



New South Wales

Legislative Assembly

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Sixth Parliament
First Session**

Thursday, 13 October 2016

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday, 13 October 2016

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

The SPEAKER read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

Visitors

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the gallery this morning the former Mayor of Holroyd, Greg Cummings, former councillor Lisa Lake, United Services Union delegate Raffaele Catanzariti and United Services Union official Steve Donley.

Bills

BUILDING PROFESSIONALS AMENDMENT (INFORMATION) BILL 2016

EDUCATION AND TEACHING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2016

Returned

The SPEAKER: I report receipt of messages from the Legislative Council returning the abovementioned bills without amendment.

Documents

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

The CLERK: In accordance with section 63C of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, I announce receipt of the Performance Audit Report of the Auditor-General entitled "Preventing and Managing Worker Injuries: NSW Police Force and Fire & Rescue NSW", dated October 2016, received on 13 October 2016.

Announcements

TYLER WRIGHT, WOMEN'S WORLD SURFING CHAMPION

The SPEAKER: Former Culburra surfer Tyler Wright has just become World Champion surfer. Tyler Wright learnt her skills at Culburra Beach in my electorate and later moved to Lennox Head. Lennox Head can take some credit, but Culburra also takes credit for her fantastic achievement. This is exciting news for Culburra and the South Coast community who have been supporting Tyler for many years.

Bills

FAIR TRADING AMENDMENT (COMMERCIAL AGENTS) BILL 2016

Consideration in Detail

Consideration of the Legislative Council amendments.

Schedule of amendments referred to in message of 11 October 2016

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (10:14:0): On behalf of Mr Victor Dominello: I move:

That the Legislative Council amendments be agreed to.

No. 1 **CDP No. 1 [c2016-093]**

Pages 3–6, schedule 1, lines 2 on page 3 to 24 on page 6. Omit all words on those lines. Insert instead:

[1] **Part 5**

Insert after Part 4:

Part 5 Regulation of commercial agents

Division 1 Preliminary

59 Definitions

In this Part:

commercial agent activity—see section 60.

commercial agent licence or *licence* means a commercial agent licence issued by the Secretary under section 60E.

commercial agent rules means the rules prescribed by the regulations under section 60K.

disqualified person—see section 60A.

exclusion order—see section 60G.

officer of a corporation has the same meaning as in the *Corporations Act 2001* of the Commonwealth.

relevant offence—see section 60A.

restriction order—see section 60G.

show cause notice—see section 60F.

60 Commercial agent activity

(1) In this Part, *commercial agent activity* means any of the following activities:

(a) *debt collection*, which is:

- (i) any activity carried out by a person on behalf of a second person (not being his or her employer) in the exercise of the second person's rights under a debt owed by a third person; or
- (ii) any activity carried out by a person on his or her own behalf in the exercise of rights acquired from a second person (otherwise than in the course of an acquisition or merger of business interests) under a debt owed by a third person;
being an activity that involves finding the third person or requesting, demanding or collecting from the third person money due under the debt;

(b) *process serving*, which is any activity carried out by a person on behalf of a second person (not being his or her employer), being an activity that involves serving legal process on a third person in relation to legal proceedings to which the second and third persons are, or are intended to be, parties, regardless of which jurisdiction the legal proceedings are, or are intended to be, held in;

(c) *repossession of goods*, which is any activity carried out by a person on behalf of a second person (not being his or her employer), being an activity that involves finding goods held by a third person or requesting, demanding or seizing such goods.

(2) For the purposes of this Part:

- (a) if a commercial agent activity is carried out by an employee of a person, the activity is taken to have been carried out by the person; and
- (b) if a corporation carries out a commercial agent activity, each officer of the corporation is taken to have carried out the commercial agent activity.

60A Disqualified persons

(1) A person is a *disqualified person* for the purposes of this Part if:

- (a) the person is a natural person who is under 18 years of age; or
- (b) the person is an undischarged bankrupt or is taking advantage of the laws in force for the time being relating to bankruptcy; or
- (c) the person is a corporation that is the subject of a winding up order or for which a controller or administrator has been appointed; or
- (d) the person has been convicted, within the last 5 years, of a relevant offence and a sentence of imprisonment or a fine of \$500 or more has been imposed on the person following that conviction; or
- (e) the person is subject to an exclusion order that is in force against the person; or
- (f) the person is a controlled member of a declared organisation within the meaning of the *Crimes (Criminal Organisations Control) Act 2012*.

(2) In this Part:

relevant offence means any of the following offences whether occurring in New South Wales or elsewhere:

- (a) an offence involving violence, firearms, weapons, fraud, drugs or dishonesty;
- (b) an offence against section 12DJ (Harassment and coercion) of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act 2001 of the Commonwealth;
- (c) an offence against section 50 (Harassment and coercion) or 168 (Harassment and coercion) of the ACL;
- (d) any other offence declared by the regulations to be a relevant offence for the purposes of this section;

but does not include an offence that the regulations declare not to be a relevant offence.

Division 2 Carrying out commercial agent activities

60B Disqualified person must not carry out commercial agent activity

- (1) A person must not carry out a commercial agent activity if the person is a disqualified person.
- (2) A person that is a corporation must not carry out a commercial agent activity if an officer of the corporation is a disqualified person.

Maximum penalty: 1,000 penalty units (in the case of a corporation) or 200 penalty units or imprisonment for 12 months, or both (in the case of an individual).

60C Field agents and employers of field agents require licence

- (1) A person must not do any of the following for the purposes of carrying out a commercial agent activity unless the person holds a commercial agent licence:
 - (a) approach or attempt to approach the person who is the subject of the commercial agent activity;
 - (b) enter or attempt to enter any premises at which the subject of the commercial agent activity resides, works or otherwise regularly frequents;
 - (c) approach or attempt to approach any property owned by or in the possession of the subject of the commercial agent activity.

Maximum penalty: 1,000 penalty units (in the case of a corporation) or 200 penalty units or imprisonment for 12 months, or both (in the case of an individual).

- (2) A person (the *employer*) must not employ a person (the *employee*) to carry out a commercial agent activity that requires the employee to hold a commercial agent licence unless the employer holds a commercial agent licence.

Maximum penalty: 1,000 penalty units (in the case of a corporation) or 200 penalty units or imprisonment for 12 months, or both (in the case of an individual).

- (3) A person who is carrying out a commercial agent activity under a commercial agent licence must produce the licence for inspection if requested to do so by an investigator or by a person who is the subject of the commercial agent activity.

Maximum penalty: 50 penalty units.

- (4) An officer of a corporation is not required to hold a commercial agent licence merely because the corporation is required to hold a commercial agent licence.

- (5) No more than 1 partner in a firm that carries out commercial agent activities is required to hold a commercial agent licence.

- (6) In this section, the person who is the *subject* of a commercial agent activity means the person from whom a debt is to be recovered or goods are to be repossessed or on whom process is to be served.

60D Fit and proper person

- (1) A person may hold a commercial agent licence only if the person is a fit and proper person to hold the licence.
- (2) A person is not a fit and proper person to hold a commercial agent licence if:
 - (a) the person is a disqualified person; or
 - (b) the Secretary makes a finding that the person is not a fit and proper person to hold a licence.
- (3) The Secretary may determine that a person is not a fit and proper person to hold a commercial agent licence on such grounds as the Secretary sees fit, including, but not limited to, the following grounds:

- (a) the person has been authorised to carry out a commercial agent activity under a licence (however described) of another State or Territory and that licence:
 - (i) is suspended; or
 - (ii) has, within the previous 5 years, been cancelled and the person has not held a licence since the cancellation;
- (b) the person has been authorised to carry out an activity under another Act administered by the Minister and that authorisation:
 - (i) is suspended; or
 - (ii) has, within the previous 5 years, been cancelled and the person has not held an authorisation since the suspension;
- (c) the person has, within the previous 10 years, been convicted of a relevant offence;
- (d) any ground prescribed by the regulations.
- (4) A corporation is not a fit and proper person to hold a commercial agent licence unless the corporation and each officer of the corporation is a fit and proper person to hold the licence.
- (5) A partner in a firm is not a fit and proper person to hold a commercial agent licence unless the partner and each other partner in the firm is a fit and proper person to hold a licence.

60E Issue of commercial agent licence

- (1) A person may apply to the Secretary for a commercial agent licence.
- (2) The Secretary may issue a commercial agent licence to a person for a fixed term of 1 or 3 years.
- (3) Part 2 of the *Licensing and Registration (Uniform Procedures) Act 2002* (the **Licensing Act**) applies to and in respect of a commercial agent licence, subject to the modifications and limitations prescribed by this Act or the regulations.
- (4) For the purpose of applying Part 2 of the Licensing Act to a commercial agent licence:
 - (a) the licence may be amended but not transferred under that Act; and
 - (b) the references to 2 weeks, 4 weeks and 8 weeks in section 9 (1) (a), (b) and (c) of that Act are each to be read as references to 6 weeks; and
 - (c) an application for restoration of a licence under section 10 of that Act may not be made more than 3 months after the date on which the licence expires; and
 - (d) an application is not required to be advertised; and
 - (e) the reference to 14 days in section 24 (1) of that Act (as to the period within which changed particulars must be notified) is to be read as a reference to 7 days; and
 - (f) the licence may be granted subject to such conditions as the Secretary thinks fit and the Secretary may subsequently impose, vary or revoke conditions at any time; and
 - (g) the licence is subject to any restriction order made under this Part against the holder the licence.
- (5) The regulations may make provision for or with respect to such matters concerning a licence as are relevant to Part 2 of the Licensing Act including prescribing fees for applications.

Division 3 Enforcement

60F Secretary may require person to show cause

- (1) The Secretary may, by the giving of a notice (a show cause notice) to a person, require the person to show cause why the Secretary should not, for the reason specified in the notice:
 - (a) make an exclusion order or restriction order against the person; or
 - (b) cancel a licence held by the person.
- (2) The show cause notice must be in writing and must specify the period (being at least 14 days after the notice is given) in which the person may show cause.

- (3) The person to whom a show cause notice has been given may, within the period specified in the notice, make a written submission to the Secretary in relation to the matters to which the notice relates.
- (4) The Secretary:
 - (a) is to consider any submission made within the period specified in the show cause notice; and
 - (b) may conduct such inquiries, or make such investigations, in relation to the matters to which the notice relates as the Secretary thinks appropriate.

60G Exclusion orders and restriction orders

- (1) The Secretary may, after giving a show cause notice to a person and taking into consideration any submissions made in relation to the matter, make an order:
 - (a) that prohibits the person from carrying out commercial agent activities (an *exclusion order*); or
 - (b) that imposes conditions, restrictions or limitations on the person in relation to the carrying out of commercial agent activities (a *restriction order*).
- (2) An order made under this section comes into force when a copy of the order is given to the person subject to the order.
- (3) An order made under this section remains in force for an indefinite period or for the period specified in the order.
- (4) A person who contravenes a restriction order is guilty of an offence.

Maximum penalty: 1,000 penalty units (in the case of a corporation) or 200 penalty units or imprisonment for 12 months, or both (in the case of an individual).

Note. Contravention of an exclusion order is an offence under section 60B.

- (5) More than one order may be given to a person under this section.
- (6) Section 88 applies to the giving of an order under this section.

60H Cancelling commercial agent licence

- (1) The Secretary must, after giving a show cause notice to a person and taking into consideration any submissions made in relation to the matter, cancel a commercial agent licence held by the person if satisfied that the person is not a fit and proper person to hold the licence.
- (2) The Secretary must cancel a licence if the holder of the licence is a disqualified person and is not required to give the person a show cause notice before doing so.

Note. The making of an exclusion order against a person would require any licence held by the person to be cancelled.

Division 4 Miscellaneous

60I Administrative review by Tribunal

- (1) A person may apply to the Tribunal for an administrative review under the *Administrative Decisions Review Act 1997* of a decision by the Secretary:
 - (a) to refuse to grant a commercial agent licence to the person; or
 - (b) to impose, vary or revoke a condition on a licence granted to the person; or
 - (c) to cancel a licence held by the person; or
 - (d) to make an exclusion order or restriction order against the person.
- (2) Section 53 (Internal reviews) of the *Administrative Decisions Review Act 1997* does not apply in relation to a decision referred to in subsection (1).

60J Register

- (1) The Secretary is to maintain a Register for the purposes of this Part and is to enter and keep in the Register particulars of such of the following as the regulations may require:
 - (a) commercial agent licences;
 - (b) licence applications refused;
 - (c) prosecutions taken for offences under this Part and the result of those prosecutions;
 - (d) exclusion orders and restriction orders made;
 - (e) commercial agent licences cancelled;

- (f) any other matter prescribed by the regulations.
- (2) The regulations may require all or part of the Register to be published on the internet for public access.
- (3) Any part of the Register not published on the internet may be inspected by a person on payment of such reasonable fee (if any) as the Secretary may determine.

60K Commercial agent rules

- (1) The regulations may prescribe rules of conduct for the carrying out of commercial agent activities including by prohibiting certain practices.
 - (2) Without limiting subsection (1), the rules may deal with the following matters:
 - (a) prohibited practices (including, but not limited to, the use of physical force, harassment, coercion, misrepresentation, making unreasonable threats, entering premises illegally, impersonating a Government employee, exposing a person to ridicule or employing or otherwise using disqualified persons);
 - (b) money held on trust including the keeping of trust accounts and the audit of those accounts;
 - (c) the keeping of records;
 - (d) the provision of information to the Secretary;
 - (e) the handling of complaints;
 - (f) advertising;
 - (g) the employment or use of persons.
 - (3) A person must not carry out a commercial agent activity unless the person does so in compliance with the commercial agent rules.
 - (4) An employer must take all reasonable steps to ensure that an employee does not carry out a commercial agent activity in the course of their employment unless the employee does so in compliance with the commercial agent rules.
 - (5) Each officer of a corporation must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the corporation does not carry out a commercial agent activity unless it does so in compliance with the commercial agent rules.
- Maximum penalty: 100 penalty units (in the case of a corporation) or 50 penalty units (in the case of an individual).

60L Exchange of information

- (1) The Secretary may request and receive information from a law enforcement officer or regulatory officer for the purpose of assisting the Secretary in the exercise of functions under this Part.
- (2) The Secretary may enter into agreements and other arrangements for the sharing or exchange of information as authorised by this section.
- (3) In this section, *law enforcement officer* and *regulatory officer* have the same meanings as they have in section 219 of the *Property, Stock and Business Agents Act 2002*.

60M Part does not apply to certain persons

This Part does not apply to or in respect of the following:

- (a) a police officer of New South Wales, the Commonwealth or any other State or Territory;
- (b) a member of the Australian Defence Force;
- (c) an officer or employee of the Public Service, or a public authority, of New South Wales, the Commonwealth or any other State or Territory;
- (d) a law practice or an Australian legal practitioner or a person undertaking practical legal training under the supervision of an Australian legal practitioner;
- (e) a registered company auditor within the meaning of the *Corporations Act 2001* of the Commonwealth;
- (f) a general insurer within the meaning of the *Insurance Act 1973* of the Commonwealth, a *loss adjuster* (being a person carrying on the business of an insurance loss adjuster on behalf of a general insurer) or an employee of a general insurer or loss adjuster;

- (g) an officer or employee of an authorised deposit-taking institution;
- (h) a person of a class prescribed by the regulations.

60N Review of Part

- (1) The Minister is to review this Part to determine whether the policy objectives of the Part remain valid and whether the terms of the Part remain appropriate for securing those objectives.
- (2) The review is to be undertaken as soon as possible after the period of 5 years from the commencement of this Part.
- (3) A report on the outcome of the review is to be tabled in each House of Parliament within 12 months after the end of the period of 5 years.

No. 2 No compensation for deregulation

Page 7, schedule 1 [2], line 7. Omit "commercial agents". Insert instead "certain commercial agents".

No. 3 Retention of positive licensing scheme

Page 8, schedule 1 [2], line 4. Insert "or not to be a fit and proper person" after "disqualified person".

No. 4 Retention of positive licensing scheme

Page 8, schedule 1 [2]. Insert after line 4:

Applications for licences under Part 5 by former licence holders

- (1) The regulations may modify (or remove the need for) the application process for a licence under Part 5 of this Act in the case of a person whose commercial agent licence ceases to have effect because of the repeal of the CAPI Act.
- (2) In such a case, the regulations may deem the person to be the holder of a licence under Part 5, or may require the Secretary to issue a licence to the person under that Part, unconditionally or subject to conditions and for such period (being no more than 3 years) as may be prescribed.

No. 5 Prescribed activities

Page 9, schedule 2.2, lines 9–12. Omit all words on those lines. Insert instead:

- (d) carrying out commercial agent activities within the meaning of Part 5 (Regulation of commercial agents) of the *Fair Trading Act 1987*;

No. 6 Retention of positive licensing scheme

Page 9, schedule 2.5. Insert after line 21:

Insert in alphabetical order of Act name:

Fair Trading Act 1987

section 60E (2), commercial agent licence

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (10:14): The Opposition welcomes the Government's repositioning on the Fair Trading Amendment (Commercial Agents) Bill 2016, which ultimately is aimed at providing appropriate and fair regulation of commercial agents in New South Wales. The Opposition argued all along its concern about the ramifications of deregulating face-to-face debt collection in New South Wales. We argued that disadvantaged people may get the rough end of the stick if rogue and cowboy operators are allowed to infiltrate the debt collection industry, which may have been encouraged by changing face-to-face debt collection from a positive to negative licensing system. The suite of sensible amendments before us is aimed at ensuring protection of people in a vulnerable social and financial position and is welcomed by the Opposition.

The Opposition welcomes all measures to increase protections for those who are doing it tough, socially and financially, in our society, particularly those vulnerable people who find themselves riddled with crippling debt. While the Opposition now welcomes the Government taking a commonsense approach to legislating in this space—indeed we thank the Government for listening to the arguments put by the Opposition just a few weeks ago—the process that it took to get to where we stand today should be noted. Originally the Government went against key recommendations of the powerful Legal Affairs Committee's report "Debt Recovery in New South Wales" whose number one recommendation was that:

... the NSW Government introduce negative licensing for commercial agents who have no face-to-face contact with debtors, while positive licensing is retained for field agents.

The Opposition believed, and continues to do so, that the 2014 inquiry was a thorough and wideranging review of the current system, and that its recommendations should not have been taken lightly. However, I am pleased that the Government realised its missteps and decided to abandon changes that could have resulted in a poor outcome for the people of New South Wales. These amendments include sensible provisions to exclude dodgy

practitioners from infiltrating the industry. Today I am pleased to see strengthened legislation that specifically outlines criteria to disqualify dodgy debt collectors from practising and that defines a fit and proper person, who is able and suitably qualified, to undertake face-to-face debt collecting activities in New South Wales.

The Opposition supports the amendments for a number of reasons. These amendments will better ensure protections and adequate regulation around what is an emotive, contentious and potentially dangerous situation in which members of the community—many of whom are from the most vulnerable parts of our community—could have found themselves. We know from evidence and from research that vulnerable people are not simply refusing to pay their bills; rather, due to the multiple barriers that social and economic disadvantage may erect, many people in our community simply do not have the means by which to pay their bills on time. Often that is not the fault of people in crippling and seemingly insurmountable debt; rather, research contends that the causes of debt and financial hardship are complex and are related to other forms of disadvantage, and that debt problems arise from the complex intersections of underlying poverty or vulnerability compounded by an unexpected drop in income or a rise in expenses.

The report also identifies that, while many Australians benefit from access to credit, the risk of financial crisis that exposes individuals to problem debt can be increased by poor health, reliance on income support, loss of income, mental health and drug and alcohol problems. These amendments give more recognition to the complexities of debt, and that is welcomed by the Opposition. During the debate on the original incarnation of the bill I asked members to picture a single mother, who, for some reason, has fallen behind in repayments—and, unfortunately, a lot of them do. At any time of the day up to 9 o'clock in the evening, there could be a knock on her door and she could be faced with someone—most likely a male, and probably of a much larger frame than she—who purports to be from a debt collection agency.

Where are his identification card and licence? How can he be traced? How can she be sure that the debt collector is a fit and proper person? Under the Government's original bill, there was very little protection. Sensibly, under these amendments, this single mother will now be better protected from unscrutinised practitioners using dodgy tactics to recover debt. In summarising the Opposition's position, the proposed bill simply did not go far enough to protect vulnerable people in New South Wales. These amendments make the legislation far more satisfactory to the Opposition. For consideration of the issues that were raised so well by so many of my colleagues on this side of the House, we once again thank the Government. The Minister listened to our concerns, and we applaud him for doing so.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (10:20): I welcome the positive comments of the shadow Minister, the member for Swansea and make it clear that the recommendations of the Legal Affairs Committee, of which I am a member, were never taken lightly by this Government. I refer members to the second reading speech of the Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation and my contribution to the second reading debate. I commend Minister Dominello for listening to the concerns about potential problems and erring on the side of caution on this legislation. I believe that the Minister with carriage of this legislation has once again demonstrated that we have a caring and compassionate Government that is prepared to listen to concerns and to amend legislation where it sees fit.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (10:21): At last the Government has used common sense and listened to the concerns I raised on a variety of matters in respect of the Fair Trading Amendment (Commercial Agents) Bill 2016. Whilst members of the Government laughed at me when I talked about the Hells Angels debt collecting agency, the reality is that it is better to use common sense now rather than later, but the Government should not have dismissed the concerns I raised last week. At the time I also had a number of positive things to say about the Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation and the way in which he conducts his portfolio. However, I said that the provisions of the Fair Trading Amendment (Commercial Agents) Bill 2016 that he sought to introduce to this House would enable organised crime to infiltrate debt collection agencies.

I made very clear that the forefathers of this House knew what they were doing when they required debt collectors to be licensed by police and to provide fingerprints. I clearly pointed out that when police judge debt collectors in order to issue licences they do so not just on the basis of criminal records, as was proposed in the bill, but also on the basis of police intelligence. I warned members that once organised crime gets into the debt collection agencies no government will be able to remove them without taking extreme action, like closing down industries as occurred in relation to the lockout laws. Having raised these matters in a concise and repetitive manner, the Minister in reply said that the registered organisations legislation will ensure that the Rebels motorcycle gang, as an example, would be prohibited from participating in debt collecting.

However, I point out that nobody in this State has been registered in accordance with that legislation, which means that it has been so effective that the outlaw motorcycle gangs are continuing to operate and are not registered. I also warned members that not every member of outlaw motorcycle gangs has a criminal record—in fact, many of them participate in legitimate businesses. I know this because some of them have been my clients

in the past, so I have some knowledge of their activities. I also warned members that the Department of Fair Trading, as good as it has been in respect of consumer protection, is simply not qualified to regulate and control the debt collection industry.

We know that the debt collecting agencies have been utilised for the sole purpose of persuading people to pay their debts. In many instances, debt collection is outsourced. That means that a business that is owed money, such as an ambulance service, can approach people and ask them to pay a debt. If the debt is not paid the business can institute legal proceedings to recover the debt. Why would those organisations outsource that function to debt collection agencies? In some instances they sell the debt because debt collection agencies seem to have better powers of persuasion than other organisations. For centuries the most effective debt collectors have been ones that have been able to persuade people to pay their debt rather than dispute the debt in a civil court. This State was well and truly aware of the need to continue to involve police in licensing debt collection, because it had been established that this was essential as far as the community was concerned so that this enterprise occurred legitimately and not through the involvement of criminals.

It is laughable to say that the legislation relating to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission [ACCC] is sufficient deterrent to control this industry. Whilst the legislation relating to the ACCC and its predecessor, the Trade Practices Act, has contained impressive consumer protection provisions and provisions for anticompetitive conduct, I suggest to the House that these provisions have been ineffectual in a number of respects. As I told the House, if the ACCC cannot control major grocery store chains from predatory pricing or alleged anticompetitive behaviour, it is impossible to believe that some poor Housing Commission tenant in Waterloo, who cannot pay her ambulance bill, will be assisted by the ACCC when excessive persuasion is used to collect that debt. It is better that the Government tries to slip through these amendments now and accepts some of what I had to say last week on this legislation, but it has not gone far enough.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): The question is that the Legislative Council amendments be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Budget

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS 2016-17

Debate resumed from 22 September 2016.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) (10:27): All members of this House know that Parramatta has some of the best schools in Australia, if not the best schools in Australia. I am very proud of those schools, one of which is the Maronite College of the Holy Family. I recognise the great work of principal Margaret Ghosn and parents and citizens association president Salma Gernamous. I recognise year 8 student Robbie Al-Bazouni, who will be progressing to the final of the recent school public speaking competition. I congratulate members of the senior rugby team, who for four years in a row have won the Parramatta Cup, particularly man of the match Arthur Melham. The team was coached by Mr Abboud. The year 1 class came first in the Australian Athletics competition and second in the world—an amazing achievement. I also congratulate year 12 student Claudia Douaihy, who almost made it all the way to the *X-Factor* finals as part of a band.

St Monica's Primary School has an outstanding record of achievement and I commend principal Louise O'Donnell. I recognise year 5 student Alex Chang, who won the New South Wales storytelling competition—a fantastic achievement. I also recognise a year 6 student who was successful in the cross-country and who has made it through to the State level of competition. I acknowledge the work that goes into St Monica's Olympathon, where students take part in various Olympic-type activities.

There is also the outstanding St Mary's Rydalmere, a primary school in the Parramatta electorate. I commend the principal, Mr Richard Blissenden, and Parents and Citizens Association [P&C] president Mrs Kelly Alcuri. Year 6 recently embarked on two great initiatives in the classroom, the first being "Bring your own iPad Device", which allows students to use their own technology more often within their learning environment and to connect to home. The other was the MILE project, which is short for My Independent Learning Experience, in which students researched a topic or question of their choice for 60 minutes a week and then made a presentation of their learning to their peers. Both these initiatives have seen a spike in students' willingness to fully engage in their learning.

