipment, advertising, insurance and utilities or the taxes he pays to the State and Federal governments. He is gravely concerned, as are many business people I have spoken to across this State, about the wider business impacts of this botched reform process. These reforms will have a snowballing economic effect on our local regional fishing communities and they will have broader economic impacts across the State. The Government frequently proclaims that New South Wales is the "new State of business" so the question must be asked: First the greyhounds and now the commercial fishers. Who is next?

LIVERPOOL ICE SMOKING ROOM PROPOSAL

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (17:04): Today I speak for the safety of the residents of south-western Sydney. A recent proposal for an ice smoking room to be operated by a non-government organisation in the Liverpool central business district has angered many local residents. That organisation runs other amazing programs for youth and drug rehabilitation but this proposal is not right for our area. I note that my objection should not be seen as an attack on that non-government organisation. I have spoken to many community members and leaders who do not want this facility in Liverpool because it will have detrimental effects on local safety, business growth and community harmony.

I state at the outset that I am in favour of harm minimisation and rehabilitation for users of drugs, and I thank the Government for its continued support in funding and providing projects in this area of health. However, I cannot support a facility that will hurt our local community and make the area a more dangerous place in which to live, and I thank the Government for supporting my stance on this matter. Chrystal methamphetamine, commonly known as ice, is a dangerous drug. Its side effects include feeling aggressive, anxious or panicky, taking more risks than usual, feeling very powerful or better than others, and/or becoming hostile or aggressive. The effects of ice, if injected or inhaled, can be felt within three to seven seconds, they can last between eight to 24 hours and they can take from two to 10 days to completely leave the body.

The proponents of this suggested ice smoking room have compared it to the injecting room at Kings Cross. However, they fail to stipulate that crystal methamphetamines are stimulants, not depressants like heroin, and, according to an article published by the Society for the Study of Addiction, ice can make a regular user act up to 6.2 times more aggressively. This does not mean that all ice users will become violent but there is a higher risk of violent behaviour compared to when they are not taking the drug. The proponents have also suggested a "chill out area" in this facility to be used after a user has injected or inhaled. I question how long users will stay in this area. I doubt it would be up to 24 hours when the effects of this drug can still be experienced. The more likely scenario is that users will head out onto the street, get into a car or use public transport and potentially endanger the lives of local residents.

Last night a forum was held at Quest Liverpool to discuss the future of this idea but as Parliament was sitting I was not able to attend. However, I have been advised that many people attended the meeting, including local business owners, residents, health personnel and people from outside our local area who are interested in the proposal. A local business owner, Adam, spoke about the impacts this proposal would have on local businesses and how similar sites are already affecting our local area. A methadone clinic is currently operating on Scott Street, Liverpool, near Adam's business. He stated that two years ago he used to see drug-affected people outside or near his shop two to three times a week, but recently he has noticed an increase of two to three people each day from outside the Liverpool area. He also said that he prefers not to walk alone to his car at night and he now locks his shop for the safety of his staff because of the drug-affected people who come in and harass them. It is also impacting his customers—some no longer want to come to his shop. Adam said that he will need to get more locks on his shop or move to another location.

I fear that the operation of an ice smoking room will bring more drug users and dealers into our local community, and that we will see more businesses leaving our area. I commend the work of Harry Hunt, AO, and the Liverpool City Council Liberal team, specifically Deputy Mayor Councillor Tony Hatchite, for the opposition they have provided to this proposal. At one of their most recent council meetings, the Liberal Liverpool council team moved and passed a motion to "make it clear that [Liverpool] council will never support a program that will encourage the use of illicit drugs in our LGA". At this meeting something very interesting happened: The Labor and Independent councillors voted against the motion and thus voted in favour of supporting programs that encourage the use of illicit drugs in our local government area.

That shows again that the Liverpool Labor councillors, and Labor in general, are out of touch with the south-west of Sydney and do not care about its safety. This was revealed again at the same council meeting when they voted to defund the closed-circuit television program, which has helped to reduce crime in the Liverpool central business district. A proposal such as this is not right for our local area and I am happy to see that Liberals on Liverpool council, supported by the Coalition State Government, are not behind it either—nor is the member for Campbelltown.

BATTLE OF LONG TAN FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (17:10): I know that many members have attended Vietnam Veterans Day events. On Thursday 18 August I had the honour of attending, with the Deputy Speaker, a Vietnam Veterans Day event at South Tweed Heads Sports Club, where veterans, guests and families gathered to honour the service and sacrifice of those who served in the ill-fated war. On the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan, I and 150 attendees came together at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Gardens at South Tweed Sports Club to remember the Australians and New Zealanders who fought in that fierce battle.

As we all know, the Battle of Long Tan claimed the lives of 17 Australians and wounded a further 25 in Australia's costliest battle of the war. As the words of the Battle of Long Tan song rang out, attendees were reminded of the sacrifices made during Australia's longest war. It was wonderful to have Vietnam veteran Uncle Victor Slockee attend the service again. Uncle Victor is a Bundjalung nation elder and he gave the Welcome to Country, as he always does with great pride. Uncle Victor is president of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Club, David Bell is the treasurer and Roger Halloren is the secretary.

A number of years ago, while on a study tour, I had the pleasure of attending the Battle of Long Tan memorial at Nui Dat and paying my respects. It is quite sombre to stand in that rubber plantation. I also attended the Binh Ba Vietnamese war cemetery, where I met some Vietnamese veterans, including a doctor who was on the Ho Chi Minh trail. That was a unique experience. While on the study tour in Vietnam I visited the Baria orphanage, near Nui Dat, which has about 100 orphans and 20 teachers. The Australian Government and a number of Vietnam veterans from the Tweed sponsor the orphanage and give it money and equipment. I was privileged to participate in a number of activities with the orphans and to see that the good work of the local Tweed Vietnam Veterans Club is being carried on.

Adjacent to Nui Dat, in the Vung Tau Province, I visited another veteran from my local area who is now an ex-pat there, Mack McGaw. Mack has been living there for a number of years and breeds rabbits for their meat and fur. One of his goals in life is to teach impoverished locals how to earn an income and he has done extraordinarily well improving the lifestyle of people in a number of small local villages. I had the honour also of attending the Hoang Van Thu Primary School, DaNang, which has 1,028 students and 47 staff—including, according to the information I was given, nine members of the Communist Party. The school has a sister school partnership with Kingscliff Public School and, to date, a large amount of information has been exchanged between the schools.

I attended also the DaNang Hospital, which has 1,500 beds and is funded by the French Government. I am pleased to say that, having visited a number of years ago, three specialists from the Tweed Hospital are now working there for the next three months. In exchange, three Vietnamese doctors are working in our hospitals. Even though it is a 1,500-bed hospital it will often have 3,000 patients, and has to top and tail patients in beds. It was great to see that after the war and such losses on both sides, both nations have come together in a communal way and are working to improve the lives of Vietnamese people. Our Vietnam veterans are proud to assist, and I believe it is helping them with the healing process in some small way. I know they are very proud of the orphanage, the hospital and the school, and that they and their children will continue to support them. I am proud to honour Vietnam Veterans Day.

SURF LIFE SAVING NSW AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (17:15): Last week I had the honour to represent the Minister for Corrections, Emergency Services and Veterans Affairs, my friend the Hon. David Elliott, at the 2016 Surf Life Saving NSW Awards of Excellence in Sydney. Before an audience of more than 300 guests, it was with pride I was able to state that the New South Wales Government has committed \$4 million to Surf Life Saving NSW over the next three years. In addition, Premier Mike Baird has reinstated the New South Wales Government's Water Safety Black Spots Fund, with an undertaking to reduce drowning in New South Wales. With previous funding through this program—now in its third year—Surf Life Saving NSW has delivered surf education to high school students in Western Sydney. In 2015 Surf Life Saving NSW delivered to 3,500 students vital safety information focusing on risk-taking behaviour around water. The program was then expanded to include practical, on-the-beach education, and professional development workshops for school staff.

Through the New South Wales Government's Water Safety Black Spots Fund, Surf Life Saving NSW finalised its Project Blueprint, which involved undertaking a coastal risk assessment at every coastal local government area in New South Wales. With the final report there has been successful implementation of treatment options in various local government areas, such as Wollongong, which has seen a reduction in death or injury since the project was completed in the area. On the Central Coast our local surf life-saving clubs are seeing results firsthand. The electorate of Terrigal is privileged to have seven surf life-saving clubs, with more than 4,000 members, which gives me the great honour of being the member for an electorate with the largest number of surf life-saving clubs in New South Wales. Our surf life-saving clubs are outstanding; they are world-class. Each club is involved in its local community and successfully delivers programs that save lives every day of the week, all year round.

The chief executive officer of Central Coast Surf Life Saving, Chris Parker, is one of our greatest assets to surf lifesaving in that he and his team are committed to delivering these programs with outstanding results. The programs have contributed to the organisation's success and boosted its ability to save lives. Through the Community Education Program, Chris Parker and his team have had successful results by presenting free one-hour beach safety talks to more than 60 primary schools and 26,000 students on the Central Coast; delivering four-hour practical Surf Fun Day programs to a further 3,600 primary students, aimed at increasing confidence and surf awareness in a fun environment; delivering nine rip safety demonstration events in front of thousands of beachgoers during peak times; delivering summer surf school programs, aimed at educating visitors to the Central Coast beaches about surf safety during peak holiday times; and distributing more than 50,000 surf safety brochures to the Central Coast community.