Rydalmere East Public School is a wonderful school and I commend the principal, Keryn Hinchcliffe, for her contribution to the school. I recognise the P&C president, Suzanne Barber, who is in her last year at the school before her youngest moves into high school in 2017. Suzanne has worked tirelessly at the school in raising funds for projects that benefit our school community. Her community spirit is outstanding. Rene Thomas, the

P&C treasurer, works tirelessly alongside Suzanne Barber. They organise and manage all fundraisers and give willingly of their time in an effort to support the school's vision and program. I acknowledge Gloria Kells, who voluntarily runs the uniform shop. She has been a regular volunteer and helper at the school for more than 55 years. Her children attended and her grandchildren still attend the school. In 2013 Gloria was recognised for her loyal service to the school for over 50 years and was a nominee for and finalist in the Australia Day Award for Volunteer of the Year. I commend long-term volunteer Margaret Kelly, who has not had children at the school for many years but is very dedicated. Each week she educates the children about environmental sustainability and she was a driving force behind our community-built environmentally-friendly outdoor learning centre.

I also bring to the attention of the House the wonderful work by three schools in the Animals Alive exhibition. I was delighted to join James Ruse principal Megan Connors; Cumberland High School principal Mechel Pikoulas; Carlingford West Public School principal Andrew Williamson; relieving director of the Parramatta Network Julie Kennedy; and ARTEXPRESS project officer Kimberley Oates. The exhibition was a joint initiative of Cumberland High School, Carlingford West Primary School and James Ruse Agricultural High School. The idea came about in 2015 when year 7 students from both high schools joined with the year 5 students at Carlingford West Primary to discuss ways in which the community of schools could work together.

The idea of a combined sculptures exhibition was the brainchild of Rowan Chate from Cumberland High School and Dineth Fernando and Danny Luo from James Ruse. The boys wanted to develop a project that was fun, engaged students of all ages and addressed a global issue, that issue being pollution. They proposed that the sculptures were to be made from recycled materials to create a real, mythical or imagined animal. The initiative resulted in 103 sculptures created by the three schools which lined the path from James Ruse via Carlingford West to Cumberland High School. It was a wonderful example of team building and community connection with fantastic artworks.

I congratulate Cumberland High School winners Jacinta Chen and Rachael Chamberlain on their piece "Winter Wanderer". I also congratulate James Ruse winners Chloe Toh, Zami Lee, Andrew Li, Mumit Mahbub and Andrew Cui for their artwork "The Pigasus", which was my favourite. I congratulate the Carlingford West winners, Brian Park, Eric Jang, Atul Megavannan and Harjeev Sing, for "The Robo Croc". I thank Jude Edwards from Cumberland High School for her kind invitation to attend this wonderful event, which is an exemplar of collaboration between schools.

Again I acknowledge Megan Connors for her leadership as principal of James Ruse Agricultural High School, one of the best-performing academic high schools in Australia. I recognise Andre Lo and Maxwell Ding, who won silver medals at the International Biology Olympiad in Vietnam. I congratulate Kevin Xian, who won a silver medal in the International Mathematical Olympiad, and Simon Yang, who won a bronze medal in the International Olympiad in Chemistry held in the Republic of Georgia. This is a fantastic achievement. I wish Daniel Ho good luck when he competes in the Urban and Environmental Science Olympiad. There are many exceptional schools in Parramatta, and I commend all their principals, P&C members, staff and students. Everybody plays such an important role in educating our future generations.

There are many great organisations within the Parramatta electorate. One of the responsibilities and passions I have is for education, which is one of the priorities I see this Government delivering on, especially in Parramatta. One need only look at the budget to see we need a strong fiscal position to allow us to have a record spend in not just infrastructure but also educational facilities. I am proud to say that we are getting four new schools in Parramatta: the first vertical public high school and the first vertical public primary school in New South Wales, the new O'Connell Street Public School in the old King's School precinct and the enlargement and redevelopment of Rosehill Public School. It is a very exciting time for people in Parramatta, who are certainly looking forward to those schools being built. We have already started work and are continuing to make sure that Parramatta will be the focus for education, including an education hub along with the University of Western Sydney, TAFE New England and many other private organisations. [*Extension of time*]

I know everyone is excited about this story, which shows how well Parramatta is doing. It is no accident that Parramatta is doing very well, as we have so many great community organisations—

Mr Jonathan O'Dea: And a great member.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I acknowledge that interjection by the member for Davidson, who is obviously a keen judge of character! I recognise North Rocks Carlingford Little Athletics, a very popular organisation, and the great work done by Fergus Tilt, president of that organisation. North Rocks Carlingford Little Athletics was successful in applying for a New South Wales Government grant for the installation of electronic timing gates at Kingsdene Oval. I congratulate its athletes of the year, who are great role models in their community in terms of achievement: Samuel Price, Lily Tilt, Anthony Shahla, Hayley Reynolds, Alexander Shahla, Samantha Dale and Maya Leverett. I thank the whole Little Athletics community at North Rocks for always making me feel welcome. At the

Old Kings Oval is the Parramatta District Cricket Club, one of the oldest, if not the oldest, cricket clubs in Australia.

What a beautiful ground. I recognise Parramatta Cricket Club president, Ron Wright. Ron regularly lobbies me about the club, which has an outstanding record of achievements. The Parramatta Cricket Academy squad recently went on tour to Sri Lanka. The team included Ben Roughan, Andrew Calvert, Brentan Smith, Blake Benge, Philip Banno, Charlie Tribolet, and Joe Mercer. They played three matches and met the Australian touring team. This wonderful organisation is preserving and enhancing cricket and all the great things it achieves, and I wish it all the best for the future. Old Kings Oval is a wonderful venue, which the club is sharing with the AFL. It is fantastic to see great organisations sharing facilities and infrastructure, and in so doing maximising their use.

Members will be aware of the Parramatta Two Blues rugby club. I acknowledge president Michael Bell, captain Doug McNaught, and groundsman Frank Lawson. Frank is still volunteering at the sprightly age of 92. Every week for 35 years, this Second World War Royal Australian Navy veteran has volunteered to take care of the grounds. What a sensational effort. Frank is a great club asset. The first-grade team, which is captained by Andrew Cox, defeated the Australian Club Champions Eastwood twice during the year after winning only one game last year. Andrew has played 150 first-grade games for the club. That is approaching the record for captaining a first-grade team in the competition. I congratulate Andrew on his fantastic achievements.

Obviously, schools and sporting groups such as the Parramatta Cricket Club and the Parramatta Two Blues are important in the local area. However, they are no more important than other clubs, such as the scouts. I am a passionate supporter of the scouting movement. I acknowledge the 1st Rydalmere Scouts, which has the support of outstanding parents and leaders. I congratulate Sue King, the group leader; and Melissa McAulay, Jaci Gross, Tim Holman, Grace Wang, Ben Gross, who are all involved in the Cub Scouts.

Bills

CIVIL REMEDIES FOR SERIOUS INVASIONS OF PRIVACY BILL 2016

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) (10:43): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I have great pleasure on behalf of the Opposition to introduce the Civil Remedies for Serious Invasions of Privacy Bill 2016. The bill aims to implement the legislative recommendations of a report of the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Law and Justice. The report is entitled "Remedies for the Serious Invasion of Privacy in New South Wales", and was published in March 2016. The recommendations in that report that form the basis for the bill were adopted unanimously. They were bipartisan. The objects of the bill are to provide for the substantial adoption of the legislative proposals made in report No. 123 of 2014 by the Australian Legal Reform Commission concerning the creation of a statutory cause of action for serious invasion of personal privacy; to confer jurisdiction upon the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] to entertain proceedings for enforcement of such statutory actions, in addition to the existing jurisdiction of the District Court and the Supreme Court; and to confer power upon the Privacy Commissioner to receive and deal with complaints about the serious invasion of personal privacy, including the power to issue take-down orders.

In a pattern of melancholy consistency, the Government is yet to take action on the recommendations of the parliamentary committee. While the delay is not as acute as, for example, the three-year wait for action concerning racial vilification, this is still disappointing. The Government has issued a discussion paper. Issuing a discussion paper rather than actually doing something such as introducing legislation is another typical response from the Government. The discussion paper relates to the possible future introduction of a criminal offence aimed at the unauthorised release of intimate images—colloquially known as "revenge porn". That may be a good idea—I will need to see the legislation. However, it is not what the committee recommended. The discussion paper proposal for take-down mechanisms only follows a conviction. That may well take some time, especially with current delays in the District Court, and will be lengthy, more confronting, and more time consuming than the take-down provisions included in this bill. In addition, it deals with only part of the field covered by the committee report.

The Standing Committee on Law and Justice inquiry was established on 24 June 2015. Its report, released in March this year, contained a number of recommendations relevant to this debate. Recommendation 3 was to introduce a statutory cause of action for serious invasions of privacy. Recommendation 4 provided the statutory cause of action be based on the Australian Law Reform Commission model in its 2014 report. Recommendation 5

incorporates a fault element of intent, recklessness and negligence for governments and corporations, and a fault element of intent and recklessness for natural persons in a statutory cause of action. Recommendation 7 was to confer jurisdiction on the NCAT to enable it to hear claims, in addition to ordinary civil courts, arising out of the statutory cause of action. Recommendation 6 was to broaden the scope of the NSW Privacy Commissioner's jurisdiction, and to empower the NSW Privacy Commissioner to make determinations that involve non-financial forms of redress, including apologies, take-down orders, and cease-and-desist orders.

It also recommended that the NSW Privacy Commissioner be empowered to refer a complaint on behalf of a complainant to the NCAT for hearing for a statutory cause of action where there is a failure to act on a non-financial form of redress, including apologies, take-down orders and cease-and-desist orders. There were several factors driving the committee's recommendations and this bill. The invasion of privacy is a profoundly serious issue for our society. There is very real and entirely reasonable community concern about the issue. That problem and the concern about it is increasing. Recent decades have seen the rapid development of technology, and the overwhelming presence of social media. Most spectacularly, that is manifested in the phenomenon colloquially known as "revenge porn", which is probably better described as unauthorised sharing of intimate images. However, the bill is broader than that.

There are several current legal avenues to deal with these issues. None is adequate. They are complex, uncertain and not effective. Left to its own devices, common law may evolve an adequate mechanism in due course. However, we do not need to wait for that. The legislature should intervene with its own solutions. Doctrines such as an equitable action for breach of confidence do not provide adequate recourse. Criminal sanctions are sometimes used in relation to intimate images. However, there are two problems with that approach. There is a conceptual problem with arguing that images are indecent when they are created between consenting parties. There is sometimes a certain reluctance in victims wanting to expose themselves to the full panoply of criminal proceedings. That is notoriously the case with sexual assault, which is under-reported and has a lower rate of prosecution. Simply relying upon the criminal law to deal with these issues is inadequate.

Civil law remedies need to be reformed and improved. However, we need other remedies, which is why this bill, following the committee report, expands the role of the Privacy Commissioner. By the way, the Government should get on with appointing a person to that position because the term expires shortly. The impact of a breach of privacy can be catastrophic for the individual victim. This is graphically obvious in the case of victims of unauthorised sharing of intimate images. Current technological developments of other types have increased the level of concern and the frequency of incidents. This includes the increasing use of drones and the unauthorised release of personal data increasingly held by corporate and governmental entities.

The first element in this bill is the introduction of a statutory cause of action for a serious breach of privacy. There has been a long line of recommendations for the introduction of this type of remedy. These include the 2008 Australian Law Reform Commission report "For Your Information: Privacy Law and Practice"; the 2009 NSW Law Reform Commission report "Invasion of Privacy"; the 2010 Victorian Law Reform Commission report "Surveillance in Public Places"; and the 2014 Australian Law Reform Commission report "Serious Invasions of Privacy in the Digital Era". The first of these reports is now years old. The implications of the digital age and increasing public concern mean that it is time to take action. It is time to adopt the multiple recommendations for a separate cause of action. Slightly different models are proposed in the reports. The model recommended in the committee report and which I have adopted in this bill is that proposed in the 2014 ALRC report. This has the obvious virtue of encouraging national consistency.

This focuses on two categories of invasion of privacy. One is misuse of private information. The other is intrusion upon seclusion. This is the narrowest of the available models and certainly narrower than the New South Wales Law Reform Commission [LRC] formulation. There is a variance in the models in relation to the fault element. The committee solution with which I agree and which is contained in this bill is to incorporate a fault element of intent, recklessness and negligence for governments and corporations and a fault element of intent or recklessness for natural persons. The jurisdiction for such claims would be the Supreme Court and District Court. Principles of common law assessment of damages would apply.

There is also merit in looking beyond the traditional courts to hear these types of claims. That holds the hope of being simpler and at lower cost. For that reason the committee recommended that jurisdiction be extended to the NCAT to allow it to hear claims in this field. This bill proposes that as well. I note that the NCAT already has jurisdiction to consider other types of claims between private persons as well as dealing with non-solved disputes with government agencies. The introduction of a statutory cause of action is a very important tool for people who have been the subject of a serious invasion of privacy.

However, there also needs to be other mechanisms that are not simply aimed at recovering damages after injuries have been inflicted. There also needs to be a mechanism to cauterise the damage. For that reason the bill adopts the committee's unanimous recommendations concerning the Privacy Commissioner. This pursues a

complaints mechanism rather than damages claims or indeed a criminal prosecution to provide redress. This will allow a private complaint to the Privacy Commissioner. That office will have to be adequately resourced. It will also need appropriate powers. The commission should be able to receive and determine complaints relating to a serious invasion of privacy. The commissioner should be able to deal with non-financial redress. This would include apologies, cease-and-desist orders and take-down orders.

Turning to the provisions of the bill, part 1 provides preliminary and definitional provisions. Part 2 establishes a cause of action for serious invasion of privacy. It makes clear that the statutory cause of action is an action in tort. People under 18 years of age are excluded as defendants. Limitation periods are controlled by currently existing law. Clause 9 makes clear that the invasion of privacy is either an intrusion upon seclusion or a misuse of private information. An action only lies under clause 10 where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy. Circumstances relevant to this are set out in 10 (2). Clause 11 sets out the fault element to which I earlier alluded. Clause 12 provides such actions must only involve serious breaches of privacy. Clause 13 importantly provides that a successful action must establish that the public interest in privacy outweighs any countervailing public interest. Clause 14 provides a single publication rule.

Division 3 of part 2 provides statutory defences against the statutory cause of action. These include lawful conduct, necessity and consent, protection of person or property, absolute privilege, publication of public document and fair report of proceedings of public concern, many of which already arise under the provisions of the Defamation Act. Division 4 provides for remedies in broad common law terms, subject to jurisdictional limits of the relevant court. Aggravated damages are prohibited. Exemplary damages are available in exceptional circumstances only. Non-economic loss damages are subject to the same limits as pursuant to the Defamation Act. The courts will also have power to issue injunctive and declaratory relief. The court may also order delivery and destruction of articles, documents or material. It may also make an order for the publication of a correction, the making of an apology or other non-monetary relief.

Division 5 clarifies the relationship of the cause of action to other rights and clause 21 ensures the cause of action does not survive for the plaintiff's estate. Part 3 establishes the jurisdiction for causes of serious invasion of privacy for the NCAT. The limitation periods are set out in clause 26. The provisions concerning the nature of the claim and defences follow those in part 2. The jurisdictional limits for monetary relief mirror those of the District Court. Part 4 of the bill deals with the role of the Privacy Commissioner. Clause 40 sets out the commissioner's role, including proceedings in the NCAT. Division 3 of part 4 provides for the making of complaints and how they are dealt with, including a preliminary assessment and conciliation.

Clause 47 sets out the mechanism for the determination of complaints. The commissioner can make various declarations including that the respondent must take specified steps, that the respondent must make an apology, or that relevant material be taken down. Should the declaration not be complied with, clause 48 provides that the determination can be enforced through the NCAT. Clause 54 provides the Act does not apply to invasion of privacy committed before the Act commences. Clause 55 provides for a statutory review of the Act five years after commencement. This bill responds to the unanimous bipartisan recommendations of a parliamentary committee in the way the Government should have but did not. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned

SUITORS' FUND AMENDMENT (COSTS OF NCAT APPEALS) BILL 2016

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) (10:54): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

It gives me much pleasure to introduce this bill on behalf of the Opposition. It deals with a very precise and specific proposal within a very narrow compass. It is a blindingly obvious proposal which the Government should have pursued when it introduced the legislation to establish the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT]. As is an all too frequent occurrence, this Government missed the opportunity to do something that was both sensible and obvious. The Government did not do it; the Opposition does. The object of the bill is to provide an amendment to the Suits' Fund Act 1951. The proposed amendment is to allow appeal panels of the NCAT to grant indemnity certificates to respondents to successful internal appeals made under the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act.

The indemnity certificate allows the respondent to an appeal to be reimbursed in particular circumstances out of the Suits' Fund. The reimbursement is of all or part of the appellant's costs of the appeal paid by the

respondent. In certain circumstances the certificate entitles the appellant to be paid directly from the fund all or part of the appellant's costs of the appeal. That would mean that a person who makes an internal appeal to an appeal panel of the NCAT on a question of law and succeeds on that appeal can recover costs of the appeal that are ordered to be paid by the appeal panel.

The current restrictions on the Suitors' Fund scheme continue. Certificates cannot be granted to corporations with paid-up share capital of \$200,000 or more, or to corporations related to body corporates with such capital. The principal Act is the Suitors' Fund Act. It commenced on 1 November 1951. In 1987 the Act was amended. In passing the then Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. John Dowd, noted that the Suitors' Fund had been an integral part of the court system but unnoticed by the public. In a paper in 2010, Crown Solicitor's Office senior solicitor Valentine Muscio somewhat tongue in cheek said it was unnoticed by the legal profession as well. In relation to the NCAT, it has been unnoticed by the Government. In his paper Mr Muscio draws several extracts from the speech of the Hon. Clarence Martin, the then Attorney General, who moved the second reading of the bill introducing the scheme in 1951. For members who are interested I recommend Mr Muscio's summary of the then Attorney General's speech.

Since 1951 the Act has been amended on a number of occasions. The circumstances in which payments were permitted were enlarged including for example where proceedings were rendered abortive by the death or protracted illness of the judge or magistrate concerned. Other jurisdictions have adopted similar provisions in Western Australia, Victoria, Tasmania, Queensland, the Commonwealth, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. A number of cases are referred to by Mr Muscio in the paper I have just mentioned setting out the general principles that are involved. I particularly draw attention to comments made by Justice Nagle in *Evatt v New South Wales Bar Association* [1968] 3 NSWLR 573 at 574 and Justice Moffit in *Acquilina v Dairy Farmers Cooperative Milk Co Ltd (New South Wales)* [1965] NSW 772 at 774. Mr Muscio wrote:

After considering all the case law cited in this paper, I believe that the purpose of the Act is to provide litigants in certain circumstances with relief from the burden of unnecessary costs incurred by some mishap in the court system which has prevented proceedings from concluding when they were anticipated to conclude, so long as no responsibility for the mishap lay on the party to be assisted by the Act.

Of course the scheme is not unlimited. It is not, as some have described it, a treasure chest. The maximum per application is \$10,000 except in High Court matters, where it is \$20,000. There has indeed been some quite robust public criticism of the scheme for not being more generous. This bill does not seek to increase those limits. The grant of a certificate by a tribunal or a court is entirely discretionary. The Director General of the Attorney General's Department has discretion as to the amount paid. The scheme is traditionally funded from a proportion of court fees. Over time the power to issue a certificate has been extended to a number of courts. It has not, however, been extended to the NCAT. The authority for that proposition is *Berger v Boulder Projects Pty Ltd* [2015] NSWCATAP 274.

Section 6 of the principal Act permits a respondent in a successful appeal on a question of law to the Industrial Relations Commission [IRC], the District Court or the Land and Environment Court to apply for a certificate. The number of applications made under the fund is significant but not large. The advice I have received sets them out as follows: in the financial year 2010-2011 there were 85 applications; in 2011-2012 there were 137 applications; in 2012-2013 there were 109 applications; in 2013-2014 there were 30 applications; and in 2014-2015 there were 58 applications. I am grateful to the Parliamentary Library for that information. My questions on notice to the Attorney to elicit that information were entirely unsuccessful.

The argument for extension of this scheme to NCAT is powerful. In fact, it should have been done when this Government introduced the legislation establishing NCAT. It is a good example of the lack of attention paid by this Government to the legislation it introduced. The NCAT has a significant and wide jurisdiction. It can make an order for up to \$500,000 for a claim under the Home Building Act or an application under the Agricultural Tenancies Act. It can make an order up to \$400,000 relating to a retail tenancy claim. There is a right of appeal from the NCAT appeal panel where parties are routinely legally represented. There are other jurisdictions where certificates under the Suitors' Fund Act can be granted. The limit of the Local Court jurisdiction is \$100,000 from whence an appeal lies to the Supreme Court.

An indemnity certificate can be issued in appropriate cases by the Supreme Court, but not by the NCAT panel, even though the jurisdiction limits are significantly larger in monetary terms. It seems anomalous for the scheme to apply to such appeals from the Local Court or the Supreme Court but not to NCAT appeals. Regarding the details of the bill, I note the provisions are simple. Schedule 1 to the bill provides an amendment to the Suitors' Fund Act to include NCAT. In particular, there is an amendment to section 6. The basis behind the bill is put this way by James Mack, a barrister and contributor to a publication by the New South Wales Society of Labor Lawyers entitled "Legal Tweaks". He wrote:

The Suitors' Fund Act ought to be changed to ensure that those who have had their day in the tribunal miscarry have the same access to costs relief as those who have had their day in court miscarry.

I thank Mr Mack for the assistance he has provided in the preparation of this bill. It is a sensible and reasonable proposal to fix up a gap that the Government has left. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned

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

Second Reading

Debated resumed from 23 June 2016.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (11:01): As I said at the outset of my previous contribution, I congratulate the member for Bankstown on introducing the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Amendment (Protection from Serious Offenders) Bill 2016. The bill provides protection to all future children of parents or guardians who have committed murder, manslaughter and other serious offences against their children. The bill will enable all future children of such parents or guardians to be removed automatically from their care at birth, or will prevent the parents or guardians from residing with, approaching or contacting them. In South Australia in 2012 a four-year-old child, Zoe Valentine, was killed after being forced by her own mother and her mother's partner to continuously crash a 50 kilogram motorbike. We all saw the disturbing and sickening images. The South Australian Coroner made 21 recommendations as a result of the inquest into the death of Zoe Valentine, which are aimed at protecting other children from suffering the same neglect and violence.

Those key recommendations are: automatic removal of future children from the care of any parent convicted of manslaughter or murder; supervision of all social workers with less than 12 months experience; urgent re-education to rectify the widespread misunderstanding that parents have to be consulted on any care decisions about their child; a requirement for social workers to be registered; the State Government begin negotiations with the Commonwealth Government to make a child protection income management regime permanent; and permanent removal of children to adoptive parents have a place in the child protection scheme. In my view, we have no higher duty than to stand up to protect children from those who, as a result of their cowardly actions, hurt or kill a child. Those people have no right to be given an opportunity to hurt or kill again. We are talking about defenceless babies, many of whom cannot walk, talk or even feed themselves. Innocent and defenceless victims must prevail over murderous and negligent parents. Why would we consider giving those parents or guardians a chance to kill again?

The bill will ensure that any parent convicted of the murder or manslaughter of their child or of other certain serious offences relating to their child will automatically have their future children removed from their care at birth through an instrument of guardianship, and will provide for the issue of restraining notices so that any person convicted of murder or manslaughter or other certain serious offences against a child may be prevented from residing on the same property of a child or young person, or from coming within a specified distance of the child or young person's residence, or having any contact with the child or young person. The bill introduced by the shadow Minister, the member for Bankstown, will ensure that those who have ended the life of a child will be prevented at all costs from destroying the life of another. We owe this to all children who are at risk.

Safeguards are proposed in section 38O and 38P. Parents can apply for a revocation of an instrument of guardianship, or a woman who has been found guilty of a disqualifying offence and who is expecting a child may, during the term of her pregnancy, apply to the Children's Court for an order to prevent the issuing of an instrument of guardianship relating to the child. The proposed section 38K would require the Secretary of the Department of Family and Community Services to assume guardianship of a child if the secretary becomes aware that the child has been born to a parent who has been found guilty of a disqualifying offence. This is achieved by the secretariat issuing an instrument of guardianship. The child specified in the instrument will, for all purposes, be under the guardianship of the Minister for a period of 60 days, unless a parent of the child makes a successful application to have the instrument of guardianship revoked.

If the child also resides with a parent who has not been found guilty of a disqualifying offence, the secretary is not to issue an instrument of guardianship but must instead issue a restraining notice under the proposed section 38Q against the parent found guilty of the disqualifying offence. The secretary is not required to issue an instrument if he or she is not of the opinion that the relevant disqualifying offence occurred where there were significant mitigating circumstances or arose as a result of any illness or condition from which the offender no longer suffers, or from any circumstances that no longer exist. I believe that child killers should lose their right to be parents. Removing the right to become a parent, which is a fundamental human experience, may sound controversial, but is a change that must happen and it should not be taken lightly. The rights of innocent children

must be upheld against their murderers. I conclude by putting in *Hansard* my utmost respect and admiration for those who have spoken out bravely about the sickening abuse of children. I commend the bill to the House and I urge all members to support it.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (11:07): I oppose the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Amendment (Protection of Serious Offenders) Bill 2016. The proposed reforms will not improve child protection and are likely to be counterproductive to child protection practice. The reforms have the potential to undermine other capacity-building approaches to child protection, which will be to the detriment of children across the State. Women whose partners have been found guilty of disqualifying offences may panic if they fear their children will be removed from them and are more likely to go underground or interstate rather than go to the Children's Court for an order to prevent the secretary from taking their children.

Given the vulnerable clients that Family and Community Services deals with day in and day out, the proposed reforms are far more likely to deter pregnant women from accessing crucial and critical health and other support services prior to giving birth, including antenatal health care in order to avoid having their children automatically removed from their care. This may especially impact mothers affected by domestic violence. It is important to note that these are the very people whom we want to encourage to access health and support services; we do not want to discourage them. Parents may attempt to circumvent these proposed laws by moving to a different, interstate town—moving away from family support networks—and giving birth to the child outside New South Wales, which may also result in the mother's avoidance of antenatal care and she may not even present to a hospital to give birth. She may not register the birth or may change her name to avoid detection.

This response will ultimately put children at risk rather than protect them. While the Opposition has included some discretionary provisions where the automatic removal of a child may not apply, these provisions simply attempt to address one of the inherent defects of the bill. The one-size-fits-all approach is bound to lead to some unjust outcomes. As we have heard from the Minister, the Department of Family and Community Services [FACS] has the tools and strategies to work with families and decide the best course of action to best protect children. The department utilises these tools and strategies to avoid further risks of harm. It is important to note that FACS has significant powers to protect children and that frontline workers have the tools and strategies to work with families and decide on the best course of action to protect children.

As we have heard from the Minister, caseworkers are guided by the safety and risk assessment tool [SARA], which uses structured decision-making to assess a child's safety and risk in their household. The tool helps caseworkers to assess whether a child can be kept safe at home, and if the family needs support to make changes to reduce risk. The tool considers the history of the parents and analyses how this history may impact on the parenting of that child. If a parent has a history of violence towards a child, this would be clearly identified through SARA and would form part of any analysis and decision-making about current risk. FACS is also continually working to develop localised initiatives that can better serve families. A new initiative of the department's Sydney district in partnership with Sydney Local Health District is the Pregnancy Family Conferencing program. Under the program, when a prenatal report is received it is allocated to a caseworker.

[Interruption]

Mr MARK COURE: Instead of interjecting, the member for Bankstown might want to hear this; this is important. The caseworker engages with the family and coordinates services to reduce the likelihood of the child being removed at birth. The program is voluntary and it works on building the families' strengths, as well as identifying areas where support and work need to be focused. Of the families who participated in conferences this year, 60 per cent retained care of their infant, and 38 per cent of families who had previous children removed from their care retained the care of their new baby. These figures identify the significant and positive role caseworkers can play in the lives of families who are vulnerable and need help. I put on the record that FACS frontline workers do an outstanding job and are the best placed to make these decisions.

This legislation would severely impact on their ability to assess the individual circumstances of the families they work with, and would affect their ability to apply their own evidenced-based judgement of what each child needs to be safe. There are many situations where, with the right support, a parent is able to make changes that create safety for their children—something which most vulnerable parents want to be given the chance to do. When working to improve child protection policy and practice, a sensible and nuanced approach is necessary. This bill does neither, and risks further isolating women or families who are already vulnerable. These changes would ultimately be to the detriment of children, and for this reason I oppose the bill.

Ms MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley) (11:14): I, too, oppose the Labor Party's Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Amendment (Protection from Serious Offenders) Bill 2016. At the outset I put on record that I am absolutely staggered that the member introducing this bill has only one member from her party supporting her today. That probably says a lot about the confidence that her colleagues have in this bill.

Ms Tanya Mihailuk: That is because your Minister spent an hour filibustering.

Ms MELINDA PAVEY: You mentioned the Minister's speech. It was a wonderful speech, which highlighted why the bill is opportunistic and ridiculous.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! If the member for Bankstown wants to have a say she can seek the call at the end of the debate.

Ms Tanya Mihailuk: Point of order—

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

Ms Tanya Mihailuk: The member for Oxley should be directed to address you, Mr Deputy Speaker—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the member to resume her seat.

Ms Tanya Mihailuk: She was speaking directly with me.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order and that is no way to address this House.

[Interruption]

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the member for Bankstown to leave the Chamber. I ask the member leave the Chamber.

Ms Tanya Mihailuk: For how long?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the member to leave the Chamber.

Ms Tanya Mihailuk: I need to be able to—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the member to leave the Chamber.

Ms MELINDA PAVEY: As I was saying, the speech last week by the Minister was one of the best speeches I have heard on this issue in this place. We are fortunate to have a Minister of that capacity. He delivered a speech that put into context the problems that we have in New South Wales with respect to the legislation introduced by the previous Government—by the Labor Party. The Minister made the point—he made it very well—that the legislation was introduced with good intentions, but that it has had disastrous consequences for the children of this State. Those consequences are nowhere better highlighted than in these figures. In 1996 there were 5,000 children in this State in out-of-home care. Twenty years later, in 2016, there are 20,000 children in out-of-home care. There are 700 of those children in my electorate.

Instead of taking the approach that Minister Hazzard has taken, the Labor Opposition has come into this Chamber to introduce legislation in an attempt to look as if it is doing something. The Minister is ready to embrace ideas; he has not politicised this portfolio. His speech was very thorough in highlighting the 20 years of failure that has led to these figures. The crux of the Minister's speech highlighted the facts surrounding the introduction, in 1998, of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998. The irony has not been lost on me that the shadow Minister is trying to amend her own party's legislation. The provisions of the 1998 legislation resulted in the loss of some really good initiatives, including the Child Protection Helpline. The legislation resulted in stopping the contact, communication and solutions at a local level. That is why we are now seeing the figures that I mentioned earlier.

No allowance was made for those relationships and for communities being able to solve some of those problems, which instead were referred to a central call line, whereas sometimes local knowledge and intervention can fix some of the problems before they are out of control. That is one of the reasons that there is a large number of children in out-of-home care. As I said earlier, the bill seeks to amend legislation, which was introduced by a former Labor Government, to automatically remove a child at birth from parents who have killed or who have committed certain offences. In the preparation of a bill of this type, one would think that a sexual offence would be a reason to take a child from its parent, but it is not included in this bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member for Bankstown to leave the Chamber for a period of three hours. I previously asked her to do that, but she refused.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Bankstown left the Chamber at 11.20 a.m.]

Ms MELINDA PAVEY: The point I make is that in the hurried and harried manner in which this bill was formulated—in an effort to appear as though the Labor Party was doing something—even some of the basics are wrong whereas, if Labor members are genuinely concerned about the welfare of children, sexual offence would have been included. In Labor's desperation for a headline, there has been a failure to acknowledge that the

current legislation has policy safeguards that protect children from persons who have committed serious offences against children. In other words, there is no need for this legislation.

One would think that the member for Bankstown would be more interested in collaborating and doing further work in conjunction with the Minister, who has been very approachable in his dealings with the Opposition. I have seen that and I heard it in his speech. A collaborative approach would have been more appropriate than simply introducing this bill. Because I am sure that the member for Bankstown has many children in out-of-home care in her community, as I have in my electorate, I would have thought she would put forward more sensible policy ideas or on-the-ground solutions. Caseworkers and Family and Community Services [FACS] workers are at the front line every day dealing with child protection issues. Some of them have great ideas for improving the system, which I feed back to the Minister and the Minister's office. As members of Parliament, we have a duty, obligation and responsibility to ensure that children in this State are being looked after.

I acknowledge that children in out-of-home care are being looked after as best they can be, but the figures are staggering. I reiterate that in 1996 there were 5,000 children in out-of-home care; 20 years later, there are 20,000 children in out-of-home care. The large number of children in out-of-home care is a big responsibility for Family and Community Services, foster carers and society. Members of Parliament should work together to resolve the problem instead of introducing legislation that is merely an attempt to grab a headline, especially when current legislation deals with the issue in any context. I again note the irony of the Labor Party amending legislation introduced in 1998 by a former Labor Government that actually created the difficult situation of so many children being in out-of-home care.

The Minister's second reading address was a great speech. His hour-long explanation of the history of child protection in this State over the past 20 years was very instructive. It is good to know that the State has a Minister who has the capacity to understand the past, look towards the future, and listen to backbench members of Parliament. The point I make is that it would be good if the member for Bankstown adopted a more collaborative approach. The member for Bankstown obviously cares about children in out-of-home care, but this type of grandstanding is not what is needed. First and foremost, we need partnerships at a community level to create networks that will ensure children in New South Wales are protected. I certainly will not support the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Amendment (Protection from Serious Offenders) Bill 2016. In fact, I oppose it. I genuinely endorse the capacity and the work of the Minister for Family and Community Services.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (11:24): I oppose the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Amendment (Protection from Serious Offenders) Bill 2016. I believe the bill should not be supported. I encourage Opposition members, who believe the bill should be supported, to read the *Hansard* report on 22 September 2016 of the debate resumed from 23 June 2016 in which the Minister for Family and Community Services, the Hon. Brad Hazzard, gave an impassioned explanation of why the Opposition's bill should be opposed.

Ms Anna Watson: I was here when he filibustered.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: I reject the interjection of the member for Shellharbour that the Minister's speech was a filibuster. If she takes the time to read *Hansard*, she will realise that, far from being a filibuster, the Minister's speech clearly was heartfelt and true, and correctly acknowledged the great work done in difficult circumstances seven days a week, 365 days a year by Family and Community Services. As the Minister pointed out, a comprehensive framework already exists for monitoring and managing child offenders in the community and for triggering an immediate response from child protection authorities when a child is believed to be at risk by virtue of being in the care of a person who previously has been convicted of a serious offence against a child.

The member for Shellharbour asked why offenders would be given a second chance. The Act addresses that issue and a reading of it might obviate the need for Opposition members to ask irrelevant questions and make irrelevant points. The Act recognises that mitigating circumstances may exist, or that people no longer may be suffering from illness that caused them to commit a crime. But if caseworkers think there is an immediate risk to a child, they will take immediate action, but action will be based on an assessment. The Child Protection Offenders Register does not just cover parent offenders but includes any offender, such as a boyfriend, babysitter, family friend and relative, who has committed a serious offence against a child. Significantly, those categories of offenders, unless they have parental responsibility, are not covered by the Opposition's bill. In New South Wales, courts also have power to make child protection registration orders against a person who is found guilty of other criminal offences.

Family and Community Services works closely with the NSW Police Force to support applications for the protection of children from child offenders. Courts also have power to make child prohibition orders for the purpose of controlling the behaviour of registrable persons, who continue to pose a danger to children, by preventing them from doing certain things, associating or having contact with specified people, or being in a

specified location such as a school. Breach of an order carries a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment. Additionally, courts have the power to make extended supervision orders, with extensive conditions, for up to five years against an offender who has committed a serious violent or sexual offence against a child or adult, and who is assessed as being a high risk of further violent or sexual offending. Breach of an extended supervision order carries a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment. The Minister for Family and Community Services said:

Labor's answer was to roll the function of the Community and Disability Services Commissioner into the Ombudsman's office. Labor removed the standalone person who could undertake that task, and for some years there was a gap until the Ombudsman built up capacity to carry out that function.

Where police, as a result of information received and the Child Protection Offenders Register legislation, have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk of significant harm, a report will be made to the Child Protection Helpline, which will initiate an immediate investigation and an assessment will be commenced. FACS and the NSW Police Force have the power to share information to assist caseworkers with their assessments and investigation. Each situation is diverse, and different factors may need to be considered including the protection that can be provided by the non-offending parent.

While in many situations the safety and risk assessments and the professional judgement of FACS staff would likely lead to the child being removed, such a decision must be an informed one based on the circumstances of the case and the current risk. Each case has its own individual and unique circumstances; one size does not fit all. Automatic removal policies, such as those proposed in the bill, remove an agency's ability to develop unique responses to each family. Those unique responses must be tailored to the individual circumstances that are presented to FACS staff when they are tasked to a particular role or job in looking after a child.

In the Tamworth electorate a dedicated team of Family and Community Services workers does an extraordinary job not just from Monday to Friday but also at weekends and after hours, when most of us are leading normal lives. They undertake this work when those who are less fortunate than we are need their assistance. This Government needs to support FACS staff to undertake that great work. A number of non-government organisations also partner with FACS to provide services that otherwise would not be available. This Government will continue to offer support and be the safety net for these services. I know that FACS staff in the Tamworth electorate do a magnificent job and I thank them and congratulate them on the difficult work that they do. For these reasons and the reasons set out by the Minister I do not support the bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): I asked the member for Bankstown to leave the Chamber under Standing Order 249A, but the member did not leave the Chamber. In view of the fact that the member for Bankstown returned to the Chamber, she will be excluded from the House for three hours and return to the House at question time.

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (Epping) (11:34): I speak in debate on the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Amendment (Protection from Serious Offenders) Bill 2016 that was introduced by the shadow Minister, the member for Bankstown. I will outline the comprehensive legislative framework that currently exists in New South Wales for the protection of children, but before that I will reiterate parts of the speech by the Minister for Family and Community Services in debate on this bill when it was last before the House. In his speech the Minister showed his competence in respect of his portfolio. He outlined in significant detail why the Government opposes this bill and he drew on his experience in dealing with his portfolio, both when the Coalition was in opposition and in government. He provided a glimpse into the complex workings of this portfolio. It is the nature of the portfolio that is being undermined by the simplistic approach evidenced in this bill.

The Minister spoke of the observations by the Law Society of New South Wales in respect of this bill, which should be the starting point for the community's approach to this legislation. The Law Society's view is that, "This bill does not achieve what it wants to achieve—in fact, it is completely counterproductive". Having been faced by that assessment of the legislation, one wonders about the framework the Opposition worked under to develop this bill that masquerades as promoting child protection. The Minister was at pains to say that he had no problem with the motivation of the Opposition in bringing forward this bill. He said he did not quibble with the fact that the Opposition is motivated by an attempt to bring in greater protections for children in our society.

Regularly we are faced with cases involving complicated difficulties in the way in which children have been treated. Some stories in the media about the treatment of children represent very difficult circumstances, which often the courts and the community have to deal with. No-one would want to see those cases repeated so we must do all we can to prevent them from occurring. However, the approach being taken by the Opposition in relation to dealing with these difficult cases is to bring in simplistic legislation, such as the bill before us today. This simplistic legislation includes provisions to remove children from those who have committed an offence of violence towards them. As the member for Tamworth indicated, that is a one-size-fits-all approach to legislative decision-making, which is inappropriate in most circumstances with which society has to deal, as comprehensively

pointed out by the Minister. In contrast, the approach being taken by the Government in dealing with affected families is evidence-based. Not one family is exactly like another family—in fact, the Minister was at pains to point out that this legislation does not properly deal with circumstances involving mental health issues in a family facing the removal of a child or children.

That is a really compelling argument for ensuring that we have a system in place for dealing with the manner in which hard cases are dealt with. The legislation has its genesis in a case in South Australia involving a little girl called Chloe Valentine, who died as a result of significant abuse by her mother and her mother's partner. Members may recall that that case involved the parents requiring the child to ride a 50 kilogram motorbike around the backyard for a long time and, as a result of that activity, she subsequently passed away. Other cases were highlighted by the Opposition in support of the bill, one involving Bailey Constable, and the tragic circumstances of that case are well known. The last case, of a girl whose name escapes me, involved significant child abuse over time. I ask the Opposition whether, if this bill had been in place, the deaths of any of those children would have been prevented. This bill seeks to impose penalties on a person who has been convicted of an offence—

Ms Anna Watson: Protecting children—that is what it seeks to do.

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: I rhetorically ask again: If in fact it is designed to protect children, in those circumstances would it have prevented the death of any of those children? The answer to that question is that it would not have prevented a death, because the person involved had not been previously convicted of an offence that would trigger this legislation. In the circumstances of the manner in which this legislation has been drafted and developed, it is my submission that it should not be supported in this place. I oppose the bill.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) (11:42): I contribute to debate on the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Amendment (Protection from Serious Offenders) Bill 2016 and offer my congratulations to the shadow Minister for Family and Community Services, Tanya Mihailuk, who has done an excellent job in preparing this bill. She served the community for many years in the capacity of councillor and mayor of Bankstown, and also as the member of Bankstown for a few years in this place, and she is also an upstanding and caring community member and mother. She has put a lot of time into the preparation of this bill. She has consulted with stakeholders of all ranks across this issue and it is with the encouragement and education she has received from them and a great many others that she has brought this bill before Parliament.

I am flabbergasted at the stance that the Government has taken on this, but perhaps I should not be. It is a good piece of legislation—and so often in the past five years we have seen that, when it comes to worthy private members' bills in this place, the Government has been embarrassed into either action or denial. In this case, it has been embarrassed into denial. When this bill is finally dealt with—if the Government has the courage to deal with it—it will vote against it because it was not the Government's idea. I think that is the sort of petulance that has been demonstrated this week, punctuated of course by the Premier's backflip on greyhounds. We should not expect too much from this Government when it comes to the sensible and reasonable treatment of a private member's bill because the way it has conducted itself over the past five years is to deny—

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order: The matter before the House is significant and it requires that the bill be considered and that there be a focus on the bill. However, at the moment the member is speaking about a number of issues that are not in the leave of bill. He should be asked to return to the leave of the bill.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: To the point of order: I am not yet three minutes into my remarks and the Minister wandered into the Chamber—

Mr Brad Hazzard: Stick to the bill, Michael.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: I do not need a lesson from the Minister about sticking to anything; I know the standing orders as well as he does. If I might be permitted to make some introductory remarks based on the speeches made by Government members—

Mr Brad Hazzard: Speak to the bill.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: I am talking to the point of order. The Minister should stop interrupting me, let the Assistant Speaker do his job and stop being rude.

Mr Brad Hazzard: I have taken a point of order: The member for Maroubra should stick to the point of order and not make a separate speech. Stick to the point of order.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! I have called the member for Maroubra to order on a number of occasions and he has chosen to ignore me. I ask him to speak to the bill. Whilst introductory remarks are acceptable in this House, the reality is that the member has wandered all over the place but has not addressed the legislation at this stage. I draw him back to the leave of the bill.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: I am disappointed by the stance taken by the Government, as indicated by previous speakers, because this is a worthy bill. One can see that it is a worthy bill by going to its objects, which are as follows:

- (a) ensure that, subject to some exceptions, any person found guilty of the murder or manslaughter of a child or young person, or of certain other serious offences in relation to a child or young person, where the offender was the parent or guardian of the victim, will automatically have his or her future children removed from his or her care at birth or will be prevented from residing with, approaching or contacting them, and
- (b) provide for the issue of restraining notices so that any person found guilty of such an offence may be prevented from residing with, approaching or having any contact with a child or young person.

I do not think any persons of reasonable mind who turned their consideration to protection of children issues would find those objects objectionable in any way, but apparently Government members do. In November 2015—

Mr Brad Hazzard: Ha, ha!

Ms Anna Watson: Fake laugh.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: It seems like it, but the Minister appears to be in a very belligerent mood this morning. I am wondering why he is cranky.

Mr Brad Hazzard: I just want to hear some substance, Michael. You have all these other members who can provide substance, and you are not doing it at the moment.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra has the call.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: The Minister spoke for an hour the other day and there was no substance to his speech. As I was saying before I was rudely interrupted by the Minister, on 12 November 2015 the member for Bankstown introduced a private member's bill with the intention of strengthening child protection laws for all children and young people. Unfortunately, that bill lapsed. This bill has been introduced because the previous one was not dealt with. As the shadow Minister pointed out in her second reading speech, the Opposition's fundamental belief is that the rights of the child must prevail over the rights of those parents or guardians who cause serious or violent harm to their children. I have listened carefully to the contributions of some Government members who have spoken in debate on this bill and that is a fact that unfortunately appears to have escaped some of them. The rights of the child must prevail, and that has been the tenet of child protection legislation in this place since time immemorial.

This bill should not be about partisan politics; it should be about the championing the rights of the most vulnerable and voiceless children in our communities. Although the electorate of Maroubra that I represent is quite affluent, in particular in regard to real estate value and other indicators, it has the third or fourth highest population of public housing tenants in this State. Those of us with a significant number of public housing tenants in our electorates all too often see the manifestations of poverty that are visited upon those who have fallen out of the tree of misfortune and who have hit not one or two branches on the way down, but six or seven.

Mr Brad Hazzard: They have fallen out of the tree of fortune.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: Apparently the Minister is mocking the expression "fallen out of the tree of misfortune". Does he want to take a point of order on that as well?

Mr Brad Hazzard: I think the member will find that he should have said that they fell out of the tree of fortune.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: I will sit down and the Minister can give us the benefit of his wisdom. He is in a belligerent mood. He should stop being rude and be quiet.

Mr Brad Hazzard: If you do not intend to contribute anything substantive, you should keep quiet.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! It is obvious that the member for Maroubra is filibustering. However, he should not respond to the Minister's interjections.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker, for indulging me and acknowledging that I am being subjected to interjections from the good and honourable Minister. As I was saying, those of us who have significant populations of impoverished people in our electorates all too often find that it is the children who suffer. That is why the Opposition has introduced this bill, and I am disappointed that the Government has chosen to oppose it. This is a good and worthy bill. I congratulate the shadow Minister, the member for Bankstown, on introducing it and urge the Government to reconsider its position. If members opposite object to the bill, which deals with the protection of children—which usually attracts bipartisan support—they should sit down with the shadow Minister and draft some amendments to improve it. In any event, I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (11:51): It is appropriate that this morning I attended a breakfast with the former Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty. As we all know, Rosie lost her son, Luke, as a result of domestic violence. That is very much on my mind as I make a contribution to debate on the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Amendment (Protection from Serious Offenders) Bill 2016, which was introduced by my colleague the shadow Minister for Family and Community Services, the member for Bankstown. This is an important initiative. First, I offer my condolences to those who have lost a child. Every time we hear about these events we feel great sadness. However, when we hear from someone like Rosie Batty we understand the depth of their sadness and grief that will be with them throughout their lives. I was interested to hear the Minister's interjections and spurious points of order. Given that I sat here waiting to make a contribution to this debate while the Minister filibustered defensively last week, I am surprised that he has the gall to criticise the Opposition. There has not been one amendment to this legislation in three years.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order: Mr Assistant Speaker, I ask you to direct the member to return to the leave of the bill.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: I am introducing my speech—

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! This bill is obviously causing angst on both sides of the House. I advise the Minister that members are allowed to reflect on comments made by other members during debate. I ask that members be civil.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: It is important to examine the comments of the Minister for Family and Community Services. He said that all members would agree that protecting children should be our highest priority. That is very true, and it is why we need urgent action. Part of my work as shadow Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault is to help women to navigate the complicated legislation that relates to their life experience of violence. They must deal with apprehended violence orders, child protection issues, and family law.

We know that the family law system is experiencing serious failures that are affecting children at great risk of serious injury, assault and even death at the hands of their parents. Children at risk are returned to their parents because there is a focus on their right to be with them, but that appears to ignore very real dangers. Of course, we cannot address the failings of the family law system in this place, but we can learn from circumstances where children have been returned to their parents, who have subsequently killed them. We must ensure that that does not happen again. This legislation is a small step towards ensuring that the State can address this issue.

It is always difficult to make the decision to remove a child. However, we must examine why we would put children into a situation in which they could be hurt or killed. Last year, the Child Death Review Team, which reviews the causes and patterns of deaths of all children in New South Wales under the age of 17, reported that 83 children have died as a result of domestic violence incidents in the past 10 years. Of the children who have died since 2004, 51 died after a string of injuries inflicted by family members, and 12 were identified as suffering a history of physical abuse. Those children were failed by this State. Last year in my electorate, a 12-year-old girl was sexually assaulted and killed, allegedly by her stepfather. Why would we allow another vulnerable child to live with such a person?

This bill is a response to the tragic New South Wales cases of a number of children, including seven-week-old Ikicia Leach, who was murdered by her father, and four-year-old Bailey Constable, who was murdered by his stepfather. This bill will ensure that any parents convicted of the murder or manslaughter of their child or of certain other serious offences in relation to their child will automatically have future children removed from their care at birth through an instrument of guardianship. This bill will allow the State to take action when the Family Court has failed to remove children who are at risk from their parents. It also provides for the issuing of restraining notices so that any person convicted of murder, manslaughter or other serious offences against a child can be prevented from residing on the same property as the child or young person, or from coming within a specified distance of the child's or young person's residence, or from having any contact with the child or young person.

All members have people approaching them to talk about children who they know are at risk but for whom they have not been able get the Family Court to act when the risk is posed by a person who has a previous conviction for murder. It is appalling to think that the Minister would not seek to address that situation. I have mentioned the Child Death Review Team, but the NSW Ombudsman also undertakes a biennial review of patterns of deaths of the subgroup of children who died of abuse or neglect, and/or in circumstances where there is a suspicion of abuse or neglect, and children who died while in care or in detention.

In 2014 there were 485 child deaths in New South Wales. The families of 101 of those children had a child protection history. Of the children whose families were known to child protection prior to their death, seven were attributed to suicide; drowning was the cause for six children; and three deaths were related to abuse. A further six children without a child protection history died as a result of abuse or alleged abuse. These are all numbers but I urge the Government and the advisers to take note of the reality: For every single one of those children there is a family, a school and a community left grieving their loss. These are very serious statistics. The child protection system acknowledges that children are unable to protect themselves in these situations. We need to take that very seriously. The Minister comes into this place and talks about legislation and bipartisan support. He did not address the bill. These are great concerns. Those opposite keep talking about 16 years of Labor Government.

Business interrupted.

Motions

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) (12:00): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Government on its unwavering commitment to the Gonski principles.
- (2) Recognises the great work our teachers and staff have undertaken in schools across New South Wales with the benefit of additional resources.

I speak today as a very proud member of this Parliament and, as a country member of Parliament, a very proud supporter of the Gonski education reforms. As I mentioned yesterday, Gonski is not just about providing additional resources to our schools but, particularly in a country context, for the first time giving country schools the ability to significantly tackle the gap that exists between student educational outcomes in the bush and those in metropolitan areas. The Gonski agreement is a landmark agreement between the Commonwealth and the State of New South Wales and all school sectors. Before Gonski, school funding had not increased significantly.