With funding for technical equipment, Surf Life Saving has distributed 45 digital radios to club lifesaving patrols and lifesaving support operational groups. It has developed new digital portable PA systems for lifesaving patrols at 15 locations—technology that has never been used before in surf lifesaving Australia-wide and which will help lifesavers keep people safe on our beaches. It has developed a new drone rescue service, which will be ready for implementation at the start of the summer surf season—once again, leading the way with new technology in surf lifesaving—and it has developed a new interactive website, which will be launched in the coming months. This will be another benefit to surf lifesaving programs on the Central Coast. Drowning is a major issue for any coastal community and, tragically, since 2004 there have been 64 drownings on the Central Coast.

However, with vital lifesaving programs in place to advance community education, the outcomes have been outstanding, with no swimming- or drowning-related deaths on the Central Coast for the first time in more than a decade on patrolled beaches. We should remember that this was a season with consistently dangerous surf conditions, and the statewide drowning rate was well above average. This local story is well worth telling. From The Lakes in the north to Umina Beach in the south, our 15 surf clubs, with their red and yellow army of volunteer lifesavers, have saved 1,162 lives and prevented 21,338 people from getting into difficulty.

In the time I have left I will quickly outline some fantastic results achieved at the 2016 Surf Life Saving NSW Awards of Excellence. Surf Life Saving Central Coast was named Branch of the Year and was awarded Community Education Program of the Year. It is a great achievement for the club to be recognised for the growth of its program over past seasons, and I congratulate the club in Parliament today. I commend Jemma Smith from Umina Beach Surf Club, who was awarded Young Athlete of the Year. The Facilitator of the Year was awarded to Wamberal Surf Club long-term member Ramzy Fawzy. I congratulate all those who received awards on the evening.

VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION ST MARYS

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (17:20): I pay tribute in Parliament this afternoon to the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia St Marys outpost, based at the iconic train at St Marys RSL, which locals know very well. As was acknowledged today following question time, every year on 18 August we commemorate Vietnam Veterans Day. On 18 August this year it was my privilege as the local member to attend the commemoration service at St Marys RSL to remember the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan, one of the largest battles fought by Australians during the Vietnam War.

It was a privilege also on that day to have the former Governor of New South Wales, the irreplaceable Professor Dame Marie Bashir, as the special guest. Dame Marie Bashir gave the sort of thoughtful, considered and intelligent speech for which she is renowned. It was heartfelt and I know it was very well received by local veterans. I could see the emotion on their faces as they listened to her wonderful speech. As the member for Londonderry, I am well aware of the strong connection my community has to our service men and women—those who have served and those who are currently serving our nation. It is because we all have a personal story; we all have a connection. It is thanks to the work of the St Marys Vietnam Veterans' Outpost that our community comes together to commemorate the enormous sacrifice made by our men and women during that war.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge, as did the Minister and the shadow Minister, the deep trauma experienced by so many veterans upon their return to our country, followed by so many years of pain. I have been told of trauma by many veterans at the outpost, and I know that many members have heard similar stories. I am very proud that Parliament recognised today, on a bipartisan basis, the sacrifices made by Vietnam veterans. St Marys outpost provides assistance to Vietnam veterans, former service men and women and their families in our community, relying on the generosity of the community and the support of the RSL to operate.

On top of providing this excellent support, St Marys Vietnam Veterans' Outpost offers many discounted activities and community events such as the fishing club, as well as hosting community lessons. Its members are well known in the community as the train washers, based on the guidance of their stationmaster, Mr Gasparino Cianta—who is known to us as "Reno". They maintain the grounds where the train is located and undertake basic maintenance. We know of hundreds of young men and women in St Marys who, over many decades of Australian service overseas, have paid the ultimate sacrifice. We know of many young men, in particular, from St Marys who went to Vietnam.

Our community is enriched by the recognition and support of the St Marys Vietnam Veterans' Outpost. We must always honour those men and women who have served our country. I take this opportunity to thank, in particular, Tony Mullavey, President of the St Marys Vietnam Veterans' Outpost, for inviting me to participate in the special services. I thank everyone from St Marys outpost, those involved in the surrounding community including the wives of Vietnam veterans—they run a very active organisation—and my community, which always comes together to celebrate the contribution of veterans, to commemorate what they have done for our country and to acknowledge those who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom.