Between 2004-05 and 2013-14, real government school funding increased by only 0.65 per cent per annum per student. The agreement had a six-year implementation period worth an extra \$5 billion to New South Wales schools. This year that means an extra \$460 million for schools in New South Wales, which will increase to \$1.86 billion by 2019. The agreement sets out a fairer funding model for all students and schools in New South Wales. It is a model in which funding is distributed according to need, for the first time ever. The Gonski agreement was the outcome of a rigorous and objective review process. The New South Wales Government is arguing—and I will continue to call on the Commonwealth to deliver on the full six years—for a continued Commonwealth commitment to the terms of that agreement, to ensure that the great work the Government started can fulfil its potential.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! The member for Londonderry will have an opportunity to contribute to this debate.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: To highlight the benefits of Gonski, already in the first two years of its implementation in the Northern Tablelands electorate, which I am very proud to represent, it has delivered an extra \$8.1 million in recurrent funding—that is extra equity funding that has been delivered under the resource allocation model [RAM]. It is not just about the funding. It is also about the fact that now through Local Schools, Local Decisions the principals of schools in receipt of those funds have the ability to allocate those funds where the needs of the students are within their school.

Under the antiquated funding model by which funding was pigeonholed for specific programs, school principals and school communities never got a say on how that money was to be spent. It had to be spent where they were told to spend it regardless of whether that was actually what was needed for the students in their schools. Under this model not only do they have extra resources—and in my electorate that equates to more than \$8 million extra already in the first two years of the six-year agreement—but they can spend it where they most need it. To highlight what that means in a local school context, and I am sure every member of this Parliament will be able to give examples in their schools, I was recently talking to Jo Burgess, the principal of Guyra Central School in my electorate. Jo had this to say:

The funding has provided an enormous boost to Guyra Central School. I specifically make mention of the fact that I can now plan long term or more long term than ever before to develop sustainable programs. I have invested heavily in a two-year whole school—that is K-12—teacher professional learning program which in our second year has exceeded my expectations and student performance and engagement has increased significantly. Staff morale has increased as well as teachers who are working together in observation teams.

At Guyra Central School Jo Burgess has been able to use that equity funding to employ three new school learning support officers [SLSOs], employ a part-time SLSO to support students who are not meeting the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy [NAPLAN] benchmarks and establish a breakfast club to provide low socioeconomic status and Aboriginal students with support for uniforms, excursions, subject fees and resources. Again that is something that school has never been able to do before. To prove my point, looking at Guyra Central School's equity funding prior to Gonski, in 2013 its equity funding was \$61,944. In 2016 its equity funding is \$655,548. That is an increase of 958.3 per cent in just the first two years of Gonski being implemented. That allows principals like Jo Burgess to make the changes she has made.

If we look further west in the Northern Tablelands to the Warialda Public School, the principal, Dan van Velthuisen, started a speech therapy program. The RAM funding has enabled him to hire a qualified practising speech therapist to tutor and specifically target students with speech delays or deficits, of which he has a number at his school. The speech therapist works one day a fortnight screening, assessing and writing tailored programs for each of those students. Again that is something the school never previously had the resources to do. Indeed, the funding that they received did not offer the flexibility they needed to dedicate the little resources they had to that purpose. Again, prior to Gonski the equity funding provided at Warialda Public School was \$4,498. They could not employ a speech therapist with that. Now they are receiving \$208,528—a funding increase of more than 4,500 per cent in only the first two years.

Gonski is doing great things in our country schools. We all know money is not everything; it is not the silver bullet. Unlike the Federal Minister for Education, the New South Wales Minister for Education understands that money, particularly in a country context, can make a huge difference because those resources enable schools to skill their teaching staff. They enable schools to better support those students that need it most and increase their educational and learning outcomes, which is what all members want to see. I congratulate the Government and Minister Piccoli for showing leadership to be the first State to sign up to Gonski—and still the only State to deliver Gonski in its truest form, as it was always intended. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (12:08): I make a contribution to debate on education resourcing. At the outset I foreshadow that I will move an amendment. I have spoken to the member for Northern Tablelands and I thank him for agreeing in advance to the amendment. I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out "Government on its" in paragraph (1) with a view to inserting instead "members of the New South Wales Parliament on their".

Whilst the member for Northern Tablelands has spoken a great deal about the commitment that has been made to the Gonski principles, to use an oft-used expression and one which also rings a bell with Gonski, this is a unity ticket. All members, particularly those on my side, are in agreement. We have seen the difference that equity in funding can make. I will talk more about equity and equality later. I reiterate that Labor supports needs-based funding. Unlike members opposite, Federal Labor is in lockstep with us. The Federal Labor Party took a commitment to the election for the full Gonski agreement and we are trying to get that commitment from the Federal Government as well. New South Wales was the first State to sign up to Gonski, and I acknowledge the then Premier, Barry O'Farrell, because it was an important decision and it has had an outstanding result with excellent consequences for kids in New South Wales. We also acknowledge that Federal Labor created the Gonski principles and conducted the review. I remind members that we support Gonski and I gave notice of a motion to ensure we continue with it.

Funding for schools is making a difference. The member for Northern Tablelands has spoken about a number of things, but I wish to talk about the issue of equity and equality. Education resourcing is about needs-based funding. It was articulated clearly that schools across New South Wales and across the nation have different needs. Every school and community is complex. What is required in metro schools may be different from what is required in regional schools. What is clear is that all schools deserve a sense of equality and a fair amount of needs-based funding should take place. More of my colleagues and other members of Parliament will speak about their local schools. We have heard about the speech pathologists who have been employed but for some schools that service low socio-economic communities, the difference can be as simple as having books available for children to take home to read. It is important that children learn to read. Unfortunately, too many homes do not have books and reading is not a part of a child's regular routine. We know that kids who are surrounded by books will develop a love of reading.

Many more examples show that this funding is used not only to employ support staff for teachers but also other forms of support. I know of schools that have purchased the outstanding MultiLit program, which is an early intervention program to support students with their literacy skills. This money is used to ensure that kids—regardless of their economic background and regardless of their postcode—have the same opportunities as everyone else. All members would agree that egalitarianism in education is a game changer that will make a difference. It will strengthen our nation more than anything else. We have talked also about the mentors who assist

students with tutoring and the social development programs, which are important. The member for Northern Tablelands talked about camps. Camps and excursions are important. For many kids that experiential learning opportunity is as important as learning from reading their books. There is nothing more heartbreaking than a kid who cannot go on an excursion that will not only enhance their learning ability but also their life skills.

Other schools have been able to employ additional teachers to reduce class sizes or as specialist teachers. All principals are reporting that students' results have been lifted. However, it is important that there is a commitment to ensuring that Gonski funding is expanded in schools. I note the State commitment that has been made. The biggest difficulty, of course, is convincing the Federal Government to do the same. The Federal Minister has talked constantly about language, Gonski and money. His intent is to dismantle this opportunity that gives kids and communities hope. It gives them a chance to achieve their full potential, regardless of where they have come from and their economic circumstances. Education is a great leveller. Many members of Parliament have been lucky to have received a good education. Every kid deserves the opportunity to learn.

Wiley Park Public School, which is one of my local schools, has a sense of school community. Every week the school conducts a class that teaches language skills to parents. It is a touchstone that gives parents an opportunity to come together to learn how to give their kids the best support at home. Let us not get carried away; we still have to convince the Federal Government to also support education resourcing. I acknowledge the Minister for Education for making public statements in support of it. I ask him and his colleagues to implore their Federal colleagues to commit to Gonski instead of cutting it. The reality is that years five and six, which we are entering, are the most significant years of funding. The second part of the motion is about teachers. I have spoken often about teachers and the commitment they make to students. However, teachers need resources and their resources will come as a result of this needs-based funding. I commend the motion to the House with the suggested amendment.

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) (12:16): It is with pleasure that I support the motion of the member for Northern Tablelands. I congratulate this Government on its steadfast commitment to the Gonski principles of needs-based funding. I note in particular the benefits that Gonski funding will have for students in rural and regional areas. Rather than continuing the old system of funding increases that were poorly targeted, Gonski funding allows for additional funding to go to where it is most needed. Many schools that benefit most from the extra support are in rural, remote and regional areas of New South Wales. Multiple factors interact at those schools to raise the level of need. In many of the more remote schools, low socio-economic levels, Aboriginality and remoteness have an effect on school performance. The Gonski review highlighted that these factors impact on educational opportunities for students and limit their potential to achieve, which is why the Gonski funding is important.

We need a commitment from the Commonwealth Government to ensure that funding is increased each year so that rural and regional schools, in particular, are able to continue delivering valuable services and programs. For example, Singleton Public School will be able to build on its work in supporting Aboriginal students to achieve higher education aims. Aboriginal students at Singleton Public School increased elevenfold in the six years to 2015. In 2015, Scone High School in my electorate of Upper Hunter was able to use equity funding of nearly \$80,000 to provide targeted programs to students to improve their literacy outcomes.

Recently, the Minister was at St James Primary School in Muswellbrook. That school has achieved outstanding results with support from the government literacy and numeracy action plan. The performance of students from St James Primary School was highlighted by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority for its National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy [NAPLAN] results in 2015. In writing, 80 per cent of the year 3 students placed in the top bands, which was an increase of 26 per cent on 2014 results; in reading, 62 per cent of the year 3 students placed in the top two bands compared to 35 per cent in 2013. In writing, no students have placed in the bottom two bands for the past two years.

Early intervention to improve students' numeracy and literacy is critical to their future performance. Improving students' results is a key focus of the New South Wales Government. We have invested heavily in our schools and teachers, and it is thrilling to see improved outcomes. I can assure the House that The Nationals are committed to ensuring rural, regional and remote students have the same opportunities as those students in urban areas. The Nationals in government have provided funding for initiatives to help close the gap between regional and metropolitan student achievement.

These initiatives include broadening curriculum opportunities for gifted rural and remote students and providing incentives to attract and retain quality teachers in rural and remote areas. The Nationals are also committed to needs-based funding in public schools, through the Resource Allocation Model (RAM) which will allow more funding to be allocated on a needs basis to rural and regional schools. I look forward to seeing, in the next couple of weeks, next year's round of RAM. The benefits of a needs-based model are why Gonski is so important to our schools, particularly in regional areas of New South Wales.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (12:20): It is a pleasure to be here again on a Thursday morning supporting a motion from the member for Northern Tablelands. He brings forward very significant issues, and I find myself agreeing with most of his motions and saying what a nice bloke he is. That rarely happens but these unity-ticket types of issue—such as Gonski, where both sides of the House agree that schools should have better funding—present an opportunity to show the public of New South Wales that while many things divide us, quite a few things unite us. We should more frequently present the public with the things that unite us; it may give the public a better perception of members of Parliament.

I have a background in schools; I was a school principal when the Resource Allocation Model [RAM] was introduced. I saw, first hand, the benefits of this type of directed funding. It is so important that the Federal Government commits to full Gonski funding. I know that the State Government is arguing very strongly for that to happen because it understands—as we all do, in this place—the benefits. I will give people an idea of the total six-year Gonski funding allocation in my electorate. Wyong Public School will get \$1,679,619; Wyong High School will get about \$4 million, Wadalba Community School will get more than \$7 million and Point Clare Public School, where I was principal—a middle-income school—will receive over \$2 million. The good work that that funding will achieve in addressing individual students' needs cannot be underestimated.

I remember that under the first RAM funding, Point Clare Public School got an additional \$10,000. Point Clare is one of those middle-of-the-road schools, so it never attracted any special funding. But schools such as that still have students with special needs, Aboriginal students and students with disabilities. The staff still need training in those different areas. It was not until the RAM funding model was introduced that the school got the additional funds for those sorts of things. For example, teachers were able to become involved in L3 Early Years Literacy Program for the first time ever. They had no special literacy training until that funding was put in place. So I know how important such a model is.

We know that such a model can lead to smaller class sizes, extra literacy and numeracy programs, and the employment of speech therapists and psychologists. That is important because many families do not have access to psychologists to get disability assessments done, so they do not receive the extra funding under the disability programs. So a school's ability to bring in a psychologist to do assessments is very important. In my role as shadow minister for Aboriginal affairs, I would also like to touch briefly on the benefits for Indigenous students.

Under the model there are five loadings—for students in rural, remote or small schools; for students who have English as a second language; for students who have a disability; for students who come from low socio-economic families; and for students who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders. One of the benefits of this model is that Indigenous students may attract several of those loadings, and that means that we can put in place the individual programs that we need to support those students. That will assist in closing the gap for Aboriginal students and will help in our hard work to reduce incarceration rates for Aboriginals in New South Wales.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (12:24): As Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer I am very committed to seeing our State maintain its very strong economy. The heart of our growing economy relies on a world-class education system that produces highly skilled and productive citizens. The critical links between education and the overall productivity growth of our State are well recognised. Ensuring that New South Wales has a high-performing education system is arguably one of our most important investments for the future. The Commonwealth Government's announcement that it will not fund the last two years of the Gonski agreement will severely impact the New South Wales education sector. However, the New South Wales Government has been unwavering in its support of the principles of a needs-based education system, and will continue to fight for this for all students in New South Wales.

The funding is essential in supporting the New South Wales reform agenda, which focuses on lifting student performance across all sectors. New South Wales is currently a leader in school reform, but this is being put at risk by the Commonwealth's plan to cut funding. Funding is needed to ensure that our students are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the twenty-first century. Additional funding helps schools address individual student need. For example, schools can use funding to hire speech pathologists, occupational therapists, and specialist literacy and numeracy teachers. There are plenty of examples of that in my electorate of Hornsby. New South Wales has recognised the effect that additional funding has on increased student performance. Using this funding, New South Wales schools in all sectors have been able to implement a variety of literacy and numeracy intervention programs, which have improved student outcomes and performance.

The new Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2017-2020 was announced by the Minister last month and has been made possible because of the Gonski agreement. The Minister announced the investment of \$340 million in education. The new Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2017-2020 will also deliver extra support to students from kindergarten until they complete their Higher School Certificate. The skills of reading, writing and numeracy are

crucial—particularly in the first few years of school. This \$340 million investment will help us meet that target by ensuring students have the support they need to succeed.

The Commonwealth's announcement that it will not provide the funding for the final two years of the agreement and its plans to redistribute funding between States and Territories will have a significant impact on the ability of New South Wales to continue implementing its reform agenda. New South Wales schools will suffer an overall loss of funding from 2018 to 2019. The reform achievements cannot continue without proper funding, as we cannot keep doing the same things when funding decreases. New South Wales needs commitment from the Commonwealth that funding will increase each year so that schools currently delivering valuable programs can continue to do so. The economic and social wellbeing of New South Wales is substantially dependent upon the strength of its education system. Given this, New South Wales will continue to advocate for the Commonwealth to honour its commitment to the Gonski funding arrangement, as it provides a needs-based funding model that ensures that every student will receive the support they need to reach their full potential, and to ensure that all students can achieve.

All of us on this side of the House are committed to the principles of needs-based funding. I note that the Opposition spokesman is also committed to needs-based education funding. The Government has concerns about the way the system has been bastardised. That was highlighted on the front page of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, just this week. We learnt that sweetheart deals were entered into in the dying days of the Rudd Government. Those deals saw some of the wealthiest schools get additional income not in line with those needs-based principles that David Gonski identified. We remain committed to needs-based funding, but we recognise that the system that was signed up to in 2013 by the Rudd Government does not necessarily achieve that outcome.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) (12:29): In reply: I thank the member for Lakemba and Opposition Education spokesperson, the member for Wyong, my colleagues the member for Upper Hunter, and the member for Hornsby and Parliamentary Secretary for their support for the motion. It is great to be able to discuss the important issue of our children's future in such a bipartisan manner, which speaks well of all members' commitment to the quality education of our next generation. I was very pleased to hear comments made from all sides of politics in the debate and examples cited of when educational reforms and additional resources have been applied and have achieved significant results in our schools.

New South Wales has committed to the needs-based funding in public schools through the resource allocation model that follows in its most pure form the Gonski needs-based model. I use the term "in its most pure form" because other States have taken funding from the Commonwealth but have not implemented the reform in the manner it was intended to be implemented. As such, other States will not achieve the same results that I am confident will be achieved in New South Wales schools. I believe the failure of other States to properly implement the Gonski reforms is partly responsible for our Federal counterparts drawing erroneous conclusions about Gonski reforms whereas the Commonwealth instead should have used the New South Wales example as the standard applying to all other sectors in all other States.

It is evident that educational needs range across all schools and in all school sectors. In this debate we must acknowledge that while some of us are the proud product of public education, the reforms also benefit non-government sector schools and Catholic schools. In combination with an ambitious schools reform agenda, the increased Gonski funding will lift students' achievement. We already are beginning to see evidence of that, but it must be acknowledged that improvement takes time. Currently we are two years into the six-year agreement. Our agreement as a State with the Commonwealth includes a detailed school reform program, and New South Wales is well on the way towards achieving that. Without doubt New South Wales is a national leader in school reform and teacher quality under the Great Teaching, Inspired Learning blueprint and in literacy and numeracy with the Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan.

All members of the New South Wales Parliament recognise the commitment and achievements of teachers and staff across all New South Wales schools. We know that that has been made possible through the provision of additional Gonski funding. While I acknowledge there is always a risk of reform fatigue, this very important reform will pay dividends in our education system for many years. In this State we also give our schools greater decision-making and accountability responsibilities through the Schools Excellence Framework. The flexibility of being able to spend money exactly where each school needs it—because every school and every student cohort is different—is absolutely fundamental to unlocking improved student educational outcomes.

The New South Wales Government and indeed this Parliament should be congratulated on fully funding commitments to Gonski in the State budget. Despite what the Commonwealth does, this State will fund its commitment for the full six years of the program. I again acknowledge Minister Piccoli and former Premier O'Farrell for their great leadership in New South Wales being the first State in this country to put up its hand and lead educational reform. I commend the motion to the House.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! The original question was that the motion moved by the member for Northern Tablelands be agreed to whereupon the member for Lakemba moved that the motion be amended by leaving out the words "Government on its" and inserting instead "members of the New South Wales Parliament on their". The question now is that the amendment be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! The question is that the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

TAFE ENROLMENTS

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) (12:33): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the concerns of teachers and students at Glendale TAFE regarding the fee freeze as not enough to curb falling enrolments.
- (2) Notes that since 2012, 83,000 fewer students have enrolled in TAFE NSW, while fees in some courses have increased as much as seven times from the levels of 2013.
- (3) Calls on the Minister for Skills to explain the effect of excess fee increases on enrolments and requests the reinstatement of the diversity of courses and necessary teachers at TAFE NSW.

"The Baird Government's meddling with TAFE is leading to disaster", say staff, students and teachers. Their concerns are a litany of this Government's policy failures. The TAFE college at Glendale is a beloved institution in my electorate. Whether it is young people who are looking to secure qualifications to break into the job market, older workers who are reskilling or expanding their skills set, or others who are simply engaging in lifelong learning, Glendale TAFE has served the local community exceedingly and extremely well. Now it has come under attack by the Baird Government and the Government seems unwilling or unable to provide information about the state of the TAFE system, generally, and Glendale TAFE in particular. On the *Newcastle Herald* website Richard wrote:

Since 2011 the government and TAFE upper/senior management have been hammering nails into the TAFE coffin lid and it's all but sealed shut.

Manufacturing and trades courses at Glendale have become more expensive, thereby starving the next generation of tradies and manufacturers of training; but private providers are not plugging the gaps. The 2016 Smart and Skilled second qualification fee is \$2,870 while the first qualification fee is \$2,390, which does not include learning materials such as safety gear that is so important. When I asked the Minister about which courses have been or will be cut at Glendale TAFE, I was given a non-answer. The Minister wrote, "With frequent changes in training packages, it is not possible to provide an accurate list of courses." Without hard data, we are forced to look to anecdotal information. The Hunter region's organiser for the NSW Teachers Federation, Rob Long, said, "Anecdotally we're hearing that private providers have not got huge numbers."

When I asked the Minister for information on enrolments at Glendale TAFE, I was given another non-answer, "TAFE NSW operates in a competitive environment. Data is not provided by location." Goodness gracious! However, according to the *Newcastle Herald*, documents obtained under freedom of information reveal that "Hunter TAFE had 64,403 enrolments in 2012. Only 24,205 had enrolled as of April this year". On top of that, the *Newcastle Herald* reports that "an estimated 120 permanent and support staff have lost their jobs over the same period." Will I need to lodge a request under the Government Information (Public Access) [GIPA] Act every time I want to find out what this Government is doing to Glendale TAFE?

Of course, this is a systemic statewide problem. All over New South Wales, TAFE is bleeding. Thousands of students have lost their courses, and teachers and support staff have lost their jobs. TAFE courses have been slashed while fees have skyrocketed. Enrolment numbers have cratered. Student and staff dissatisfaction is soaring because contact hours have fallen, and they are forced to deal with the failure of this Government's expensive and bloated information technology [IT] system.

There is no way to avoid it: the New South Wales TAFE system is in crisis. Glendale TAFE and TAFEs around the State have had to weather an unprecedented assault unleashed by this Government, which has been subjecting TAFE to death by a thousand cuts for five years, and as the 2016-2017 budget papers have revealed, the Government is now starving TAFE of funding. The Government allocated \$314 million less than was promised in the 2015-2016 budget. This means fewer teachers. This means fewer course options for students. This means fewer support staff. It is a slap in the face for TAFE staff and students. For this Government, the free-market-at-any-cost ideology leaves people in my electorate at the whim of largely unaccountable, under-regulated private corporations beholden only to their shareholders and driven by profit.

We have seen case after case all over this country of private vocational educational providers caught out taking advantage of vulnerable students by promising laptops for courses that do not exist, for example, or leaving students without adequate training or support. The experiences of Glendale TAFE's staff and students show that the Smart and Skilled experiment, driven by ideology rather than consideration for the best interests of the citizens of this State, has failed.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) (12:41): I am a very proud former TAFE student. I tried university and stayed just long enough to get a HECS bill. I did a fantastic four-year TAFE course in hospitality management. I am also a very proud former TAFE teacher in my chosen career. I am a great supporter of TAFE. My eldest daughter will be starting year 11 next week as she attends a school where the academic year starts the term before the new year. I will encourage her to attend TAFE once she completes her schooling, if she decides to go down that path. I wish all students sitting the Higher School Certificate [HSC] good luck. I am very proud of my niece Brianna Dooner from Broughton Anglican College who starts her HSC today, and I wish her well.

Ms Yasmin Catley: And my daughter.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: Lovely. This is not the first time that Glendale TAFE has been raised in the House, but generally as part of Labor's unrelenting fear and smear campaign on TAFE NSW. This campaign is doing TAFE NSW a disservice by cheapening the brand, which is a real shame. However, I will get to the facts. Glendale TAFE has experienced strong growth in enrolments. Year-to-date data show that enrolments at Glendale campus have increased by nearly 18 per cent compared to year end 2015. This includes a nearly 11 per cent increase in commencing students. Enrolments at Glendale campus have increased across all levels—bachelor level courses; diploma courses, which increased by 22 per cent; certificate III courses and statements of attainment.

There have been strong enrolments in pre-vocational part qualifications at Glendale, providing opportunities for further enrolments in higher level awards in courses such as aged care introduction, identify and respond to children and young people, leadership in the aged-care industry and workplace health and safety in child care. The certificate II in electrotechnology career start has been an area of significant growth over the past two years, with commencing enrolments increasing by more than 67 per cent. This offering is a recognised career pathway for the electrotechnology industry, with many students going on to obtain apprenticeships and enrol in the certificate III in electrotechnology electrician.

I am pleased that Glendale has been highlighted in the debate on this motion on TAFE enrolments, because it is a shining example of what is happening across the State. As at 2 October 2016 TAFE NSW has had more than 492,000 enrolments since January this year. Of those enrolments, 331,073 were commencing enrolments and 160,961 were continuing enrolments, a 25per cent increase in commencing enrolments, or 66,008 more students, compared to this time last year. The New South Wales Government recognises the importance of providing quality vocational education and training for young people in this State. Members on this side of the Chamber implore those on the other side who care about our students finishing the HSC to get behind TAFE, help to build it up and give it what it deserves. Let us work together to ensure that the community recognises this outstanding institution.

As I said, I am a proud former TAFE student, which proves that a person does not need a university degree to represent their community, although I encourage those with university degrees to enter Parliament. The outstanding member for Drummoyne is also a proud TAFE graduate. A TAFE course encourages common sense in graduates, and I am glad that there have been nearly 500,000 TAFE enrolments since January because we can safely say that those 500,000 students, whether they be undertaking pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship or certificate courses, will bring common sense to the community after they graduate. This Parliament can ensure that TAFE is one of the many fine pathways to a qualification for our school leavers, whether they have passed their HSC or have decided not to complete year 12.

I respect the member for Wallsend and I thank her for moving this motion, and I ask that members stick to the facts; I would be happy to provide those facts to every member if they would like them. We need to know what we are dealing with, so that together we can support this wonderful institution. I found out only this morning that the 2016 WorldSkills Australia National Competition was held in Melbourne at the weekend. A number of TAFE NSW students received medals. I single out Blake Rogan, who was awarded a silver medal in information technology. He is a student at the Campbelltown campus, and this is an outstanding achievement. Well done, Blake. I urge those opposite to support TAFE NSW and oppose this motion.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (12:48): In making my contribution to debate on the motion on TAFE enrolments, I acknowledge the commitment of the member for Wallsend to the institution of TAFE. This motion shows that only Labor supports and believes in the importance of TAFE for life-long learning and skills development. This Government talks a big game on training, but its record is pathetic. It has a record of killing off TAFE campuses, discouraging students from enrolling at TAFE and making education expensive. The matters

the member for Wallsend has highlighted in this motion are not isolated to the Hunter region. In the Illawarra we have seen the direct impact of the Government's policy on vocational education and training.