RETIREMENT OF COUNCILLORS COL SULLIVAN AND ERNIE BENNETT

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (17:25): I pay tribute to two local councillors who will be retiring at the next council elections in September. Col Sullivan and Ernie Bennett, both serving councillors with the Richmond Valley Council, will be retiring. They have served local government for a combined period of 63 years. Col Sullivan has been working in local government for 42 years. He was mayor like his father, his grandfather and his great-grandfather. He has not only a sense of history but also a sense of community. He cut the ribbon at the bridge at Tatham with the same silver scissors that his grandfather used to open the original

bridge. Col was born at Stratheden and his commitment to serving the community comes from his upbringing. His parents devoted their lives to the community—his mother at the school and his father with local government.

Col Sullivan not only served as Richmond Valley's mayor for 12 years and as councillor throughout his 42 years; he also served as President of the Shires Association of NSW, was on the Local Government Boundaries Commission of NSW and served as Vice President of the Australian Local Government Association. In addition, he was a member and chairperson of the Northern Rivers Area Consultative Committee. He was President of Beef Week for 10 years and served on the Casino Show Society for 48 years, including nine years as president. His mother, Freda, was President of the Casino Show Society Ladies Auxiliary for many years and his wife, Dorothy, is still a member of the ladies auxiliary.

Col regards his greatest local government experience as being the time that he was elected to represent Australia on a goodwill tour to the Republic of China, sponsored by the Chinese, and to celebrate 100 years of local government in China. He is proud of his efforts as mayor, including the beautification of Casino by planting trees in the streets, the opening of the community centre and the rebuilding of bridges around the shire. He had a stroke two years ago and decided it was time to give it away, otherwise I am sure he would get re-elected. Col's philosophy as an elected representative has always been to listen to the community. At times this has been difficult but Col has never shirked his responsibility in taking decisions that he believed were in the best interest of his community. His approach at these times has simply been to be honest with himself. I wish Col and Dorothy all the best in his retirement as this was a full-time job for Col.

Ernie Bennett holds the unusual distinction of having been mayor in two local government areas. For 12 years he served as mayor of Kyogle and now, at 67 years of age, he is retiring after a four-year term as Richmond Valley mayor. Ernie was born in Casino, schooled at Stratheden, Casino, and Woodlawn College. He married June in 1969 and they have three children and 15 grandchildren. Ernie is a big man and a hard worker—someone who is not afraid of hard physical labour. He worked at the meatworks abattoir for 20 years as a loader so it was a real blow to him when a freezer was dropped on him at work. It caused serious injury to his back and he was forced to rest. The accident was the start of Ernie's political career.

It was the early 1990s during a terrible drought so Ernie started a committee to assist local farmers. When the council elections came around, June and the children urged Ernie to nominate. In 1995 he became a councillor on Kyogle Council. He started as a novice but for 12 years he served as mayor of Kyogle. In 2012 Ernie decided not to run for mayor; after 17 years he felt he had been there long enough. But he still had the fire in his belly and, because of his connection to Casino, he decided to run for mayor of Richmond Valley.

Ernie was told that it would be impossible for him to be elected mayor of Casino after his long association with Kyogle. In 2012 he was popularly elected as mayor of Richmond Valley. Ernie brought a can-do attitude to the Richmond Valley Council and has helped to reshape the council into one of the best in the State. He has never been too frightened to stand up and speak his mind in support of his community. This September he is finally bowing out of political life. He will keep farming his 320 head of cattle at Mummulgum and intends to travel with June to Tasmania and New Zealand, and to spend more time riding his Harley. On behalf of the House I thank Ernie and Col for their dedicated service to the community above and beyond the call of duty.

RYDE ELECTORATE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation) (17:29): I speak this afternoon to raise awareness of the heavy-lifting by the Ryde community in the construction of new homes and urban renewal across this State to accommodate the growing population of Sydney. Some 10,000 new apartments are under construction across three developments in the Macquarie Park urban renewal precinct in Lachlan's Line, Ryde Garden and the Macquarie University precinct. These apartments will bring thousands of new residents and families into the North Ryde area. I have continually fought overdevelopment in Ryde, objecting in particular to high-density development on the southern side of Epping Road. With the support and hard work of our community, we achieved a reduction in height of the development on Allengrove Crescent from eight storeys to five storeys and on Whiteside Street from 11 storeys to five storeys.

Additionally, in Meadowbank we limited the height of the development to 10 storeys, down from 23 storeys, and are continuing to fight modification requests by the developers. A 16-storey residential building has been proposed for the site adjacent to Blenheim Park, which is frequented by many families and residents of North Ryde. The proposal for 100 units next to the park has been rejected multiple times by City of Ryde council, most recently in August 2016. Located opposite the Lachlan's Line and Ryde Garden sites, the proposed development sits outside the Department of Planning's Macquarie Park investigation area despite numerous references to the corridor as justification for the proposal.