In my electorate, for example, the Government slowly and sneakily garrotted the Dapto TAFE campus. I was accused by Government members and the Minister of scaremongering and of being hysterical—the usual claim against women. But for all my scaremongering and being hysterical, I was deadset right all along. A TAFE campus that was active and bustling, and had nearly 700 students and 111 teaching staff has now closed. The Dapto TAFE campus is no more. I say to members in this place: If the Minister ever accuses you of scaremongering or being hysterical because you fear your local TAFE is under threat, do not be intimidated by the Government's pressure—take it like it is, because the facts will always be contrary to the Government's spin on TAFE. On 7 October the *Illawarra Mercury* published a story under the headline, "Declining enrolments at every Illawarra TAFE campus", which is damning for the Government and concerning for the future of the TAFE campuses in the region I represent. It says:

Student numbers at TAFE Illawarra campuses have plummeted by almost 30 per cent over a three-year period, new data has revealed.

There were 32,369 enrolments in the Illawarra TAFE; in 2015 there were just 23,116. The member for Wallsend has highlighted the impact of Smart and Skilled in the Hunter region. It is a similar story for the Illawarra. Right across the board, at nearly every TAFE campus in the Illawarra, enrolments are down. The Wollongong campus has seen enrolments drop by 26.9 per cent between 2014 and 2015. The Labor candidate for Wollongong, Paul Scully, recently highlighted that students studying butchery at the campus had no meat to practise their skills on. Labor will always support and fund TAFE NSW. It is an institution of great importance to the State and its people. The Government should be absolutely ashamed of its record on vocational education and training. Again, I commend the member for Wallsend for bringing this notice of motion to this House today.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (12:51): Clearly the member for Londonderry has been set up to fail: She is constantly talking TAFE down. This is typical Labor. Rather than engage in a constructive debate about TAFE, it steps up its TAFE bashing. The member for Wallsend should be looking at job creation options and at supporting young people and adults who are seeking vocational education and training, as opposed to what we are hearing from Labor today. Perhaps the member for Wallsend should take a leaf out of the book of the electorate of Tamworth and partner with TAFE instead of taking a big stick to it all the time. TAFE is doing an outstanding job. A Try A Trade Workshop will be held from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday 5 November at TAFE New England in conjunction with the Gunnedah and District Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Entry is free and lunch will be provided to all those who register to participate.

Students in year 10 or 11, as well as those using the services of employment agencies, will have the chance to get hands-on experience in 10 different trades' skill sets. The skill sets on offer for people to try include aeroskills, engineering, automotive and mechanical, electrotechnology, construction and building, nursing and aged care and child care, hospitality, beauty and hairdressing, graphic design and business. TAFE representatives, local businesses and employment agencies will also be on hand to give advice on employment opportunities in Gunnedah, apprenticeships and training requirements. Registration forms can be picked up from the front office at TAFE New England Gunnedah Campus on Hunter Street or requested via email at admin@gunnedah.com.au or at the chamber website, gunnedah.org.au.

This is a great opportunity to promote the valuable contribution TAFE New England makes in assisting our young people to receive the appropriate training they need to gain employment in local industries. It will also provide a forum in which local businesses can promote their industries and foster relationships with young people who will be ready for the job market in the next couple of years. If the member for Wallsend would like further information, she should contact Alysha White on 0409 145 921 or Michael Broekman, the president of the Gunnedah chamber of commerce, on 0408 810 968 if the member wishes to look at options to promote the wonderful opportunities that TAFE provides for vocational and educational training.

If the member for Wallsend is having trouble with those numbers, she can get on the My Gunnedah Facebook page, where the sensational Christoph does a good job in updating the page, which allows the community to be informed of such important events as the Try A Trade Workshop on Saturday 5 November in conjunction with TAFE New England, the Gunnedah chamber of commerce and my office. It is a really good example of how she could do something positive instead of having a black cloud following her around while she is bashing TAFE. She should get over it, get on board and support TAFE.

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (12:55): I am delighted to hear the member for Tamworth talking about and supporting TAFE. We look forward to his support when the Technical and Further Education Amendment (TAFE Funding Guarantee) Bill 2016 is introduced. I thank him in advance for his clear in-principle support. My neighbouring colleague the member for Camden is quite right when he says Campbelltown is a—

Mr Kevin Anderson: Point of order: The member opposite is misleading the House. I did not give in-principle support to what he is talking about.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Mr GREG WARREN: I thank the Assistant Speaker for putting some sense and sensibility back into this Chamber. The member for Camden is quite right: Campbelltown TAFE has many devoted staff. It is a fine institution. I attended it myself at the end of my military career because the skills that I had learned in the army were, quite simply, not consistent with being in a civil workforce. I began management studies there, and I feel humbled and privileged that I was able to finish my Master of Business Administration a few years ago. It is something I followed through with, and TAFE gave me that start.

The member for Wallsend is right to advocate how important the TAFE Institute is in providing the foundation of skills for people to utilise throughout their lives as well as being a vital, essential vehicle for economic growth, which of course creates jobs. In the electorate of Campbelltown and in the broader Macarthur region, we continue to experience unprecedented urban growth through the Camden, Campbelltown and Wollondilly local government areas. That means we need more builders, plumbers and landscapers; we need skills. Sadly, though, the Government's Smart and Skilled change has seen courses removed from Campbelltown TAFE. There has been a more centralised approach. I accept that, while I do not agree with that. I do not feel that this is consistent with community expectation, nor has it provided the instruments to get a modern workforce and indeed drive a modern economy.

The number of apprentices and trainees in New South Wales fell from 145,000 in December 2010 to 80,000 in December 2015. The number of apprentice and trainee commencements in New South Wales dropped from nearly 98,000 in 2010 to approximately 44,000 in 2015. We have also seen a 22 per cent jump in course fees. The member for Camden was right in alluding to the fact that not everyone wants to go to university, and that does not mean anything negative. People of any persuasion can function very well in this place with or without a degree. My former councillor colleague and I do not agree on everything all the time, but we do agree on the importance of getting skills in our local area and region. I commend the member for Wallsend and thank her for giving me the opportunity to contribute to debate on the motion.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (12:59): Members on this side of the House have a positive plan for TAFE. It is disappointing that the member for Wallsend has moved this motion. Members opposite excel in creating fear and confusion about TAFE, and it is unfortunate that they continue this campaign against the good people of Glendale. Like TAFE NSW, Glendale campus has experienced strong growth in enrolments under this Government, which recently announced its vision to modernise the sector. I was engaged in that process because I have a TAFE college at Kogarah in my electorate. TAFE NSW will be providing more choice, better access, and more convenient training for students and employers to support the jobs of the future. New South Wales has the strongest economy and the strongest jobs growth in the nation.

Over the next four years, more than \$73 billion will be invested in infrastructure programs to create more than 330,000 new jobs and to provide greater opportunity to build a skilled workforce that will secure a strong future for our great State. We must maintain and grow our economic advantage and strengthen our skills base by providing vocational education and training options that connect students with jobs. The TAFE reforms that have been introduced will help the Government to achieve that. As part of these changes, TAFE NSW is investing heavily in improving course delivery and course content. Regardless of where students live, they can expect the same high-quality, industry-related courses. The reforms will help TAFE NSW to become more efficient, and the gains made by implementing those efficiencies will be reinvested in skilling and training our young people.

The Government will provide state-of-the-art campuses and technology-driven learning platforms for our students throughout the State—not only those in Glendale. TAFE NSW will recycle vacant land and underutilised assets, and will reinvest every dollar raised in modernising and improving our great TAFE facilities and learning platforms for the benefit of students. It will also create a student-centred workforce and systems comprising more diverse and flexible roles and employment conditions. It will also retain its strong connections to the local community, and will ensure that it remains relevant. It will do that through a new advisory structure that will include local employers, schools and community groups. Of course, Government members are strong advocates of the TAFE system.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (13:03): By leave: I congratulate the member for Wallsend on moving this motion, which raises her concerns about Glendale TAFE. I know better than most in this House how hardworking she is and how dedicated and committed she is to her electorate, and in particular to Glendale TAFE. Both the member for Wallsend and I know only too well how important TAFE institutions are in the Hunter. I can appreciate their importance because the electorate of Swansea is home to Belmont TAFE, and more than 30 per cent of our constituents have a TAFE qualification. I do not think I need to clarify that because it speaks

volumes. The member for Wallsend and I are strong advocates for TAFE, and I applaud her for moving this motion.

I admire and thank the member for Camden for his contribution to this debate. I know that he is genuine in his support for TAFE. Unfortunately, he has been hoodwinked by his colleagues about the underfunding of TAFE and the fact that courses are being dismantled. If that is not happening in his electorate, I am surprised. That is certainly not the case in Belmont and Glendale. However, he is an outstanding member and he often demonstrates his commitment to TAFE, with which he has a long history.

I am perplexed that the member for Tamworth has such a narrow view of what people are saying about TAFE. Of course, that narrow view exists only in this Chamber. He seems to believe that it is only members of the Opposition who are critical of TAFE NSW. It is worth noting that it is not only Labor members who have deep concerns about the future of TAFE. An editorial published in January 2016 in the *Sydney Morning Herald* was scathing about the Government's cuts to the TAFE NSW budget. The editorial, entitled "Empty classrooms and empty gestures sum up TAFE's shabby treatment", assessed the Liberal-Nationals Government's policies, and stated:

The state government's 'Smart and Skilled' policy for vocational training is at the very least misnamed. It is actively discouraging would-be students from signing up to gain skills. Nothing smart about that, one would think.

Speaking about the 83,000 fewer TAFE enrolments since 2012, which the member for Wallsend also pointed out, the editorial stated:

... a savage fee rise implemented and the Orwellian Smart and Skilled policy has meant students in some courses face steep increases in the price of equipping themselves for work.

The member for Wallsend and the *Sydney Morning Herald* are in lockstep about what is happening to the TAFE sector. I again commend her for moving this motion. We in the Hunter appreciate the importance of TAFE, and we know that it is too good to lose.

Ms MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley) (13:07): By leave: It is with great pleasure that I contribute to this debate to introduce some perspective. The motion of the member for Wallsend is incorrect at the local level. I join my colleagues from across New South Wales in acknowledging that concerns have been raised about TAFE enrolments. However, one of our most serious concerns relates to the Labor Party's campaign of talking down TAFE. I have listened to members' contributions today, and I am astounded that no-one has dealt with the vocational education deregulation introduced by former Prime Minister Julia Gillard. That move caused profound disruption in the vocational education sector, and it has had the greatest impact on enrolment figures across New South Wales. It disappoints me that members opposite have not addressed the substance of the issue in their contributions to this debate.

In relation to the Glendale campus, the fearmongering and concerns being orchestrated by the local member are particularly disturbing. There have been some great results in Glendale. It is a great campus of which Government members are very proud. To have the local member talk it down and create concern is very disappointing. It has experienced strong growth in enrolments despite the local member talking it down. I applaud the Minister for Skills, the Hon. John Barilaro, who despite continuing put-downs by the Labor Party talks daily to and supports our TAFE teachers. Revolution is in the air: He is moving jobs from the back office to the forefront to ensure that we have more teachers.

Ms Prue Car: There will not be any jobs left by the time you guys are finished.

Ms MELINDA PAVEY: What an outrageous accusation. It is not true to say that there will not be any jobs left in TAFE. There has been strong growth in Glendale. In the debate about vocational education Opposition members should put the facts on the table—about Julia Gillard and her changes to vocational education which pretty well stuffed it up. The vocational education sector is now being cleaned up federally. The member for Londonderry is not game to interject in relation to that issue as it is the truth. Cowboys came into the vocational sector and skimmed off dreadfully large amounts of money. The Federal Government has been left to clean up that basket case.

Ms Prue Car: We are not talking about Bexley Hill.

Ms MELINDA PAVEY: We are talking about vocational education. Federal reforms had an effect on TAFE enrolments. If you cannot accept that and you do not believe it you do not deserve to be the shadow Minister.

Ms Anna Watson: Point of order: The member for Oxley should be asked to direct her comments through the chair rather than directing them to the member for Londonderry.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I ask the member for Londonderry to stop interjecting. I put members on notice that if they continue interjecting I will put them on calls to order that will remain for the rest of the day.

Ms MELINDA PAVEY: I cannot support this motion.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (13:11): By leave: It is my great pleasure to support the motion moved by the member for Wallsend. Opposition members support TAFE—TAFE teachers and TAFE students. We support the concept of vocational education as an important pillar of education in this State—one that has served this State well for decades and one that should continue to serve this State for decades to come if the current reforms do not reform TAFE in such a way that it cannot perform its current role. The main pillar of TAFE was accessibility to all people no matter their age, where they lived or their education level. TAFE often enabled those who went out of the workforce for a while to retrain and get back into the workforce.

Opposition members are not criticising TAFE—the teachers, the students or the TAFE concept—which is what those opposite would have us believe. We are saying that the reforms are impacting on TAFE in such a way it is changing the way in which TAFE is assisting our community. At the moment there are higher fees which impact on accessibility and there is less access to courses. The Government cannot deny that through Smart and Skilled, by picking winners and losers when it comes to courses, it is pushing people from certificate courses to diplomas. Diplomas used to be an avenue reserved for universities. Through this system the Government has taken a group of people who should be doing certificate II, III or IV courses and it is forcing them into diploma courses because they are worth more money.

In a competitive system people start to offer courses that generate the most money. That is what TAFE is being forced to do in order to keep its funding and it is pushing people into a domain in which they are unable to complete their courses. The Government must look not only at enrolments but also at completion rates. There are cutbacks to the courses that are being delivered and the workforce is being casualised by making full-time teachers part-time teachers, thus creating a brain drain. All those great TAFE teachers used to write the courses that other private institutions used and they did that in their own time. Completion rates are now being affected. The Government must look at how many students are completing their courses. That number is going down because delivery methods and teachers are being attacked.

The Government cannot understand that these reforms are not just hurting TAFE; they are hurting the people of New South Wales. There is a problem when people in industry say that they can no longer trust the certificates that students are getting because they believe the competencies are not being properly met. There is a big problem when they are looking for external assessments in order to ensure that students can do what they are supposed to have been trained to do. That is what the Government needs to focus on. Government members talked about the number of enrolments and those sorts of things but that is not the issue. The issue relates to completion rates and the quality of courses—that is what is being affected. The Government cannot deny it because people in industry and in the private sector are saying it, but Government members are deaf.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) (13:16): By leave: Everyone in this place should have TAFE in their hearts and promote this wonderful institution which has served this State well in the past and which will serve it well in the future. Like the member for Camden, after I left school I completed a number of certificates in hospitality which led me into a small business of which I am extremely proud. TAFE is an option for many people when they leave school if they do not want to pursue education in the university sector. TAFE is an extraordinary institution. Challenge always comes with change. We must choose our words carefully when we are discussing TAFE because the greatest disservice that can be done to this institution is to talk it down. Anything in society can be talked down, which creates many problems. There is a dispute about whether enrolments are on the increase or on the decrease. Someone is telling fibs, which does not serve us well. If all members agree that TAFE has done a great job that is what we should be talking about. The member for Oxley said earlier it is disappointing that members are disputing facts.

TAFE will always play an instrumental role in the trades sector where we are crying out for the skill sets required to cope with the construction and infrastructure boom in this State. I will not talk down these skill sets as TAFE will always play a significant role in this State. Some of the changes that the Government made in the funding of certain courses were driven by what constituted jobs at the end of those courses. Earlier the Minister for Education asked how it was possible to justify funding something that had low job prospects when nurses who are trying to re-enter the industry are having to pay \$10,000 to do refresher courses. It makes no sense whatsoever but I understand that there are different views. Putting aside the motion, I am sure that all members acknowledge that TAFE has served this State magnificently in the past and that it will continue to do so in the future.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (13:19): In reply: I thank those members representing the electorates of Camden, Shellharbour, Tamworth, Campbelltown, Oatley, Swansea, Oxley, Wyong and Drummoyne for their contributions to debate on this motion. The member for Camden and the member for Oxley

said that I seem to be informed about TAFE. The member for Camden also referred to the number of questions I have asked, the notices of motions I have moved and the speeches I have made relating to Glendale—a multiplicity of them that are well known. As a former teacher I have a great interest in TAFE so what they said is ironic. The member for Camden waffled a bit but I also respect him—I respect him in the morning and in the evening in the same way as he respects me. The member for Shellharbour made some important points. She spoke about the fact that Dapto TAFE had been garrotted, which is a real concern. The member for Shellharbour also made the important and incredible point that one of the TAFEs had a butchery facility but that it was unable to afford to buy meat.

It was nice of the member for Tamworth to give me a list of phone numbers. My brother was a WorldSkills manager for New South Wales before he died and I visited Tamworth TAFE with him, so I know it well. I respect the teachers and staff at Tamworth TAFE. I am sad that Tamworth TAFE, like many other institutions, has had increased enrolment fees and a reduction in courses. I again thank the member for Tamworth for that list of phone numbers; I will remember them for the rest of my life. The member for Campbelltown spoke eloquently about education and TAFE, the importance of apprenticeships in New South Wales, and the worrying cost of fees and decreasing enrolments. What can I say about the member for Oatley? It is interesting that he talked about the positive plan that the Government has for TAFE. He spoke also about Smart and Skilled and about strong growth at Glendale TAFE, which is inconsistent with my understanding and what I have heard from students and staff at that facility. In his view, students and staff at Glendale know nothing and he knows everything.

The member for Swansea spoke eloquently, as she always does, about the parallels between Belmont and Glendale TAFEs—how they both are suffering from decreased enrolments, decreased courses and rapidly increasing course costs which has made it impossible for many students to attend. The member for Oxley did not mention the fact that students at Kempsey—I know that TAFE as I taught there for six years—are also facing difficulties. Many of them have to travel as far as Port Macquarie to attend TAFE every day as many courses are no longer offered in their local area, which is appalling.

The member for Wyong also spoke eloquently in debate on the motion. As a former school principal he has an interest in TAFE and he knows a lot about it. He spoke about Smart and Skilled and about cherry-picking courses. Certificate II, III, and IV courses have become expensive and students are unable to complete their diploma courses, which is a worry. All I can say about the member for Drummoyne is that he spoke positively but he also waffled a bit. As is reflected by the number of members on both sides of the Chamber who spoke about TAFE, it is an important issue. Smart and Skilled is a failure. I ask all members to support TAFE by supporting this motion.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes32
Noes46
Majority..... 14

AYES

Aitchison, Ms J
Car, Ms P
Crakanthorp, Mr T
Doyle, Ms T
Harris, Mr D
Hoenig, Mr R
Lalich, Mr N (teller)
McDermott, Dr H
Minns, Mr C
Smith, Ms T
Watson, Ms A

Atalla, Mr E
Catley, Ms Y
Daley, Mr M
Finn, Ms J
Harrison, Ms J
Hornery, Ms S
Leong, Ms J
McKay, Ms J
Park, Mr R
Warren, Mr G (teller)
Zangari, Mr G

Barr, Mr C
Chanthivong, Mr A
Dib, Mr J
Greenwich, Mr A
Haylen, Ms J
Kamper, Mr S
Lynch, Mr P
Mehan, Mr D
Robertson, Mr J
Washington, Ms K

NOES

Anderson, Mr K
Berejiklian, Ms G
Conolly, Mr K

Aplin, Mr G
Bromhead, Mr S (teller)
Constance, Mr A

Ayres, Mr S
Brookes, Mr G
Coure, Mr M

NOES

Crouch, Mr A
 Evans, Mr L
 Grant, Mr T
 Henskens, Mr A
 Kean, Mr M
 Marshall, Mr A
 Patterson, Mr C (teller)
 Petinos, Ms E
 Roberts, Mr A
 Skinner, Ms J
 Taylor, Mr M
 Upton, Ms G
 Williams, Ms L

Dominello, Mr V
 George, Mr T
 Gulaptis, Mr C
 Humphries, Mr K
 Lee, Dr G
 Notley-Smith, Mr B
 Pavey, Ms M
 Piccoli, Mr A
 Rowell, Mr J
 Speakman, Mr M
 Toole, Mr P
 Ward, Mr G

Elliott, Mr D
 Goward, Ms P
 Hazzard, Mr B
 Johnsen, Mr M
 Maguire, Mr D
 O'Dea, Mr J
 Perrottet, Mr D
 Provest, Mr G
 Sidoti, Mr J
 Stokes, Mr R
 Tudehope, Mr D
 Williams, Mr R

PAIRS

Foley, Mr L
 Smith, Ms K

Baird, Mr M
 Gibbons, Ms M

Motion negatived.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! I point out to the member for Wollondilly and the member for Davidson that the way they entered the Chamber was unparliamentary. I will now leave the chair and the House will resume at 2.15 p.m.

*Visitors***VISITORS**

The SPEAKER: I welcome all our guests in the gallery this afternoon for the last question time for this week. I hope you enjoy the afternoon.

I extend a very warm welcome to Genevieve Overell, the Government Advisory Director at Deutsche Group Services and Simon Dodd, the General Manager of American Airlines in Australia. They are guests of the Speaker. I thank them for joining us this afternoon.

I also welcome the students, teachers and parents from St Anthony's Primary School, Ryde Public School, Northcross Primary School, and St Kevin's Primary School, who are participating in the Ryde Electorate School Leadership Program. They are guests of the Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation, the wonderful member for Ryde. I also acknowledge the members of the Bathurst and Central West Filipino group in the gallery today. They are guests of the Minister for Local Government, the wonderful member for Bathurst. I also welcome Daniel Peake and Christina Parisi from Washington DC, guests of the wonderful member for Coogee. Welcome to you all this afternoon.

*Question Time***LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATIONS**

Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (14:20): My question is directed to the Deputy Premier and Leader of The Nationals. Will he join me at a town hall meeting in Molong and debate his forced merger of Cabonne Shire with Orange City?

The SPEAKER: I could barely hear the question. I know the member for Auburn could repeat the question, but I think most other people did hear it. My message is about members interjecting when a member is asking a question. I ask the member for Keira to stop pointing at members on the other side of the Chamber as if he were completely innocent when it comes to noise making.

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Deputy Premier, Minister for Justice and Police, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Racing) (14:21): I could not think of anything worse than spending five minutes with the Opposition leader.

The SPEAKER: Order! What a great start to question time.

Mr TROY GRANT: I am on the public record indicating what I would do with a fork and an eyeball with respect to self-inflicted injuries on a different occasion; I am not quite sure what analogy I would use in the context of spending time with the Leader of the Opposition.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Leader of the Opposition to come to order.

Mr TROY GRANT: The message for local government right across this State is that we have a Minister and a Government that are committed to providing the best local government that this State can provide for the communities that rely on the services and the investment in infrastructure. That is exactly what the merged entities are already receiving. I speak from firsthand experience. Councils in my electorate were merged. The Dubbo and Wellington councils merged to form the Dubbo Regional Council. Throughout that debate, there is no doubt that very strong views were expressed and there was very strong opposition from sections of the community, which is what change often brings.

People do not like change and are often suspicious of it. The fear factor associated with mergers in local government stem from a couple of key points. I can speak specifically about the Wellington community who feared there would be mass job losses from Wellington Council. After the merged entity began to operate, it was discovered that Wellington had 20 job vacancies. Why was that the case? Prior to amalgamation, Wellington Council had been struggling to recruit people because Wellington Council could not offer professional opportunities in line with the council's functions.

One of the missing important recruitment elements was that Wellington Council had no planning staff. Consequently, Wellington Council had received only two development applications [DAs] in a 12-month period. How can a community be expected to progress, develop and evolve when its development applications had to be subcontracted to a South Coast company that did not have local expertise and local knowledge to be able to understand the process? In only eight weeks after the merger, development applications received by Dubbo Regional Council increased to 20, which is one very clear example of the progress and benefit of mergers.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting.

Mr TROY GRANT: Issues that adversely affected the former Wellington Council and the former Western Plains Regional Council, which would be likely to be common also to Molong, Eugowra and Canowindra, included a loss of local identity. Guess what? Wellington is still referred to as Wellington. Approximately three weeks ago I attended the Wellington community celebrations at the local park. The Wellington pool is still referred to as the Wellington pool, so that loss of identity has not eventuated. The greatest benefit of council amalgamations is improved council capacity. Some communities have an enormous task and onus to deliver services and are experiencing growing demand for services and infrastructure.

Within the next couple of weeks, the Wellington pool will host the country swimming championships. Because the former Wellington Council did not have the staff to ensure that that very important community asset had been kept up to speed and because no asset assessment had been made of the pool, after the merger professional council staff discovered that a wall of the pool was collapsing. The former Wellington Council had been spending \$54,000 a year to top up the leaking pool because it had neither the finances nor the expertise to fix it. Since the merger, the pool has been rectified and the country championships will go ahead.

Mr Jihad Dib: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The question was whether the Deputy Premier will or will not go to the debate.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Premier is being entirely relevant to the question.

Mr TROY GRANT: I have a very great privilege of representing Canowindra and Eugowra, which also are part of the council merger process. For four years as the local parliamentary member for those areas, I received letters week after week from those communities asking for amalgamation with other councils. Council amalgamations are not all one-way traffic. The Leader of the Opposition is a political opportunist of the worst kind and a disgrace. I could not stand spending five minutes in his company.

SYDNEY INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) (14:26): My question is addressed to the Premier. How is the New South Wales Government's record infrastructure program transforming Sydney?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD (Manly—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) (14:27): I thank the member for Coogee for his question. The great people of Coogee cannot believe that they have such a great member as the current member for Coogee.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The people of Coogee have never been better since the member for Coogee was elected. They absolutely love him—just as they love every member of this Government. As Labor Opposition members know, the State is very different since the Coalition was elected to government approximately five and a half years ago.

Mr Luke Foley: Yeah. There were trees along Anzac Parade then.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: There he goes—the old man of principle—who repeatedly said, "I am for light rail." He hates being reminded that he said repeatedly, "I am for light rail", and later said, "Oh, hang on! There is a political opportunity here, so I'm against it. I hate it!" There he sits opposite me, the man of principle. Here he comes again. Come on, champion! What is he against today, and what will he be for tomorrow? What is Labor policy?