This particular area on the southern side of Epping Road was excluded from the planning precinct in 2013 as the result of our community's tireless efforts to have Tennis World and Bundara Reserve removed from consideration. At the time the North Ryde community rallied in opposition to its inclusion, citing the need to retain this area as open space for the growing community in North Ryde. There must be continuity in planning decisions. In line with the previous determinations with regard to the Tennis World site and the wider Blenheim Park area, I therefore strongly advocate that this proposal does not proceed.

Additionally, whilst the application cites proximity to North Ryde station as strategic merit for its approval, it fails to acknowledge the perilous journey from the site to the station. I have walked from the site to the station, and it was not pleasant. There was significant noise from the rush of traffic travelling at a steady 70 kilometres per hour across six to eight lanes, dust and exhaust fumes and a lengthy wait for the pedestrian lights. In addition to a range of play equipment, the park also includes a cycleway, an off-the-leash area for dogs, a remote control car track and the nearby courts at Tennis World. In particular, the dog park is an important community facility and many friendships have been formed by both the residents and their dogs. This community space is vital to the health and wellbeing of existing and future residents of the North Ryde community.

This area must be preserved, protected and, if possible, expanded. In 2012 the Ryde council identified Blenheim Park as a potential option for land consolidation in its open space plan, arguing the strategic merit of expanding existing open space by acquiring adjacent properties such as those identified as the site of this proposed development. In response to the development application Ryde council has endorsed acquisition of these properties for this purpose. On behalf of my community, I arranged a meeting with the Minister for Planning, Mr Rob Stokes. I was joined by Ryde councillor Craig Chung and community representatives Chris Turner and Brad Powe. We discussed the strong community opposition to the proposal.

I will continue to advocate against this development on the grounds that it does not fit with the longstanding commitment to limit development on the southern side of Epping Road, increases density in an area already experiencing significant development and is not appropriate for the site given its close proximity to a community park and open space. Any future development proposals in North Ryde and Macquarie Park must be put on hold until the Department of Planning has carefully considered the Macquarie Park strategic investigation survey. The department must ensure that the necessary social infrastructure is included in the precinct to accommodate the demands of the growing community for schools, health services, transport and road infrastructure. It is essential that social and affordable housing is included in strategic planning proposals.

I advocated for the salt and pepper model of mixed communities in the redevelopment of the Ivanhoe Estate and will continue to fight for this throughout the Macquarie Park development and the wider Ryde electorate. Planning proposals must consider the impact on neighbouring residents, existing developments and social infrastructure. The proposal to replace three low-density houses with a 16-storey, 100-unit apartment block fails the community standards test and I will stand with my community to oppose its construction. It is out of context with the surrounding low-density residential homes and would impact negatively the amenity of the North Ryde area.

FIRST HOME OWNER GRANT

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (17:34): The First Home Owner Grant plays an important role in the State's economy and in my electorate of Campbelltown as a vehicle for many young Australians who aspire to the great Australian dream of owning their own home. As members will be aware, last year the First Home Owner Grant was reviewed and then reduced by one third, from \$15,000 to \$10,000. This amount may not sound substantial to many, but it is. To a first home buyer it could be the difference between being able or unable to buy a home at auction. Last year I spoke at length about the consequences that this change will have on first home buyers in the Campbelltown region and across New South Wales. I spoke of the dangers of this blow to those trying to enter the property market compared with the quick sugar hit of stamp duty revenue. The consequences are now starting to show.

In 2011 the percentage of first home buyer loans as a share of total loans was 18 per cent. In the five years the Government has been in office it has plummeted to a record low of 10 per cent. This fall shows the consequence of changes to the First Home Owner Grant, and the people of Campbelltown are being affected adversely as they try to enter the housing market. The latest data from the Office of State Revenue shows the Campbelltown region is in the top 10 areas that access the First Home Owner Grant. Median house prices across Sydney have been increasing steadily for the past few years. In the Campbelltown region the median house price jumped from \$400,000 in 2014 to \$500,000 in 2015, and recent data indicates it is now closer to \$600,000.

At a time when housing prices are increasing in Campbelltown the Government should be doing more to ensure that the Australian dream of owning a home is achievable for first home buyers. I refer to NSW Economic Update Winter 2016, which identifies a number of key factors influencing the Australian economy. This has a

direct effect upon aspiring home owners in my electorate and across New South Wales. The board noted that the gross domestic product [GDP] growth among Australia's major trading partners was slightly below average while conditions in both labour and housing markets remain mixed. According to CoreLogic, Sydney house prices rose by 6.8 per cent over the June quarter, to \$881,800—the highest quarterly increase in the nation and a year-on-year increase of 11 per cent.