Mr Luke Foley: Point of order: It is 2:30 p.m. Premier, what is your backflip today?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. There is no point of order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: You will have to do a lot better than that, son.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I know the Leader of the Opposition has all the policies in the world. He votes against a policy and then he says he is for it. He says, "I love light rail" and then he says, "I hate light rail." Privately he says one thing and publicly he says something else.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: That is the Leader of the Opposition. The good news for him, while he is trying to work out what he is for and what he is against, is that this Government is getting on with delivering for the people of New South Wales. We are building infrastructure from one end of the State to the other. We are very proud to be doing that. Whilst the Leader of the Opposition says he wants to lead a party of solutions not a party of protest—and I am not sure about that—we are building infrastructure.

We are proud of our great Minister for Education. Under this Minister 66 major school building projects totalling more than \$1 billion have been delivered or announced since 2011. Our great Minister for Health is overseeing, including the forward estimates, \$10 billion worth of infrastructure across New South Wales. We are very proud to be doing this work, and all the people of this State love it. Where do I start in talking about transport in this great State? There are 16,000 extra transport services and there is the \$20 billion Metro under this Minister for Transport. These developments are making a huge difference for the people of New South Wales.

In Darling Harbour there is the Convention and Exhibition Centre, which we said we were going to build. In a very different approach to government compared to the Labor Government, we are actually building the centre. We are very close to opening the centre, and I know those opposite are very keen on it. It is a \$3.4 billion project on a 20-hectare redevelopment site. It is going to be Australia's leading convention and exhibition centre. People in the Asia-Pacific are looking at the centre, and I am happy to be leading the Government that is delivering these projects.

Speaking of convention centres, I note that last week the Leader of the Opposition seemed to be spending a lot of time going to Wollongong. I do not know why he is going to Wollongong, but it is probably something to do with the by-election there. He announced a \$50 million new convention centre. But we all remember the history of this announcement. One day the member for Wollongong said that a new convention centre would be built, but the next day the then Leader of the Opposition, Robbo, said it would not be built. [*Extension of time*]

This is typical of Labor—it announces something and then it cancels it. In the lead-up to the election—

Ms Jenny Aitchison: Point of order: I do not think the Premier should be lecturing us on flip-flops.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is absolutely not a point of order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I am talking about how to deliver projects. We on this side of the Chamber are delivering projects. At the election the exact same project, under the former shadow Treasurer, was announced to be costing \$35 million. This project was to cost \$35 million under the former shadow Treasurer but will cost \$50 million under the current shadow Treasurer. What has happened? Where has the extra \$15 million come from?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We know how the shadow Treasurer has said he will draw up the budget.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: He said that he will not have to do anything because inflation takes over.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: He has the phone number of the former shadow Treasurer and he taken the \$35 million and looked at inflation over the past two years and arrived at \$50 million. He is only about \$12 million out. That is not bad for the shadow Treasurer.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Keira will stop interjecting while the Premier is answering the question. He might not like the answer, but he is not entitled to interject. I call the member for Keira to order for the second time.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We know how committed those opposite are to the project because in their election policy they noted that they did not bother to get it costed. They do not care about it. That was the way with old Labor. They announce things but they do not do business cases or the necessary work. They make it up as they go along. The great news for the people of New South Wales is that we deliver projects and we will continue to do so.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATIONS

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) (14:34): My question is directed to the Deputy Premier and Leader of The Nationals. Given the Government's admission that it was wrong on greyhounds, will the Deputy Premier admit that he is wrong to pursue the forced amalgamation of Cabonne and Blayney shires with Orange City?

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Deputy Premier, Minister for Justice and Police, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Racing) (14:35): No. We are right because we are intent on making sure that each of the communities in the Orange area, the Cabonne area and the Blayney area has the best local government, as they deserve. Questions about council amalgamations and mergers are typical of Labor. I make this point because it was not that long ago that those opposite were in government and they merged 24 councils in 2004 or 2005.

Mr John Barilaro: It was 27.

Mr TROY GRANT: I am told it was 27 councils. What is good for the goose is not good for the gander, according to those opposite. This is the mystery of those opposite.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: Tamworth Regional Council was one of those councils that was merged. Tamworth Regional Council would have to be one of the most impressive and successful local councils in New South Wales. We want that sort of success for every local government area in this State. As I said earlier, many residents of Eugowra and Canowindra, which I had the great privilege to represent from 2011 until 2015, wrote to me on a weekly basis asking for their council to be merged. As has been the case throughout history and as is the case right now, Dubbo City Council before its merger into Dubbo Regional Council was a merged entity itself. Over time things change, demographics change, capacity and communities change, the ability of local government to service the needs of the community with a growing population changes, and then we have to make sure that that council is fit for the future to continue to service the communities it represents.

The proposed merger is apparently subject to court proceedings, so I will let the court make its determination. But the merger is being proposed in the best interests of every single constituent of that proposed merged entity. Those opposite try to lecture us about merging councils. They tell the affected communities that our proposed council mergers are bad for the communities. But it was not that long ago that under the Labor Government there were a heap of mergers, probably more than we are proposing. I congratulate them for doing so because a lot of those merged councils are good success stories, as will be the case after this series of mergers.

The massive difference in these mergers is that when those opposite merged councils they did so by way of facsimile. There was no notice, no consultation and no support. In contrast, this Government has spent 4½ years working with the sector, and the Minister for Local Government has used his experience in a merged local council, Evans Shire Council, to understand the process. He was opposed to mergers until he saw the great benefit of the merged council he served on when it became part of Bathurst Regional Council. We want all communities to have access to the very best, capable local governments in their areas.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: That is what we are committed to. In answer to the question I say no, I will not be opposing the merger of those councils. If the court rules in our favour, I expect the mergers to proceed for the benefit of those constituents.

SYDNEY OLYMPIC PARK DEVELOPMENT

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) (14:39): My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning. How is the Government working to create a vibrant centre in Sydney Olympic Park and enhancing its role as a premier event destination?

The SPEAKER: The member for Lakemba should not interject.

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Planning) (14:39): I thank the member for Drummoyne for his question. He is a great member of this House—a member the Premier and most of the people of New South Wales like to refer to as "The Package". When you look at him, it is not hard to see why. The idea of the package summarises the focus and vision that the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Major Events, and Minister for Sport and I have taken to the planning of this important precinct right in the heart of Sydney. For so many years, Sydney Olympic Park has drifted.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition should not be so rude and should not argue. The Leader of the Opposition is in a very grouchy mood this afternoon.

Mr ROB STOKES: Ever since Sydney held the best Olympics ever, there has been a need to articulate a clear vision for the future of this incredibly important precinct, and that is precisely what we have done. We have put together a package of different elements through land use and infrastructure planning to provide opportunities for up to 10,000 new homes, 34,000 jobs and 5,000 students. There is already about 430 hectares of publicly available parklands, and we are seeking to contribute to that with another two hectares of parklands as part of the overall precinct of about 630 hectares. This will be an incredible opportunity to provide a precinct in which Sydneysiders can work, live and play.

I have been asked to comment on entertainment opportunities at Sydney Olympic Park. One of the great opportunities we have is to have it not just as a place that only comes alive when there are major events but also as a place that comes alive 24 hours a day, seven days a week—a place with a real heart and real vibrancy and a place where people not only visit but also live. It has an interesting history: 50 years ago it was a brick pit and abattoir. Many of the buildings around Sydney were built with bricks from the old State Brickworks at Homebush, and many Sunday roasts were one-time visitors to the abattoir. Today it has been transformed in terms of its entertainment potential. The Government is all about ensuring that it has potential as a place where people can live and work in an integrated way, with new cafes, new restaurants and new retail opportunities. It is an incredible place to live.

In terms of entertainment, there are some great events coming up at Sydney Olympic Park. In just a few short months I understand that Justin Bieber will be taking his world tour, entitled Purpose, there. I encourage the Leader of the Opposition to attend to learn a bit about purpose and to become a Belieber. But perhaps the greatest legacy of Sydney Olympic Park was the bringing together of sport, entertainment and Australian culture in terms of—I am getting emotional just thinking about it—the amazing song by Olivia Newton-John and John Farnham, "Dare to Dream". I could not help but think of the member for Maroubra when I read the lyrics:

I am my own believer
In my heart the reason
I will follow the light from within

...

Dare to dream
Dare to fly

Dare to be the heir, the chosen one to touch the sky ...

[Extension of time]

The key to making the Sydney Olympic Park precinct work has always been the integration of jobs, homes, entertainment opportunities, sporting precinct, public recreation, respect for heritage and great public infrastructure in terms of social infrastructure like schools, community facilities, public transport connections and new road connections. That is the detailed work we have done to ensure that we have a vision and a master plan which—unlike the 2010 master plan—will actually work and will be sustainable into the future. We will ensure that there are more opportunities for better homes and better located homes, more jobs, better availability of jobs and opportunities, and a great opportunity as well to capitalise on the interests of universities such as Charles Sturt University, the University of Western Sydney, the Australian College of Physical Education and others that have a real interest in the vibrancy of this precinct.

It is an incredible opportunity. It is one that comes along only once in a generation. Most cities that have had a recent opportunity to host the Olympics have used it as an opportunity for urban transformation and renewal. In the case of Sydney Olympic Park, it has been a long time coming, but through hard work and through the capacity to pay for infrastructure that the disciplined budget approach of this side of the House has ensured, we are able to deliver a vision which will ensure that Sydney Olympic Park becomes all it can be.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATIONS

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (14:47): My question is directed to the Minister for Local Government. Why will the Minister not allow the people of Cabonne Shire to vote on their future by holding a plebiscite on the same day as the Orange by-election?

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Local Government) (14:48): I thank the member for Campbelltown for his question. The House listened very carefully to the Deputy Premier, who articulated very well how committed this Government is to reforming local government in New South Wales. I thank the member for Campbelltown for giving me the opportunity to update the House on local government in New South Wales, because the member for Campbelltown also forgot to mention that at the last State election his mum and dad actually handed out for the Deputy Premier. Any time that he wants to come and sit over here, we will be very happy to have him!

The SPEAKER: Order! The clock will be stopped until the House comes to order. Government members are wasting the Minister's time. Does the member for Kiama have a death wish?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I thank the member for Campbelltown's parents for their help during the election campaign.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Oatley will come to order. That is enough!

Mr PAUL TOOLE: The Government is continuing to take the necessary steps to ensure that the local government sector reflects the twenty-first century. The local government sector is important because it has a large impact on our quality of life. I know that some people are afraid of change. However, the 20 new councils being created will provide more services and infrastructure. I have heard members of the Opposition's stories about swimming pools and senior citizens' centres being closed. That is not true. Services are continuing to operate in this State. What we have not heard about is the Labor Party's policy on local government reform. We are not hearing what it plans to do. The mums and dads, the pensioners, and the families of this State should be very concerned, especially the voters of Cabonne. Members opposite attack those hardworking individuals—

Mr Greg Warren: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! If the point of order relates to relevance, I advise the member for Campbelltown that the Minister is being relevant. Does he have another point of order?

Mr Greg Warren: My point of order relates to Standing Order 59. The Minister is straying outside the scope of the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not think so. There is no point of order. The last word I heard him say was "Cabonne". That point of order is bizarre.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: The Government has done four years of research, consultation and work with community to establish what is needed. The Leader of the Opposition's policy is an attack on the people of New South Wales. His approach to reforming local government involves people reaching deeper into their pockets; his answer to reform is to jack up rates. That is not fair and it is not sustainable. He wants to rewind the clock. Some council boundaries have been in place for more than 100 years. The Leader of the Opposition wants to take us back to the days of the horse and cart. He wants to make communities pay more; he wants to increase costs; he wants to increase red tape; he wants councils to pay more; and he wants to move people from the front line to the back office. When I travel the State, people tell me that they want to see their councils fixing potholes, building bridges, and maintaining parks and gardens. Members opposite clearly do not want to see that. This Government is committed to local government reform and creating a strong local government sector that ensures we have strong communities.

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

SOCIAL HOUSING

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (14:53): I address my question to the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing. How is the Government delivering better outcomes for social housing tenants?

The SPEAKER: Order! I assure Government members that the Minister does not need assistance from anyone.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing) (14:53): I thank the member for Ku-ring-gai for that question. He has a strong commitment to the vulnerable people in his electorate who need housing.

The SPEAKER: Order! Is that a reason to interject? Some Opposition members appear to have had a jolly lunch. Their behaviour is disgraceful.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: As the Minister responsible for those members who make a big effort for people who need support, I note that the member recently visited the Waitara Light of Christ Centre, which caters for the homeless, and I thank him for doing so. Obviously, housing for the vulnerable in our community is a high priority for the Baird-Grant Government. Earlier this year, we launched the Future Directions for Social Housing policy, which targets a number of different objectives, one of which is to provide much more social housing. The Government also wants to ensure that the social housing experience is better for those who need it.

In 2009, the Federal Labor Government met with Coalition and Labor governments from across the country to agree on a broad objective to transfer about 35 per cent of social housing from the various government agencies to community housing providers. The New South Wales Government confirmed its commitment to that objective earlier this year in the Future Directions for Social Housing policy to which I referred. On behalf of the Baird-Grant Government, I am delighted to advise that it is now moving forward in that process. During the past week, I have met with community housing providers and confirmed that the Government will be transferring to them approximately 18,000 homes that are now managed by the Department of Family and Community Services [FACS]. That reflects the need to acknowledge the 2009 commitment and to deliver on what the Government sees as a positive way forward for people who need support services.

People who occupied social housing 20 or 25 years ago—when it was called "public housing"—were generally low-income earners. However, the demographics have changed since then, and 80 per cent to 90 per cent of tenants need a great deal more support. They may be escaping domestic violence, or be suffering from mental illness, or alcohol and drug addiction, and sometimes a combination of all of those issues. The Government has tried to be as creative as possible in working with the community housing sector. Over the past 30 years, the sector has grown up. There is more work to do in various areas, but the sector is now much closer to the community than we could ever have imagined. Recognising the need to ensure that support services are provided, and, as I said, recognising its commitment, the Government has announced that 18,000 homes will be transferred to the community housing sector.

That means that this State will receive about \$1 billion over the next 20 years through the Commonwealth Rent Assistance program. Community housing providers will be the direct beneficiaries of those funds. They have told the Government that they want to be able to provide the additional support services that the community expects. That extra funding will provide much more support for vulnerable tenants to address the issues confronting them. As I said, that relates to the objective of the Future Direction for Social Housing policy of not only providing more housing—which the Government is pursuing on other fronts that I will not address today—but also providing a better experience for tenants. This process will have some effect on FACS staff. The Government hopes that some staff from the Shoalhaven, the mid-North Coast, the Hunter-New England area, and North Sydney will transition to the community housing sector. I thank the FACS staff for all the work they have done. Many have already shown an interest in working in the community housing sector. [*Extension of time*]

They have already shown interest in working with the community housing sector so we have spoken to the community housing providers and said, "Whoever is successful, will you make every effort to transition our staff?" The answer has been an absolutely positive yes. In fact we will have opportunities for some of our staff to go over it. This whole event is going to occur not just in one day but in a transition period of three years. Over the next few years our staff will be able to work in the community housing providers' offices and get a feel for whether or not that is the sort of organisation they would really like to be in. I know this because some of the staff from Family and Community Services [FACS] have already moved across and it has been a very positive experience.

I have also said that for those FACS staff who do not want to continue in the housing area we will look at trying to support them in another area of FACS. Those of us in Government are aiming to make sure no-one in FACS loses their job. We will make sure they transition into other areas. The Family and Community Services

public servants have obviously done a great job but I am now looking to the energy from the community housing sector. The Federation of Housing Associations said last week:

The NSW government's announcement it will transfer management of 18,000 public housing units to the community sector is good news that will allow for greater investment in maintenance, tenant services and potentially more homes.

Also, PowerHousing Australia said:

What the Baird Government is doing here today is saying that the provision of housing really matters and recognises that housing is such a key issue to our communities.

The community housing sector knows it. The tenants know it. Our Government certainly knows it. It would appear the only people who are arguing against it are the Labor Opposition who are still living in the past.

PAID DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEAVE

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (15:01): My question is directed to the Premier. Will the Premier commit to supporting the inclusion of paid domestic violence leave in the National Employment Standards and will he act to place this on the agenda at the upcoming Council of Australian Governments [COAG] meeting?

Mr MIKE BAIRD (Manly—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) (15:01): That is a good question from the member. The good news, as I am sure she is aware, is that we already offer domestic violence leave. We are determined to do that here. I am sure the member knows our track record in relation to this. She will understand if she looks at the most recent budget: there is \$300 million towards domestic violence initiatives over the four years—very specific and purposeful, led by the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault; it is about making a real difference.

The strategy is not only about continuing to provide support for the victims but also targeting the perpetrators. We have looked at the issue globally and one of the key strategies, particularly in the United Kingdom, has been successful in targeting the perpetrators not just in terms of repeat offenders but also in terms of anger management and ensuring that we are providing those sorts of courses to change behaviour and to help change the culture. That remains a very strong focus for us. Clearly domestic violence leave is an important part of that. We have provisions here. If we can strengthen them, of course I am happy to strengthen them.

I go to COAG this month. Again I acknowledge Anastacia Palaszczuk who at COAG suggested that we get together collectively to do this. I also committed with Premier Dan Andrews to look at working on initiatives we could do together. It is an area about which we cannot be silent. Certainly I have been very proud of what this Government has done but more importantly what the country has done on the back of Rosie Batty as Australian of the Year. She used that title in a very important way to raise awareness and challenge every single government to do more. Part of that, in my understanding, was for the first time coming to realise that up to 40 per cent of police work is actually domestic violence related. That is an unbelievable statistic.

We all need to do much more. Certainly the more we can work together and work across party lines, the greater our chance of achieving success. We will continue to be committed to doing everything we can on domestic violence. I commend Anastacia Palaszczuk for the initiative to draw a special COAG meeting together this summer to discuss these very issues. It is taking place. I will be a constructive participant as will every single Premier because we are committed to doing everything possible against domestic violence.

HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (15:04): My question is addressed to the Minister for Education. How is the Government supporting the students undertaking the Higher School Certificate [HSC] examinations and related matters?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI (Murray—Minister for Education) (15:04): I thank the member for Tweed for his question and I wish the 618 students in the Tweed electorate doing the Higher School Certificate [HSC] this year all the very best. I also acknowledge in the gallery—I photobombed some kids having their photo out the front—St Anthony's Primary School, Ryde Public School, Northcross Primary School and St Kevin's Primary School as part of the Ryde electorate school leadership program. Welcome to Parliament. Today the New South Wales HSC examinations commenced. Almost 77,000 students will be doing those exams and 60,000 of those students sit the first compulsory exam, English, today. The HSC is not just an exam across New South Wales. There are students all over Australia doing the New South Wales HSC as well as a number of students doing the HSC in other countries.

Again it is not just school students doing it. I heard of a 94-year-old gentleman who is sitting the HSC exam this year—and I wish Richard Amery all the very best! I saw Richard yesterday. He is in very good spirits, actually. He does not look a day older than the day I first met him here in 1999—a credit to him. Unashamedly this Government has continued to invest in education in this State across the three sectors. Earlier today I was at

an Association of Independent Schools event in Macquarie Street talking to independent schools that have been part of the literacy and numeracy action plan. Some of the results they are getting for their kindergarten to year 2 students are quite incredible. We look forward to those students progressing through upper primary and through high school and doing their HSC in a number of years.

The investment that the Government continues to make as part of the Gonski funding model that we were the first State to sign up to is also going to help deliver better academic, social and wellbeing results for all students across New South Wales. If only some members of Parliament had done a little bit better in their literacy and numeracy whilst they were at school! The other night while debating the Board of Studies bill the member for Cessnock made the point that a teacher does lots of paperwork. He said the proportion was about 70:30 but it had got so bad he thought the percentage had gone to 50:80. I am still trying to work out the mathematics of that in my head. Reading is a skill as well. Mick Veitch in the upper House talked about the backlog at Moree East Public School. He did not read the bit about the \$15 million rebuild of that school. I can assure him there is no backlog there. Earlier today there was a debate about Gonski. The member for Lakemba got up and said, "We are a unity ticket on Gonski funding." There is only one problem with that.

Mr Jihad Dib: I said we are on a unity ticket.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Okay—you said you were on a unity ticket. But you cannot be on a unity ticket for only the spending part of it: "Yes, we agree with all the spending."

Mr Jihad Dib: How was that radio interview when you were asked about it?

The SPEAKER: The member for Lakemba will come to order and stop yelling, or he will leave the Chamber.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: You cannot be on a unity ticket just for the spending component. This is the dishonesty of Labor members: "Yes, we agree with all the spending but we do not agree with how you got the money to be able to spend it." They opposed everything: the 2.5 per cent wages policy, despite the fact it was Labor's policy prior to 2011; police death and disability reforms; workers compensation reforms; the labour expense cap—

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order: It is 129. This is about HSC students not about police death and disability. In honour of the HSC students, stay on task.

The SPEAKER: He is talking about literacy and numeracy, if you would listen.

Mr Guy Zangari: Yes, but not death and disability for police.

The SPEAKER: The member for Fairfield knows how the Minister is making that comparison. There is no point of order.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: That is the unity ticket they were on, "Bust the Budget". They were happy to take the credit for all the spending, but they were not prepared to do any of the hard work to get the money. Inflation will not do it for them. Inflation will not give them the money to spend \$5 million in Gonski funding. I make this clear to all members, the Health and Education portfolio combined make up 50 per cent of the budget. *[Extension of time]*

We know that for almost every year prior to 2011 the revenue forecast by the Labor Government exceeded its expenditure by almost \$1 billion a year. When I first became the Minister for Education, and I am sure it is the same for the Minister for Health and the Minister for Transport, the Department of Education could not give me a monthly update on its budget position—what had been spent in the first month of the financial year as opposed to what was revenue. When Labor was in Government, it added up how much had been spent at the end of the year. If it was \$3 million or \$4 million overspent in health or education, it went to Treasury and it got the extra money. We could not run households like that and we could not run tuckshops like that, but Labor used to run a \$60 billion budget like that. That is why it had no money for Gonski. Labor should not tell me it is on a unity ticket. That is why it had no money for infrastructure. It is not the headline work that this Government has been doing, such as poles and wires.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kogarah will cease shouting.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: It is the day-to-day hard work, the grunt work of running a Government—

Dr Geoff Lee: Discipline.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The member for Parramatta is exactly right. It is the discipline of not spending more money than is raised. As Margaret Thatcher said about Labor governments, the problem is they eventually run out of other people's money. The member for Lakemba is not a bad bloke, but he is infected with the same

disease as all members on that side. There is no discipline; it is all about staying in power. That is why this Government can afford to invest in Gonski, the National Disability Insurance Scheme, WestConnex and North West Rail. We have the discipline that this State needs.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Lakemba this is not a debate. If it were, he would probably lose. The member for Lakemba will come to order and stop shouting.

SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (15:12): My question is directed to the Treasurer. Given Serco—the company known for running inhumane detention centres in Australia—has expressed an interest in managing public housing and has met this year with the Minister for Social Housing, is there anything to prevent Serco from profiting from the newly established billion-dollar Social and Affordable Housing Fund?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Family and Community Services will come to order. I call the Minister for Family and Community Services to order for the first time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations) (15:15): I thank the member for Newtown for her question.

The SPEAKER: I will wait until members stop telling me what to do. After one call they want the Minister thrown out. Opposition members are on 10 calls before they are thrown out. Is that right, the member for Rockdale? Three calls, seven warnings. One call and the Opposition wants the Minister thrown out?

Mr Chris Minns: Yes, throw him out.

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer has the call.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I acknowledge and thank all members in this House because the social and affordable housing legislation went through this Chamber and the Parliament unopposed. We are proud because it is an Australian first. There is no other Government or jurisdiction in the nation that has set aside a dedicated ring-fenced fund to support social and affordable housing. We are the first Government to have done that, and we are proud of it. I am able to update the House that in May we narrowed down the potential bidders for phase one, which involves providing 3,000 extra dwellings for social and affordable housing. We narrowed down the bidders to nine interested parties and the organisation that was mentioned was not one of those bidders. I say clearly, notwithstanding the fact that I have articulated the facts for the benefit of the member for Newtown, Government entities, non-government entities and private entities that have an interest in supporting the noble intentions of this Government of providing additional social and affordable housing are free to participate in all of our processes.

For too long things have been done the same way in this State and the outcomes have not changed. Members opposite do not like to listen to this bit. They talked a lot about social and affordable housing and they did nothing. It is a credit to the Minister for Family and Community Services. As was apparent, he feels strongly about this issue, as do all Government members, because we care about those who are most vulnerable. We are in a strong budget position to be able to provide that support, which those opposite were not able to do. Even in a million years they would not have the ability, capacity or know-how to set up a dedicated billion-dollar fund, which is ring-fenced to support those who are most vulnerable in our community.

The SPEAKER: Order! There are too many interjections.

[*Interruption*]

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am bemused by the interjection by the member for Londonderry. I thought she supported social and affordable housing. I thought she said she supported the fund. I am not sure what her problem is. I appreciate Opposition members are a bit sensitive, because it highlights their hypocrisy. They say one thing in Opposition, but they failed to deliver in Government when they had the chance. In addition to the information requested by the member for Newtown, I have outlined the process we are up to in relation to the bidders.

While we invited bidders to participate in the process of supporting 3,000 extra dwellings for the first time, we also made it clear that small- or medium-sized bidders will have the chance to participate, because some of them might come forward with a solution for 200 extra houses in a particular part of the State. Others might come forward with 500. We have said through this process—which is a first—that bidders do not have to have a solution for 3,000 dwellings; they might have a solution in a particular part of the State for a fewer number than that. We want to provide flexibility to those on the ground who have the most expertise to deliver the best housing for those who are the most vulnerable. This is another example of a Government in control of its budget.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The member for Bankstown has not offered any policy position in this matter.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I note that the better our policies are, the stronger their interjections because they cannot handle the truth.

The SPEAKER: I warn the member for Bankstown for the last time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The member for Newtown might like to give me extra time. It is up to her; she might feel I have answered the question sufficiently. In particular, I thank Tracy Howe from NSW Council of Social Services for her amazing support of this policy. I also thank other stakeholders such as Infrastructure Partnerships Australia and the experts on the ground who have supported the Government in this initiative.

JOBS, SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (Epping) (15:18): My question is addressed to the Minister for Finance, Services and Property. How has the New South Wales Government shown vision and leadership in pursuing the delivery of jobs, services and infrastructure whilst working inclusively with key stakeholders?

The SPEAKER: Order! It is not too late to remove the member for Rockdale.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Hawkesbury—Minister for Finance, Services and Property) (15:18): I thank the member for his question. There is no doubt that the Liberal-Nationals are the true party of progressive politics in this State. In my humble opinion we may be the most progressive Government of all time thanks to our forward-looking vision New South Wales is prospering through a golden age, the likes of which we have never seen. The budget is balanced. Our debt has disappeared. There is money in the bank and we can see cranes on the skyline. Importantly, New South Wales is creating two-thirds of the jobs in this country. That is why the Liberal Party is the party of the worker. Labor members have never understood that one cannot be a worker if one does not have a job. As my hard-working colleagues on this side of the House know, on every issue we have had to battle the outdated, backward, conservative ideologues on the other side of the House.

The SPEAKER: Order! I cannot hear the Minister.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: While the Minister for Education is looking at innovative initiatives—of building new schools in the Hawkesbury electorate, for example—Labor wants to shut them down. The Government has a great health Minister who has innovative, progressive ways to deliver health care but Labor opposes them. When the Treasurer comes up with new financing models that do not involve new taxes and more borrowing, members of the Labor Party shout us down.

Those opposite are the conservatives of the twenty-first century, preserving broken models, bankrupt systems and relics of a bygone era. They want to preserve and conserve everything that is wrong with society—like the Sirius building, which is an ugly monstrosity, a brutalist behemoth, standing tall in the heart of one of our most treasured heritage precincts. Our progressive policy will trade in this ugly monstrosity for more than 300 new social houses for some of the most vulnerable people in our society. Who opposes this? It is opposed by the extreme right of the Labor Party, led by the member for Maroubra—a man who puts the concerns of the inner-city elites over the hopes and aspirations of the most vulnerable people in this State.

The SPEAKER: I ask the Minister not to incite The Greens.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: The real question is: Why does the Labor Party hate the working class? On this side of the House we know that vulnerable families are more important than brutalist architecture that should be left where it belongs—in the 1970s. We are not just a party of the worker; we have become the party of the battler. Those opposite are jealous; they interject because we have stolen their brand. They know that whatever they do, the Liberals and the Nationals do it better. Nowhere else is there the almost religious zeal for protecting things that are out of date.

The SPEAKER: I ask the member for Balmain not to get upset.

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: I ask the member for Blacktown to let the member for Hawkesbury finish.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: More obvious is their opposition to Service NSW and their love of outdated motor registries. The member for Maroubra threatened petitions, the member for Swansea wanted to go on strike and the member for Campbelltown was crying—all to protect outdated motor registries.

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Is the member for Liverpool going to take the same point of order about interjections being disorderly? Order! I would like to hear the member for Liverpool's point of order.

Mr Paul Lynch: My point of order relates to standing order 129. None of this is relevant to the real world; perhaps we could move on.

The SPEAKER: Hopefully; we will see.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: While those on the other side of the Chamber were publicly harping on about how much they hated Service NSW, in private it was a very different story. There has been a lot of complaining in this House about members opposite not getting invited to announcements in their electorates. We have listened. The Government got it wrong and has fixed it. We have seen the planning Minister reconcile with the member for Newcastle. The Premier came into this Chamber yesterday; he tried to cut the grass of the Minister for Planning. I have also changed my processes. [*Extension of time*]

The SPEAKER: Members should listen to this; it is very entertaining.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: I chose a few processes. I recently received a letter from the member for Charlestown, who said:

I am writing to express my extreme disappointment that I was not invited to the official opening today of the new Service NSW office at Warners Bay which is in my electorate of Charlestown.

She wrote:

I would have thought ... we could stand together to celebrate milestones in any electorate.

It is great to see that those on the other side of the Chamber now see Service NSW as a great milestone. They have seen the light. But I got another letter five minutes later. It was addressed "Dear Minister" not "Dom". She said that she was wrong and that Service NSW Warners Bay was not in her electorate, but she would still like to be invited to all the great announcements of the Baird-Grant Government. No worries. As of today, the member for Summer Hill will be cutting the rope when we open WestConnex. When we finalise the lease of Ausgrid the member for Auburn will write the cheque. And when we open light rail in Newcastle, the member for Newcastle can drive the train—toot, toot! Whilst the backward reactionaries opposite continue to oppose and obstruct every bit of reform from the progressive Baird-Grant Government we will continue to be the most progressive Government that this State has ever seen.

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**.

Ice Smoking Room Proposal

Petition requesting that the Legislative Assembly rejects any plans for an ice smoking room to be built or operated in the south or south-west region of Sydney, received from **Ms Melanie Gibbons**.

Safe Schools Coalition

Petition requesting that the Government prevent the use of the Safe Schools Coalition program in government schools and support for holistic anti-bullying approaches, received from **Mr Kevin Conolly** and **Mr Thomas George**.

National School Of Art

Petition requesting that a long-term lease be provided to the National School of Art for its site, that it remain independent and that the Government continue its funding, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Light Rail Station, Surry Hills

Petition requesting the construction of a second light rail station in Surry Hills at the Wimbo Park/Olivia Gardens site, received from **Ms Jenny Leong**.

Route 389 Bus Service

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

Ferry Services

Petition requesting new inner city ferries, 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**.

Inner-City Social Housing

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

Pet Shops

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

*Committees***STAYSAFE (JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY)****Report: Driverless Vehicles and Road Safety in NSW**

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melinda Pavey): The question is that the House take note of the report.

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) (15:27): The StaySafe Committee tabled its report on driverless vehicles and road safety in New South Wales on 22 September 2016. The Committee self-referred this inquiry in response to increasing levels of vehicle automation and reports that self-driving cars would soon be available. We were aware of trials of self-driving cars in South Australia and overseas, and wanted to ensure that New South Wales is prepared for their arrival. We looked at how our current road safety policies and regulations anticipate the introduction of more automated vehicles, and any regulatory and policy changes that will be required.

We are already benefitting from technologies that assist drivers. Our cars tell us when our seat belts are unfastened, or when fuel is low. Cruise control helps us remain within speed limits. Sensors alert us when we change lanes or are too close to another car or object. Some vehicles park themselves. Many people do not consider these advances as driverless technology, but these functions lessen or replace the human factor. Connected, these are steps on the way to driverless cars. Automated vehicles are already on our roads. Driverless trucks, operated from hundreds of kilometres away, take ore from mines to trains in the Pilbara. Fifteen separate trials are underway in California, including the ubiquitous Google car which has no steering wheel. A driverless bus is being trialled in Perth and a driverless taxi fleet is being trialled in Pittsburgh.

In 2017, 100 self-driving cars will be introduced to public roads in Gothenburg, Sweden. This is a joint initiative of the Volvo Car Group, private agencies and the Swedish Government. Last November Volvo demonstrated this technology on Adelaide's Southern Expressway. In March this year committee members and I experienced the technology firsthand when we visited Volvo in company with the Australian Road Research Board. The technology is not a thing of the future: It is here now, and we need to be prepared. I am pleased to report that New South Wales is on the right path. We found that our State agencies are satisfactorily monitoring the development and rollout of the technology. They have established the Smart Innovation Centre to provide support, facilities and expertise, and to promote research and innovation. The centre will focus on crash research and analysis, and on safety and on testing the roadworthiness of new technology.

A second major initiative is the Cooperative Intelligent Transport Initiative run by the New South Wales Centre for Road Safety. This is an Illawarra-based trial of connected infrastructure to assist heavy vehicles drive more efficiently by warning of collisions and congestion, heavy braking, traffic signal phases, and speed limits. Most importantly, New South Wales is working with the National Transport Commission and the other States and Territories to ensure that a coordinated national approach to this issue is adopted. Many witnesses agreed that a national approach will maximise the road safety benefits and minimise the risks of the technology. The committee also heard that the Australian market is a small one, and a national approach will help us to maximise Australia's influence. We agree with that position. Hence the committee recommended that the New South Wales Government continue to work with the National Transport Commission to establish a national regulatory framework for the development and deployment of automated vehicle technology.

The commission will deliver its report on regulatory reforms for automated vehicles to the ministerial council on 4 November. I look forward to the commission's recommendations and hope that our report has given timely support to this national project. The Staysafe Committee's priority is to examine road safety and identify measures to reduce deaths and injuries as well as their social and economic costs. In this inquiry we received much evidence that went beyond the road safety benefits of automated vehicle technology. Many stakeholders argued that the technology would improve mobility for disadvantaged groups, reduce road congestion, and make both private and commercial road use much more efficient. Automated vehicle technology will have many road safety benefits. Up to 90 per cent of crashes are caused by human factors such as driver error and behaviour, including fatigue, speed, driver distraction, impairment from alcohol and drugs, health issues, inexperience and risk-taking. By removing human beings from vehicle operation, it follows that crashes will be significantly reduced.

We know not everyone is comfortable with the rapid rollout of this technology. Advocates for pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists put the case forcefully that driverless cars are not infallible, and risks need to be identified and managed. The committee agrees, but not at the expense of delaying the safety benefits. It is essential that the community is educated about this change and how driverless cars may behave differently. The committee recommended that driverless cars be visually distinctive to support this approach. Managing the transition to a driverless fleet and especially managing a mixed fleet for many years would present special challenges, but it also presents special opportunities to gain road safety and other benefits as the technology is deployed.

I thank stakeholders who made submissions and witnesses who appeared before the committee. I also thank members of the Staysafe Committee for their contributions to this inquiry, in particular my Deputy Chair, Scot MacDonald, who leaves the committee. I also welcome the Hon. Scott Farlow to the committee and congratulate him on his election as Deputy Chair. Finally, I acknowledge committee managers, Vedrana Trisic and David Hale, and committee staff, Jacqueline Isles and Jennifer Gallagher, for their hard work during this inquiry. Committee members and I look forward to the Government's response to our report and recommendations. This is an exciting time to be involved in the introduction of this technology and to envisage the extraordinary changes it promises. I believe that by preparing for those changes now we will be well on the way towards making a smooth transition and to ensuring that New South Wales is part of a national approach to making Australian roads safer. I commend the report to the House.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) (15:33): I am pleased to debate the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety's inquiry and report on driverless vehicle technology. It was not so long ago that a driverless vehicle technology was the subject matter of science fiction and cartoons such as the Jetsons. Our own vehicular technology has advanced in rapid succession and will allow for safety improvements in road use, thereby benefiting the community at large. The NRMA's Chief Executive Officer [CEO], Rohan Lund, already has gone on record and publicly has said that driverless cars could become part of the solution to the State's road toll. Mr Lund points out that the greatest successes in reducing the road toll have coincided with significant enhancements in technology with advancements such as seatbelts, airbags, and electronic stability control. The NRMA's main concern is that in Australia there are more than 700 laws and regulations that driverless technology will have to navigate.

The human toll of our unsafe roads speaks for itself. As of 16 August, tragically 253 people had lost their lives on the State's roads, which is an increase of more than 40 compared to the same time last year. The NRMA's report, "Accelerating our Smart Transport Future", outlines a road map for the Government and the private sector to ensure that Australia reaps the extensive benefits of fast-approaching mobility technology, which includes the driverless car. It has been suggested that full driverless car technology has enormous potential to reduce road fatalities and injuries by up to 90 per cent. Other benefits include the better utilisation of road space as well as a reduction in traffic congestion and the number of accidents on our roads. There also are the benefits that driverless cars will have for elderly Australians who have limited mobility and eyesight as well as for those living with physical disabilities.

Mr Lund says that the potential benefit of driverless cars dwarfs any technological advancement previously seen and that its impacts will be more pronounced in regional and rural New South Wales where transport options are few and far between, particularly for people who face mobility challenges. The Staysafe Committee believes that improved road safety outcomes can be best achieved through a national regulatory framework. This would be handled appropriately by the National Transport Commission in consultation with New South Wales and other jurisdictions. However, such a framework takes a while to achieve; so, pending its implementation, the committee recommends that the New South Wales Government publish a clear statement outlining the terms and conditions for conducting trials of fully automated vehicles on New South Wales roads, or adopt a code of practice based on current regulatory and policy settings to govern the deployment of the technology in New South Wales.

Semiautonomous vehicles already are on our roads. Vehicle manufacturers already are responding to the market's demand for audiovisual technology by deploying technology within the existing licensing and safety regulations. The Government needs not only to keep up with the technological advancements of such an important industry but also to get ahead of it. The national regulatory framework recommended by the committee will ensure we can move forward in our national interest without regulatory confusion, duplication and inconsistency. In conclusion, I thank committee members, the Chair, and the secretariat without whose work the committee would not have been able to formulate its recommendations.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (15:37): Today I contribute to debate on the driverless vehicle technology report as a member of the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety, which is referred to as the Staysafe Committee. The committee believes that improved road safety outcomes can be best achieved through a national regulatory framework that will maximise the benefits and minimise the risks of automated vehicle technology. As cars have evolved, technology has assisted drivers by performing functions that usually are applied by the drivers. However, most vehicles driven on Australian roads today have some type of automated technology to assist with driving, such as cruise control and adaptive cruise control, self-stopping indicators, airbags, automatic windscreen wipers, and alerts to notify when a seatbelt is not in use to name just a few.

The committee examined the definition of automated vehicles, the different levels of automation and their potential impact on road safety. The report describes the status of enabling legislation and trialling of automated vehicles in several Australian and overseas jurisdictions. The current situation in New South Wales is that this State has been slotted at level three, which means that the car is able to self-drive with a driver available to take over, when required. The inquiry reported on driverless vehicle technology in New South Wales with particular reference to the capacity of driverless vehicle technology to deliver improved road safety outcomes that include a lower road toll, and fewer accidents and injuries to drivers, pedestrians and other road users. The committee needed to know the extent to which current road safety policies and regulations in New South Wales anticipate the introduction of driverless vehicle technology, including driverless heavy vehicles and any regulatory and policy changes that will be required. The committee also needed to know the preparedness of New South Wales road safety regulators and how they meet the challenges extended by driverless vehicle technology.

We sought the experience of other jurisdictions in Australia and overseas on how they adopted and are adapting to driverless vehicle technology. This included the first ever lower House committee Skype session with evidence being provided live from Germany. The committee has extensively looked into aspects of the concept and implementation of driverless vehicles in New South Wales. The committee recommends that a national regulatory framework for the development and deployment of automated vehicles be developed by the National Transport Commission, in consultation with New South Wales and other States, and implemented by an agreed date with a number of components.

The first component is a robust national trialling and testing regime, including collaboration between regulators and manufacturers, and consultation with users. The second component is the establishment of agreed benchmarks for setting safety and performance standards for both automated vehicles and users, and other road users, including vulnerable road users. The third component is the incorporation of the benefits of international standardisation and/or an international framework. The fourth component is a determination of the liabilities attaching to the manufacture, sale and use of the technology, to be legislated if necessary. The fifth component is an examination of the security of the data systems which underpin the technology, including the development of protocols to facilitate data sharing and address privacy issues.

The sixth component is a comprehensive public education campaign about the deployment of the technology, targeting amongst others drivers of both automated and non-automated vehicles, cyclists, motorcyclists, and pedestrians. The seventh component is the public identification of automated vehicles to make them visually distinctive to other road users, particularly during the trial and testing phase. The eighth component is a program to determine the impacts of automated vehicle technology on the provision and maintenance of road infrastructure, including consideration of both current arrangements and any new arrangements required to support vehicle connectivity. The final component is transition protocols for managing safe road use by a mixed fleet. The committee recommends that pending the introduction of a national framework, the New South Wales Government should publish a clear statement outlining the terms and conditions for conducting trials of automated vehicles on New South Wales roads.

I thank the committee members for their diligence and their hard work—the chair, the member for Albury Greg Aplin; the deputy chair, Mr Scot MacDonald; the Hon. Scott Farlow; the member for Northern Tablelands, Adam Marshall; the member for Miranda, Eleni Petinos; the member for Cabramatta, Nick Lalich; and Dr Mehreen Faruqi and the Hon. Daniel Mookhey. I also have to acknowledge the outstanding work of the committee staff Vedrana Trisic, David Hale, Elaine Schofield, Jason Ardit, Jacqueline Isles, and Jennifer Gallagher. With an extensive investigation and a dedicated committee, I commend the report to the House.

Report noted.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE (PAC)

Report: Management of NSW Public Housing Maintenance Contracts

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melinda Pavey): The question is that the House take note of the report.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) (15:42): I speak in debate on the Public Accounts Committee report of its Inquiry into the Management of NSW Public Housing Maintenance Contracts, which was tabled on 11 October 2016. This inquiry was conducted as part of the broader remit of the Public Accounts Committee to follow up reports of the Auditor-General and to maintain a watching brief on public expenditure and the management of State financial outlays. The inquiry was established to assess the quality of public housing maintenance and the extent to which the contractual arrangements with contractors are meeting the needs of tenants, as well as satisfying service obligations entered into with the Department of Family and Community Services.

The committee's inquiry follows earlier reviews of public housing conducted by the NSW Auditor-General in 2013 and the Public Accounts Committee in 2014. The committee's earlier inquiry concluded that performance measurement and reporting on public housing was inadequate and unreliable. As a result of these earlier reports, the New South Wales Government developed a new strategy to improve the delivery of public housing, known as Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW. This policy is supplemented by the implementation of a new asset services maintenance contract, with tenders let earlier this year.

The committee's current inquiry is conducted against the background of major social and demographic change, an ageing housing stock, reduced income from rentals, increasing costs of maintenance, and a trend towards single occupancy for an ageing population. These forces have placed additional pressure on existing public housing properties. The committee is aware of expressed concerns about the state of the public housing stock and has examined whether properties are being effectively maintained and whether tenants are able to receive adequate resolution of needed repairs in an efficient and effective way. As part of its review, the committee was also keen to establish whether new maintenance contracts, recently introduced, are overcoming difficulties identified under previous contractual arrangements.

Evidence was taken from community housing representatives, advocates for tenants and vulnerable people, employee advocates, local government, State government agencies, individual tenants and contractors. Following the public hearing, the committee also visited a range of public housing estates managed by the Department of Family and Community Services to gain first-hand experience of the range and current condition of public housing assets. The committee was interested to see how the new arrangements were working and whether earlier problems identified by contractors and tenants had been overcome. Although it is too early to tell whether that is the case, there have always been communication difficulties and a failure to deliver adequate repairs in a timely fashion, thereby compromising tenant health and safety. The committee also wanted to learn whether the new contracts were delivering better outcomes overall.

As I said, even though the new contracts have not been operating long enough to make a comprehensive evaluation, common themes emerging from the inquiry were that more attention needs to be paid to measuring performance against agreed targets improving client satisfaction measures and enhancing communication between the Government, contractors and public housing tenants. The report makes 10 recommendations, directing the Department of Family and Community Services to implement changes to reporting arrangements and systems administration to increase transparency and accountability. The committee has asked the department to report back in 12 months, detailing progress on the new maintenance contracts and the longer-term plans for the public housing sector. In my electorate of Coogee there are many public housing properties and after the redistribution of electoral boundaries the number increased substantially by including the area of South Coogee, where I grew up. The attitude towards public housing has always been appreciation. My grandparents lived in public housing—

Mr David Elliott: As did mine.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH: —as, I note, did the grandparents of the Minister for Corrections, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Veterans Affairs. Tenants deserve to have their properties looked after, as should be the case for tenants in the private sector. In conclusion, I would like to thank the committee members for their contributions and the fabulous committee secretariat for their assistance in conducting the inquiry. I commend the report to the House.

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (15:48): It is a pleasure to speak in debate on the Public Accounts Committee report of its Inquiry into the Management of NSW Public Housing Maintenance Contracts, following

the contribution of the chair of the committee. As the deputy chair of the committee I note that my electorate also has a not insignificant amount of social housing. I recently attended the opening of a number of social housing units in Lucas Road, Seven Hills, with the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for Multiculturalism, the Hon. John Ajaka. We inspected some homes that cater particularly for the needs of people who are ageing and those with disability. It was interesting to meet the great residents of these units and to see this form of housing. The units featured access ramps and wide-access toilet and bathroom facilities along with specially designed kitchens. It was a pleasure to inspect these fine examples of social housing with the Minister.

As outlined by the Chair, the report looked into contracts in the provision of maintenance services to the stock of social housing across the State. I imagine that the provision of maintenance and repairs is important to tenants. Imagine being in a place of tenancy, putting in a call for an urgent or routine repair, having that report lost in the system and having to call multiple times. There is nothing worse than multiple attendances and not having things fixed the first time. Government contracts, not just for communications systems but also for the greater provision of services, will improve social housing. As the chair rightly said, at this stage the Government is assessing overall procedural improvements. One of the strong recommendations in this report relates to a thorough examination in 12 months time to assess the effectiveness of those improvements. I look forward to being part of the committee when the Government responds to this report. In summary, it was a pleasure to be a part of a committee that produced this report. I look forward to improvements in social housing. The constituents of Seven Hills—the recipients of social housing—also look forward to these improvements.

Report noted.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 26/56

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melinda Pavey): The question is that the House take note of the report.

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSON (Upper Hunter) (15:51): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in debate on the Legislation Review Committee's twenty-sixth digest for the Fifty-sixth Parliament. I will briefly discuss the committee's comments in respect of three of the bills introduced into Parliament in the last sitting week. The committee also commented on two regulations. On the Building Professionals Amendment (Information) Bill 2016, the committee commented that the bill enables the obtaining and sharing of information related to the certification and regulation of building work. Such information may concern information about people's private residences and impact on their right to privacy. The committee noted that the objective of the bill is to obtain accurate information about the state of buildings in New South Wales. The committee also noted that the bill contains safeguards concerning the use of any information obtained and, as such, the committee made no further comment.

The second bill I wish to speak to is the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Amendment Bill 2016. This bill is part of the Government's regular legislative review program, and the committee made a number of comments in relation to the proposed amendments. First, the committee noted that the bill introduces an onus of proof on the defendant to prove that he or she had a lawful authority or reasonable excuse regarding offences relating to places of detention. The committee concluded that, given the prosecution will still need to establish the contravention, it was not unreasonable to require a defendant to prove that he or she had a lawful authority or reasonable excuse. On this issue the committee made no further comment. Secondly, the committee noted the bill provides that the court may make a forfeiture order in relation to an offensive weapon or instrument which is being possessed by a person in a place of detention. The committee noted the general principle that property should not be subject to forfeiture—however, considered in these circumstances, where an offensive weapon is found in a place of detention, the forfeiture is appropriate.

Thirdly, the bill makes it an offence to loiter about or near any place of detention without lawful authority. The committee noted the general principle of freedom of movement in public places and highlighted that the bill does not clearly define the area that will be subject to the offence. However, given the aims of the bill are to safeguard places of detention, the committee made no further comment on this issue. Fourthly, the bill proposed a number of amendments concerning the powers of correctional officers to stop, detain and search persons and vehicles in places of detention. The committee noted the provisions and highlighted concerns it had with these powers being exercised on a routine basis and in inappropriate circumstances. However, the committee referred to the objective of the bill, which is to safeguard places of detention, and made no further comment. The committee also raised two other issues in relation to this bill.

In respect of amendments to section 257, the committee was concerned about the appropriateness of enabling exceptions to a prohibition on disclosing information to be achieved by way of policy. The committee

was also concerned about proposed new section 257A, which may insufficiently subject the exercise of legislative power to parliamentary scrutiny. The final bill I will speak to today is the Industrial Relations Amendment (Industrial Court) Bill 2016. This bill transfers most of the functions of the Industrial Court to the Supreme Court, District Court and Local Court. The committee noted that the transfer between these courts may result in difficulties in accessing justice for some individuals due to the differences in formalities and costs between the courts. That concludes my remarks on this digest. I thank the committee staff in particular and the members for their input. I commend the digest to the House.

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (15:55): On behalf of the Labor Opposition, I thank the House for the opportunity to speak in debate on the Legislation Review Committee's twenty-sixth digest of the Fifty-sixth Parliament and the deliberations of the committee contained therein. As the chair outlined, the committee considered five bills against the five criteria under section 8A of the Legislation Review Act 1987. We commented on four of those bills, and we also looked at two regulations and commented on both of those against the criteria under section 9. I will not add any more to the chair's report except to endorse it. I want to make comments on some discussion that took place during the take-note debate last week, when some comments were made by the member for Myall Lakes about my view in the committee—

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Point of order: The point of order is to draw the member back to the leave of this debate and the take-note debate on this digest, not the digest of last week. The member cannot use today to respond to something from a previous week.

Mr David Mehan: What is the point of order?

Mr Stephen Bromhead: It is the leave of this debate.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melinda Pavey): I note the member's point of order and implore the member for The Entrance to restrict his comments to the current digest.

Mr DAVID MEHAN: In relation to the way the committee conducts its work, I have been referred during committee deliberations to whether the committee is empowered to review decisions of the Government in bringing forward bills. It was put to me in the committee that it should not be re-examining the reason a bill is being brought before the House, and it was put to me that it was not empowered to seek further information from the Government or a private member who put forward a bill. I point out to the committee that the Legislation Review Act envisages the committee from time to time asking for further information. Section 11 (1) says:

The Committee shall have power to send for persons, papers and records.