It notes that, according to a report by property advisory group Herron Todd White, Sydney's houses and apartment prices have not reached their peak, thereby pricing prospective buyers out of the market. On page 25 it notes that the average monthly number of dwellings approved in New South Wales declined by 7.2 per cent in the March 2016 quarter, to 5,412 approvals. This figure was only 0.1 per cent lower than the March 2015 quarterly average for the number of approvals. As members—including the member for Parramatta—will be aware, the markets fluctuate and we cannot ignore market indicators.

In terms of housing finance, the average number of owner-occupied housing financed in New South Wales fell by 17.7 per cent in the March quarter, to 15,837. That included first home owner dwellings. That is a steeper drop than the national quarterly average of minus 13.5 per cent. The report goes into detail. It must be noted that the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey has revealed a rapidly growing divide between younger persons and older home owners. That is the motivation for my private member's statement, and why I am addressing the House on this issue.

This is an issue that I feel should transcend partisan politics. I could go on the attack here this afternoon, but that would not be in the interests of the community or the State's economy. Instead, I call on colleagues and the Government to deliver solutions to solve the housing crisis for first home buyers. It would be a remarkable achievement for all in this place if we were able to ensure that first home buyers in places such as Campbelltown were once again able to achieve the great Australian dream. I thank the House.

Matter of Public Importance

HIS HOLINESS PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) (17:39): I offer my condolences on the passing of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, spiritual head and president of Bochasanvasi Akshar Purushottam Sansthan [BAPS], who passed away on 13 August 2016 at 6.00 p.m. I offer my condolences and those of the New South Wales Government to the entire BAPS community during this difficult time. I acknowledge the outstanding contribution of the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir at Rosehill, whose members have flourished under the spiritual guidance of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj. His Holiness was a well-respected, much-loved and world-renowned spiritual leader. He inspired his followers to serve their communities. World leaders from across the globe, including Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and Premier Mike Baird, have paid tribute to His Holiness. The Prime Minister of India, the Hon. Narendra Modi, visited the temple in Gujarat where Swamiji's mortal remains were placed.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was the fifth spiritual successor in the guru parampara tradition of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. He was born on 7 December 1921 into a humble farmer's family in the small village of Chansad, in Gujarat. In 1939 he received initiation into the sadhu fold from his guru, Brahaswarup Shastriji Maharaj. At the age of 25 he was appointed as the kothari of the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Sarangpur. In 1950, when he was 28, Shastriji Maharaj selected him as president, or pramukh, of BAPS in his place. Since then, he has been fondly known as Pramukh Swami. In 1971 Swami Maharaj succeeded the then spiritual leader Yogiji Maharaj to become the fifth spiritual guru of BAPS.

For 45 years he was a role model of selfless service to society. He was a man of saintly virtues who showed profound devotion to God, which earned him the respect and reverence of countless people worldwide. He travelled tirelessly, visiting more than 17,000 towns and villages in India and abroad. His Holiness liberated thousands from vices and addictions, provided relief and rehabilitation to innumerable people in times of calamity and catastrophe, and inspired character and faith in hundreds of thousands of children and youth. His Holiness created and consecrated 1,100 mandirs and giant cultural complexes, such as Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi and Gandhinagar, to portray the cultural and spiritual heritage of India. In February 2002 Swamiji visited Sydney and inaugurated the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Rosehill. Sydney was blessed to have hosted His Holiness on three occasions in the past—in 1984, 1996 and 2002.

Renowned spiritual masters and heads of state who have been deeply touched by his humility, saintliness and noble works include His Holiness the Dalai Lama, India's late President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Prince Charles, former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the late Sheikh Isa bin Salman al Khalifa of Bahrain, and many royals, heads of state and other dignitaries. All were profoundly touched by Swamiji's spiritual personality and humanitarian services to society. The news of his earthly departure has

created a pall of deep sadness among countless devotees and well-wishers. Age and ill health saw him spend his last few years at the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Sarangpur. He is succeeded by Mahant Swami Maharaj.

More than two million devotees and well-wishers worldwide have paid a visit to the Sarangpur Mandir precinct where Swamiji's mortal remains have been placed. His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj once said, "In the joy of others lies our own." The BAPS Mandir at Rosehill exemplifies this spirit of selfless service across the community. His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj was 94 years old at the time of his passing. On behalf of the New South Wales Government, I offer my condolences to the entire BAPS community on the passing of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (17:44): I pay tribute to His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, who passed away on 13 August at the age of 94. He was the head of the Bochasanvasi Akshar Purushottam Sansthan [BAPS] movement of the Swaminarayan Pramukh Swaminarayan sect. He was the fifth spiritual successor of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the guru of BAPS. It was my great privilege last year to visit the astonishingly beautiful Swaminarayan Akshardham in the Indian capital of New Delhi. There were 40,000 people present on the day that the Hon. Daniel Mookhey and I visited. We were welcomed by His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj, who has now been installed by BAPS as the successor to His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj. In paying tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj, known as Swamiji, I note that he was revered throughout the world. Indian Prime Minister Modi paid tribute to him on his passing, as did former President Clinton of the United States and the new Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Theresa May.

In 1971 the then successor of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and head of the worldwide BAPS movement declared Pramukh Swami Maharaj as his spiritual successor. From that time on, Swamiji nurtured the BAPS movement, as they tell it, "from a sapling into a sprawling banyan tree". As the guiding guru of the BAPS movement, Swamiji inspired character and faith in countless people. Out of his compassion for humanity he made more than 15,500 city, town and village visits. He sanctified more than 250,000 homes and wrote more than half a million letters. He spread the glory and traditions of Indian culture by celebrating cultural festivals and consecrating more than 750 mandirs in India and abroad. One of the mandirs he consecrated is at Harris Park. I have been privileged to attend that Mandir in our great city on numerous occasions, when I have been welcomed by the faithful at the BAPS Mandir in Harris Park.

Swamiji personally inspired thousands of people to give up addictions and practise spirituality. Through his humanitarian acts he provided succour to countless souls in times of natural catastrophe and need. The BAPS movement worldwide is engaged in charitable works and educational activities. It instils spirituality in people, leading them away from addiction to a path of serving others. The lesson that Swamiji preached to humanity worldwide and to the Indian diaspora in particular was to serve others before oneself. I was so proud to visit that astonishing temple to Hindu culture, Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi, after the Hon. Daniel Mookhey took up his seat in this Parliament. The Hon. Daniel Mookhey was the first member of Australia's oldest Parliament, the New South Wales Parliament, to be sworn in on the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Hindu holy book. His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj, who succeeds Swamiji as the guru of the BAPS movement, told us how proud he was of my colleague the Hon. Daniel Mookhey's entrance to the New South Wales Parliament.

Swami Maharaj lived a humble, simple and transparent life. He had no desire or honour for self-importance or self-gratification. He always preached from the heart with no declaration or glitter. He truly served humanity and not himself. May he rest in peace. I wish all the faithful followers of BAPS of the Swaminarayan sect worldwide best wishes and particularly I wish well their new guru, the successor to Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (17:49): It is a privilege to make a short contribution to this matter of public importance raised by my good colleague the member for Parramatta. I also acknowledge the comments of the Leader of the Opposition and likewise I offer my condolences to members of the Bochasanvasi Akshar Purushottam Sansthan community, who are mourning the passing of His Holiness the spiritual head and president of BAPS. His passing marks a difficult time for members of the community and our thoughts and prayers are with them during this time of difficulty. BAPS upholds the Hindu belief that there can be unity in diversity and values living in harmony with others and working in unity towards a better world.

The Mandir at Rosehill is the centre of a flourishing community and hosts, amongst other things, classes in English, music and scriptures. The member for Parramatta was present when the temple was opened early in 2014 with the then Premier of New South Wales. My understanding from being in the local community at the time is that some 5,000 people attended over four days. Like many centres of faith, the temple provides outreach to the community that helps engage members of the faith to be closer and closer with one another providing support but also linking with the wider community.

Each year it is a privilege to see the temple lit with candles to celebrate Deepavali, the festival of triumph of light over dark. Once again, our thoughts and prayers are with members of the BAPS community as they mourn

the passing of His Holiness. The temple is the centre pin of connecting the community. The Government is keen to promote cohesiveness and harmonious society because it understands that it enriches the lives of people in New South Wales. I firmly believe New South Wales sets an example around the world, and across this great country, of a peaceful, harmonious and multicultural society.

In 2015 the Mapping Social Cohesion Report of the Scanlon Foundation showed that Australians certainly promote a multicultural society, with about 86 per cent of the population agreeing that multiculturalism certainly has been good for Australia. And from what we have just heard there can be absolutely no argument about that. In time, unfortunately, when there are troubles across the world, and even in our nation or State, perhaps it is the great work and great recognition of people like His Holiness that can certainly be in the memories of those in this Chamber. I pass on my condolences.

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (17:52): By leave: I am pleased to speak on this matter of public importance as I have been associated with the Bochasanvasi Akshar Purushottam Sansthan [BAPS] Mandir at Rosehill for many years and greatly admire their work and the leadership of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj. I offer my deepest condolences to the entire BAPS community in Sydney and around the world for the recent passing of His Holiness on 13 August. More than 800,000 devotees paid tribute to him in the immediate days after his passing and I know every flight from Sydney to India was booked out within hours of the news of his passing. The Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, mourned his death, stating "many have lost a guru but I, a father".

The BAPS congregation are dedicated to combining spirituality with service. Their five lifetime vows are no alcohol, no addictions, no adultery, no meat, and no impurity of body and mind. The Swaminarayan tradition upholds many important virtues. Bhagwan Swaminarayan revealed a way of life based on the Vedas and Upanishads. He taught that everyone is the divine atma, or soul, thus there was no legitimate spiritual basis for caste-based discrimination. He was among the first Hindu leaders to crusade against caste-based discrimination in society. This belief has been maintained and promoted by Pramukh Swami Maharaj, who said "In the eyes of religion, all are equal. There is no high and low. Those who do not understand the nature of true religion play up the differences. But we have to remove this in a united manner."

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was the fifth successor to the BAPS founder, Bhagwan Swaminarayan. He is regarded as divine and the ideal example of how a devotee to God should live. He emphasises family harmony, community service and spiritual progress. His compassion for humanity, universal wisdom and striking simplicity was widely admired. His devotees make an enormous contribution to the community in many different ways. From assisting people to resist addictions, to making substantial contributions to disaster relief, blood donation drives, recycling and tree planting, the BAPS community encourages voluntarism both within the organisation and the wider community.

Born Shantinal Patel in 1921 in rural Gujarat, Pramukh Swami Maharaj was chosen by Shastriji Maharaj to become a sadhu. So he left his family and travelled to Ahmedabad to begin his spiritual journey as an 18-year-old. Ten years later, he became the President of BAPS under the guidance of his guru Yogiji Maharaj. From the time he had become a sadhu, till the passing away of Yogiji Maharaj, Pramukh Swami had always lived in the footsteps of his gurus and served under them devotedly. In 1971 he became the spiritual leader of BAPS after the passing of Yogiji Maharaj and he has inspired millions and overseen the massive growth of the organisation. Since then, he has consecrated 30 shikharbaddh mandirs and more than 1,000 hari mandirs around the world, including Australia. This enormous growth is a lasting legacy of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and the millions he has inspired.

I have come to know the BAPS community during the past 15 years through its Mandir at Rosehill—it is across the road from my home and they are wonderful neighbours and generous hosts. I have been privileged to share many festivals and spiritual occasions with them during my time as a councillor on Parramatta City Council and as a member of Parliament. During that time I have watched the community grow and flourish, and the Mandir be rebuilt as the beautiful centre it is today. That community would not be as successful as it is without the work of dedicated volunteers like Darshan Desai, Yogi Savania and many others.

I have also had the tremendous privilege of being their guest at the Akshardams at both Delhi and Ghandinagar when I have visited India, which are incredibly beautiful buildings constructed by volunteers, which are keeping traditional stone masonry skills alive too. On my most recent visit to Ghandinagar, I also visited a brand-new girls' school built by BAPS that will be supporting disadvantaged people in the community. It is a sister school to the boys' school I visited a few years ago. While Pramukh Swami Maharaj is no longer with us, his legacy will live on through the selfless devotion and service of the BAPS community throughout the world. Jai Swaminarayan.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) (17:56): In reply: I thank the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Granville and the member for Seven Hills for paying tribute to His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj and his life's work. The Leader of the Opposition paid tribute by exemplifying world leaders who paid him tribute to him. The sheer volume of about half a million letters and the 250,000 homes that His Holiness visited is certainly an indication of his devotion to the community not only in India but also around the world. I also pay tribute to the member for Granville, who is a neighbour and close friend of the Swaminarayan community, for her recognition of the good work they do in the community, holding different events such as tree planting, supporting those in need or helping with education. She also said they have a wonderful Mandir and are going from strength to strength in the community.

The member for Seven Hills also provided a valuable contribution in terms of BAPS upholding the Hindu believe that there can be only unity and diversity and values in living in harmony with others and working in unity towards a better world. I think that exemplifies the attitude of His Holiness and spiritual teachings that have simply grown around the world to have such a strong Swaminarayan community that exists today, especially right in the heart of Rosehill, where its latest temple is located. Together with the member for Seven Hills and the Hon. Barry O'Farrell, I had the privilege of attending the opening of the temple. It was a joyous day. After many years of renovation the temple is now the centre of the community.

I have known the BAPS community for five years. It offers great leadership, focusing on the importance of education, family values and spirituality. It also encourages its members to participate in the world and to make it a better place. The BAPS community represents the wonderful contribution of multiculturalism to building Australia and making it a great place. On behalf of the Government and everybody in this Chamber, I pay tribute to His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj. His life and his legacy will be known for generations to come.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 18:00 until
Thursday 25 August 2016 at 10:00.**