In relation to the committee's comments in the past, particularly on controversial legislation like the privatisation legislation that has come before the committee a couple of times, especially where a Minister bases that legislation on studies that were not tabled before this House or the committee, I think it is well within the rights of the committee under the powers we have in section 11 to ask for the tabling of those documents either at the committee level or in this House to ensure that the House is fully informed of the reason behind these bills. That is the purpose of this House and that is the purpose of the committee. That is how a bipartisan committee works; it does not just fall in line with the decisions and the will of the Government. I wanted to put that out there. Otherwise, I endorse the digest and I thank the House for the opportunity to make a contribution.

Report noted.

Matter of Public Importance

HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (15:59): I appreciate the opportunity to raise this matter of public importance about the Higher School Certificate [HSC]. The Minister for Education was asked about the exams during question time, and I will have more to say about that later. Today marks the beginning of the 2016 HSC exams, in which 77,163 students will participate. I hope that those who have already done the English exam have done well. The Indonesian exam is happening now, and I hope those who are doing it also do well. Earlier today, I spoke about the HSC with a colleague, who said that when he was young it was called the Intermediate Certificate and then the Leaving Certificate. We talked about how the process had developed since then. Some members will remember when the HSC was marked out of 500. We also had the Tertiary Entrance Rank [TER], the Universities Admission Index [UAI], and now we have the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank [ATAR]. The maximum mark that can be achieved in the HSC is just under 100. The students who achieve such a mark are truly impressive. I sometimes struggle to count to 99.99, but they appear to do it easily.

It is interesting to note that the exams are held in many different places. Of course, they are held in school halls, but schools that do not have halls or whose halls are too small must make other arrangements. The exams are held in town halls, church halls, and community centres. However, they are also held in some unusual

locations. Students are sitting the exams in jails, in TAFE colleges, overseas, and on Royal Australian Navy vessels. That demonstrates the wide range of people who take the exams and the regard with which they are held. A recent article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* by Eryk Bagshaw told the story of Matthew Wilson, a 27-year-old, who while training for the 2016 FINA World Short Course Championships will manage to squeeze in five HSC exams. That is an impressive feat, given that he is an elite athlete. It is also commendable that he recognises the importance of getting a good education.

Students see the HSC as their pathway into university. Of course, the universities base their student intake on the ATAR. However, the HSC is not the only way into tertiary education. I know that many students follow what is happening in this place online, and I stress to them that the HSC is not the be all and end all; there are many pathways into university. It is easy to say that when the exams are behind us, but those students should realise that there are many other important things in life. Of course, they should work hard and give it their best shot; they cannot simply turn up to the exam and hope for the best.

I acknowledge those students who face challenges in their efforts to gain an education. I refer to those who have disabilities, those who care for their parents, those who come from single-parent homes, and those who are themselves parents. They are having a go no matter what, and they are the most inspiring students. They face difficult circumstances, but they are determined to do the best they can in life. We focus on the students who achieve high marks. As impressive as that is, we must acknowledge those who do the HSC in the most difficult circumstances. I have been told that a 94-year-old person is sitting the exam, and I wish that person all the very best. The HSC has changed a great deal over the years. Of course, students still sit exams in the traditional subjects such as English, mathematics and science. However, the range of subjects has expanded to include electro-technology, hospitality, software design and development, and so on. That is a reminder of the diversity of the curriculum, and we should celebrate that.

My advice to this year's HSC students is that whatever they want do—whether their next step is tertiary education, vocational education, employment, or whether they are undecided—it is okay. That is what life is about; it is about ensuring that we grab opportunities when they are offered. They should give it their best shot, but they must always remember that there are many different pathways to the future. Parents should also do their best to support their children during this difficult time. I thank the teachers, families and schools who have helped the students to reach this point in their life.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (16:04): It is my pleasure to join the shadow Minister for Education in marking this matter of public importance today.

Mr David Elliott: He has been working on that all day.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: Yes. In fact, 1,148 students in my electorate are participating in the Higher School Certificate [HSC] exams. One of them is my son Daniel. I know that I share that experience with a number of other members, including the member for Swansea, the member for Cootamundra, the member for Ku-ring-gai, and the member for Drummoyne. We heard earlier today that the niece of the member for Camden is also sitting the exam, as is the son of the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox. Of course, doing the HSC is often a team event. Schools, teachers, families, and friends are members of the team supporting and encouraging students in this important endeavour. Across New South Wales, just under 70,000 students in year 12 will complete their HSC this year. Another 7,000-odd are doing the exams as accelerated students. My son, who is doing the HSC this year, did an accelerated course last year.

Mr David Elliott: He must take after your wife.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: Indeed, he has his mother's brains, not mine. There is a degree of flexibility in the HSC, which is a good thing. That did not exist when I did it. People well past normal school age are sitting the exams this year. They are either doing them for the first time or are taking the opportunity to learn something new. The HSC exams will involve 118 subjects and will occupy nearly 300 hours, and they will be conducted at 750 venues across the State. The venues are staffed by some 7,500 supervisors and presiding officers. The community and the Government thank everyone who is facilitating that process. As the shadow Minister said, a number of students are sitting the exams at non-traditional sites across New South Wales. They are being held in unusual locations such as high schools in Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea.

I will provide some advice to students who are doing the exams and who might take time out to listen to what is happening in this place, which is probably not many. Students who are worried about the exams should keep in mind that healthy eating, getting enough sleep, and continuing to engage in regular exercise are all important in reducing stress. It is also important to speak to someone if they are feeling overwhelmed. That message is particularly salient during Mental Health Week. It is beholden on all of us to support people dealing with stressful events. Of course, those affected should seek help and talk through their issues. It is also important

that over the next few weeks they keep everything in perspective. Exams are only one part of school life, albeit the final part of the assessment process. Of course, that process has been going on for these young adults for up to two years.

As the shadow Minister acknowledged, it is likewise also important that the HSC is just one step in the direction of our futures. How many of us in this place would have anticipated when we were sitting our HSC exams that we would be sitting here today in the Legislative Assembly of the New South Wales Parliament? We probably all got different results and came from different paths, but life directs us in different ways. As Bill Watterson, an American cartoonist, said:

The truth is, most of us discover where we are headed when we arrive.

Good luck to all the HSC students in New South Wales and commendations to all those who are facilitating a smooth and productive process.

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (16:10): I add my voice to the good wishes from this Parliament to young people across the State sitting their Higher School Certificate [HSC] exams today. I thank my good colleague the member for Lakemba and the shadow Minister for Education for seeking that this matter be considered. The subject matter and the learning environments, as we have heard, have radically changed in recent years but the feelings and experiences for many students today will be much the same as those for many of us in this place when we first sat our exams. As a former English teacher and the mother of two teenage boys I know that this can be a stressful time—possibly the most stressful time—for young people. I thank parents and teachers of our HSC students for their input, support and patience.

I say this to our young people of today: Take a deep breath, relax and make sure that you look after yourselves during this period. The HSC exams are the culmination of years of hard work through years 11 and 12 particularly but that hard work is already paying off and these exams are only half of the picture. Your efforts over the past two years are just as important. As has been said in this place, the HSC is not the be-all and end-all of academic achievement. My son reminded me last year of something I said to him: It does not determine the rest of your life. Mind you, he reminded me the night before his first exam that that was what I had said to him.

By no means is the HSC a reliable indicator of future results so you need not worry, young people, that these exams are the only pathway to your chosen career or future path. Many of you will enrol in university or pursue a trade qualification through TAFE and many others will enter the workforce directly. What is important is that you will be leaving school with the knowledge, skills and self-awareness to make your way as an adult in our society. Today I particularly want to wish all the very best to HSC students at schools in my electorate, many of whom I taught as well—Blaxland High School, Katoomba High School, Springwood High School, Winmalee High School, St Columba's High School, Corowa High School, Mountains Christian College and Wycliffe Christian School, Blue Mountains Steiner School and Kindlehill. Congratulations on all your efforts so far. You are good young people. Take another deep breath and enjoy the final weeks of school as you head out into the world on your next adventure. The exams are just part of that.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) (16:12): I will make a brief contribution and, like the members before me, wish the 77,000-plus students doing the HSC well. To echo the words of those that have spoken before to all those students, there is life after the HSC. Do your best. Regardless of the outcome I am sure your families, friends, communities and schools will be very proud of you. I wish you all well. I was in the last year in which the HSC mark was out of 500 and I did not get close to 400—it was a little over 300. I want to attest that anything is possible post the HSC.

There was a very nice, uniform discussion in this place on TAFE today. Members from all sides believe it is a wonderful institution. To those doing the HSC this year, whether you take a gap year, work for your family, work or go to TAFE or university—whatever it is—just do your best. To all those in the House with family doing the HSC today I wish your sons and daughters and you as a family all the best because it is a stressful time, as the member for Blue Mountains has said. This morning I had the opportunity to single out my niece from Broughton Anglican College, Brianna Dooner. I am extremely proud of you and your achievements thus far. When we spoke on the way home on Tuesday night you were telling me how you already have pre-acceptance into the University of Wollongong. That is something we are very proud of. To everybody doing the HSC, good luck. We know that there will be a lot of proud families, communities and schools when the results come in.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (16:15): By leave: I speak on this wonderful matter of public importance introduced by the member for Lakemba, the shadow Minister for Education. As representatives of this great State it is appropriate that we acknowledge those students who are sitting their HSC this year, as we do every year. Like the member for Davidson I too have a child who is sitting the Higher School Certificate [HSC] this year—Alex Coombs. Alex is at St Francis Xavier's College at Hamilton. I give a big shout out to her and all the

students at that school sitting the HSC today. There are in excess of 1,000 of them. In fact it is one of the largest senior schools in this State. I say to all of them: Have a great HSC.

It is important for young people to know, and today in this place it has been said by everybody very eloquently, that the HSC does not define you. It is a pathway in life but the thing that I know my daughter has taken from her schooling is the wonderful friendships that she has formed and I hope they will be lifelong friendships as mine are. I wish all of the students in New South Wales who are sitting the HSC the best of luck. May your future be bright. As the member for Davidson said, who would have thought all of those years ago we would end up here? That is how the cards played out.

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (16:17): In reply: I thank everybody who has made a contribution. The member for Davidson spoke of his son and also about some of the great things that occur in a school such as the team effort it takes—the wraparound service of teachers, parents and the community. I acknowledge and thank him for the wonderful advice that he offered to students about providing balance, making sure that they seek support if they need it and, even if they are doing it a bit tough, continuing to do their very best. My good colleague the member for Blue Mountains spoke of her experiences as a former teacher and as a mum of a student who did the Higher School Certificate [HSC] last year—her personal experiences with her own son—and expressed that same sentiment.

The member for Camden gave a shout out to his niece but also remembered the 77,000-plus students who are also having a go at the moment. Again he gave really great advice about looking after themselves. The member for Swansea spoke about her daughter. She also spoke about the fact that there is a bright future for students. She said you have to give the HSC your best shot but there are also so many other pathways that define our lives in ways other than just through an examination. Again I thank everybody who made a contribution. The very clear sentiment that was expressed by everybody was that the HSC, as important as it is, is not the most important thing in life. It is not the be-all and end-all but that does not mean one just turns up for the occasion. I want to comment on something that was said in question time today in relation to the HSC. The Minister was asked a question about the HSC and rather than answering the question he launched into a tirade and started to have a go at people and their grammar.

Minister, you need not worry, because in the HSC they are not going to ask students questions such as, "What is a pronoun?" We know the Minister struggled with that when he did the 2UE interview or his benefit, a pronoun is "he" or "she". Once again, I wish every student the best. Wherever they may be, or however old they may be, I congratulate them on having a go. I especially congratulate those who are doing it tough but are doing their best. I thank the teachers who have given up their weekends to provide support and additional assistance and tutoring to get them there, and for providing the mental health support that kids need. We probably have families in the gallery who have kids who are taking their Higher School Certificate. Give them as much support as possible. Make sure they are told that they are loved and that whatever they do, their families are proud of them. Encourage them and support them. Make sure that they not only look after themselves but that they are looked after.

Community Recognition Statements

GOULBURN ELECTORATE MAYORS

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) (16:20): I congratulate the newly elected mayors of four councils in my electorate following the recent local government elections. Congratulations to Rowena Abbey, re-elected mayor of the Yass Valley Council; Bob Kirk, elected mayor of Goulburn Mulwaree Council; Brian McCormack, elected to lead the Upper Lachlan Shire Council; and Ken Halstead, elected mayor of Wingecarribee Shire Council. I look forward to working with them and their newly elected councils over the course of the next term in representing our region to ensure we get our fair share of road funding, to promote tourism and economic opportunities, and to strengthen life in our wonderful regional communities. I know how well they are committed to the people they are elected to serve. Congratulations and may they do their communities proud.

MACARTHUR LAW SOCIETY

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) (16:20): I recognise the Macarthur Law Society. I was able to attend its September meeting and address its members. I attended the event with my colleague the member for Campbelltown, Greg Warren. I thank the society office bearers, including president Brett McGrath and vice-president Bruce Hanrahan, who was also one of the few people in the room who was in the law when I commenced practice in south-west Sydney. I acknowledge secretary Lance Watson and treasurer Sarah Reid. I also acknowledge the presence on that night of an old friend of mine, Dom Mosca, who worked with me as a

young solicitor last century. We had a useful and informative discussion concerning court resources in the region, especially the effective closure of Camden Court House and the need for Camden residents to travel to Moss Vale for court appearances. We also had an interesting discussion about the compulsory third party changes proposed by the Government.

NORTH WEST DISABILITY SERVICES INC

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Corrections, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Veterans Affairs) (16:21): North West Disability Services Inc. is a remarkable community organisation in my electorate of Baulkham Hills. Recently I had the pleasure of attending their thirty-second annual general meeting. They are committed to providing the best services to the disability care sector and navigating the immense change brought by the National Disability Insurance Scheme. They host a range of standout events for the people in their care, some of which include an outback adventures tour, a transition to work program, and table of eight dinner parties, which are popular. I commend their impressive work to the House, with particular mention of Chief Executive Officer Deborah Gersbach. North West Disability Services Inc. has a vision of turning dreams into reality. I warmly thank everyone who works towards this vision and wish the organisation a prosperous year ahead.

DURGA PUJA

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (16:22): Last Saturday I attended the celebration of Durga Puja by the Australian Bengali Hindu Association at Granville Town Hall. Sharadiya Durgotsav, or Durga Puja, is the celebration of the goddess Durga over a number of days. It commemorates the victory of the goddess Durga over the buffalo demon Mahishasura and symbolises the victory of good over evil. It is one of the largest festivals for Bengali Hindus and has been celebrated in Sydney for many years. The celebrations are always colourful and joyous, with exceptional musical and dance performances. This year was no different. Congratulations to President Samir Sarkar, Secretary Shantanu Kar, and all the executive for another successful Durga Puja.

TYLER WRIGHT, WOMEN'S WORLD SURFING CHAMPION

Ms SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast) (16:23): Today I offer my heartfelt congratulations to Culburra local Tyler Wright. Last night, whilst competing at Landes in the Roxy Pro France 2016, Tyler was crowned the Women's World Surf League Tour Champion—that is world champion. The Championship Tour is a series of events held across the globe. The declaration of world champion is based on a system of accumulated points. Tyler made it to the semifinals of the Roxy Pro, beating fellow compatriot Laura Enver in the quarterfinals. In a pressure-filled semifinal, she competed against and defeated Tatiana Weston-Webb.

Tyler's last remaining rival for the title of world champion, world number two Courtney Conlogue, needed to win the Roxy Pro to remain in the running. She was defeated by Carissa Moore in the semifinals by the smallest of margins, leaving Tyler to compete against Carissa in the finals. While she did not go on to win the Roxy Pro, she had secured the position of world number one and was announced as the South Coast's very own surfing world champion. Despite a number of family tragedies this year, Tyler persevered, determined to win the title. Her dedication has paid off. Congratulations to the girl whose father taught her to surf at Culburra Beach. Well done, Tyler Wright.

THE ARTS UNIT OF NSW

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (16:24): I congratulate and highly commend The Arts Unit of NSW. I particularly acknowledge the New South Wales Public Schools Symphonic Wind Ensemble, known as SWE. This is one of the premier student ensembles in Australia. They proudly celebrate high achievement in national and international competitions, a range of festivals and esteemed concerts. SWE has toured and performed in some of the world's greatest concert halls across Europe and the United States of America, and most recently in 2014 at the prestigious Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic in Chicago. Kudos and thanks go to Stephen Williams, musical director and chief conductor extraordinaire. I also thank the entire team of The Arts Unit NSW, including Jason Isaac, Elizabeth Scott, Lindsay Pringle, Helen Mathieson, the many tutors and staff. Congratulations to the talented musicians of SWE, especially for their incredible performance at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music on 25 September at the Australian National Band and Orchestra conference 2016. They were exceptional.

GREAT LAKES SURF LIFESAVERS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (16:25): I inform the House that two Great Lakes surf lifesavers have won a swag of awards at the Lifesaving World Championships held in the Netherlands in September. The gruelling winter training schedules proved to be worthwhile for Laura Thurtell from Forster Surf Lifesaving Club and Noelene Young from Black Head Surf Lifesaving Club. Fresh from her win as the 2016

Masters Athlete of the Year for Surf Life Saving NSW, Laura Thurtell achieved gold in both the surf and ski race, silver in the ocean woman, and bronze in the board race. She was also awarded three silvers in the pool events. Noelene Young achieved gold in the board race and iron woman, silver in the ski race, and bronze in the one kilometre run and beach flags. Noelene entered the over 60s age group, but due to low numbers the 55 to 59 and 60 to 64 age groups competed together. To achieve her two golds, she beat women in the younger age group.

BELMORE OUTREACH PROGRAM

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (16:26): Last Wednesday I was pleased to attend the opening of a new outreach service at Belmore Sports Ground, opened by Youth Off The Streets in partnership with the Canterbury Bulldogs and Barnardos. The service will run each Wednesday at the Belmore Sports Ground and will offer a range of activities, including hot meals, mentoring and support services, art, cultural, and music activities. I congratulate and recognise the outstanding commitment of Father Chris Riley who has headed Youth Off The Streets since 1991. Father Riley is a great example of someone who works selflessly to help disadvantaged youth, regardless of their background or circumstances. One of the secrets of his success has always been the very simple but practical measure of employing locals to work with those most vulnerable in their local community. I also congratulate Barnardos for its long-term commitment to working with the disadvantaged. I especially acknowledge the Canterbury Bulldogs. While I am a St George Illawarra supporter, I am a fan of the Canterbury Bulldogs for the work they do in their local community. They support important and practical initiatives.

MADISON FITZPATRICK, NATIONAL JUNIOR HOCKEY PLAYER

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (16:27): I acknowledge that recently the women's Hockey Junior World Cup squad was announced. The Hockey Junior World Cup will take place in Chile in November. The team of 18 has been selected by their head coach, Tim White, and the national selection panel. The team came from across Australia. I acknowledge the efforts of Madison Fitzpatrick from Cabarita, in the great electorate of Tweed. Madison has been selected as part of the women's hockey National Junior Squad 2016. Performances of the athletes have been assessed in events throughout the year and most recently at the Australian Hockey League, which took place in Perth over the weekend. The squad will depart for Santiago on Sunday 20 November. I wish Madison and the whole team the best of luck.

AUSTRALIA-INDIA BUSINESS COUNCIL NSW THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (16:28): I bring to the attention of the House the work of the Australia India Business Council [AIBC] NSW and congratulate them on their thirtieth anniversary. The Australian Council was established in 1986 by then prime ministers Bob Hawke and Rajiv Gandhi as a way of facilitating commerce between two vibrant democracies. In our State, the objective of the AIBC is to foster and enable bilateral trade, commerce and investment between New South Wales and India. I thank the management committee of AIBC NSW, president Raja Venkateswar, vice-president Sameer Arora, treasurer Rob de Lorenzo, and members John Cox, Rana Pala, Stuart Davis, Carolyn Dorrian, Raj Nanda and Paul McKenzie for their commitment to building on the goodwill and opportunity that characterises the relationship between India and New South Wales. I sincerely congratulate and thank the national chair of the Australia India Business Council, Sheba Nandkeolyar, on her strong leadership.

PAUL MILLER

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (16:29): Paul Miller is an accomplished artist who has been nominated as one of 40 finalists in the 2016 New South Wales Parliament Plein Air Painting Prize. His chosen artwork is an en plein air landscape titled "Road Work, Frenchs Forest", that depicts an area where he resides within the electorate I represent. Paul was an Archibald Prize finalist in 2014 and his work has received international acclaim, featuring in galleries in Australia, Romania, Egypt, England, Japan and Canada. Congratulations to Paul on the selection of his dual-panel painting. I encourage everyone to view his work and the works of other artists displayed in the main exhibition in the Fountain Court of this Parliament. The display runs until 28 October, and has become a fine tradition as part of this Parliament's calendar. I say to those in the public gallery: go and see the exhibition.

VIETNAMESE AUSTRALIAN WELFARE ASSOCIATION

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (16:30): I was honoured recently to attend the Vietnamese Australian Welfare Association's recent annual general meeting held on 5 October in Bankstown. I am proud to report to the House that the Vietnamese Australian Welfare Association [VAWA] is an organisation that has done an immense amount of work in the Bankstown and wider south-west Sydney community in supporting Australians of Vietnamese heritage. The VAWA services include early intervention and prevention services, settlement services and a range of collaborative services with local non-government organisations, councils and State and Federal departments. Recently it has focused on crime and domestic violence prevention. I take this opportunity

to congratulate the president, Mr Ambrose QH Dinh, who has been the president for the past 10 years, and the entire VAWA management committee on their excellent work within the organisation, including Mr Dang Khoa Nguyen, the vice president; Mr Minh Tran; Ms Doan Trang Doan, the secretary and volunteers coordinator; and Mr Thanh Hoang Diep, the treasurer.

Business interrupted.

Petitions

NATIONAL ART SCHOOL

Discussion

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (16:31): The National Art School provides a unique form of arts education that has produced generations of successful artists and is essential to thriving arts scenes in Sydney and the State, and to Australia's artistic reputation. There is strong community support for the school, with more than 13,000 people having signed this petition—and we could have another 10,000 soon. Petitioners have come from across New South Wales, including from Coogee, Rose Bay, Castle Hill, Penrith, Byron Bay, Manly and Hornsby. I acknowledge supporters here in the gallery, and thank them for joining us. Indeed, I thank the hundreds of people who attended the August rally, which closed roads from Oxford Street to Macquarie Street.

The proposal to subsume this important cultural institute into the university system and relocate it from the Old Darlinghurst Gaol is alarming. The National Art School [NAS] provides a different arts education than university based schools and must remain separate. Its atelier form of teaching is based on dedicated studio space, a large number of contact hours with teachers, and small class sizes. The intensive studio education trains artists to develop discipline, technique and individual style. By contrast, universities have an academic approach.

Many students from across the country and the world purposely select the NAS because of its unique teaching style. The National Art School accepts students based on interview and portfolio as opposed to universities, which use the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank. As such, the school can train students with significant artistic talent who may not meet university entry criteria. World renowned artist and graduate Reg Mombassa says that he would not have met university entrance requisites when he applied to NAS.

Proposals to amalgamate the National Art School with the University of New South Wales Art and Design school are part of a wider merger proposal that would also include the Sydney College of the Arts to create a single art school for Sydney. The university schools were to be merged earlier this year but the Sydney College of the Arts withdrew pending inclusion of the NAS. Students are still being moved from the Callan Park campus, and this is also the subject of protest. Talks about a NAS merger continue.

There are risks in homogenising arts education. Different education approaches, styles and practices produce diverse artistic and creative talents and help enrich the cultural fabric of our city. Cities with strong artistic communities are better places to live and work for everyone, and have an edge over other international cities in attracting labour forces. Different artistic and creative talents will be needed in the future economy, which will increasingly rely on innovation and entrepreneurship. The arts industry has lasted for a long time—outlasting many other industries.

Loss of independence could mean the loss of the atelier teaching model, reduced teaching hours and a more theoretical approach. Changes could happen immediately or over time as the culture of the school changes under new management. Creating a centre of excellence or super art school would only warrant merit if it coincided with a large injection of additional funds, but that is not what is being proposed; the amalgamation seems to be more about cost-cutting. Alarmingly, the Government recently transferred ownership of the National Art School's home, the Old Darlinghurst Gaol, from the NSW Department of Education to Property NSW. The site will now be managed as an asset and there are rumours that it could be sold for residential development.

The NAS provides a purpose that compliments the heritage values of the old jail, and the jail provides ideal facilities for the school's teaching model, including small, light-filled studios and gallery spaces, with architecture and gardens that motivate and rouse creativity. Occupation of the site is fundamental to the school's success. The NAS has been located within the Old Darlinghurst Gaol since 1921, and as its sole occupant since becoming independent in 1996. As a school, the public is able to access the site including the grounds and galleries. It is used for many public events.

The Darlinghurst and inner city communities strongly support keeping the NAS where it is and are broadly concerned about the sale of inner city assets, including the Powerhouse and Millers Point public housing. If the State Government will not guarantee future funding for the school it should ask its Federal colleagues to help fund it—modelled on the National Institute of Dramatic Art or the Australian Film, Television and Radio School—in recognition of its unique place in Australian arts education.

Art and creativity are essential to the wellbeing, liveability and visibility of a city and they help create its history. We need to nurture and help establish local artists who can tell the stories that matter to us. Without an independent National Art School, Sydney's cultural wellbeing would suffer. In closing, I call on the State Government to maintain the National Art School's independence, funding and occupation of the Old Darlinghurst Gaol, and work to achieve a national funding model with their Federal Government colleagues.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (16:36): I begin by acknowledging all those in the public gallery who have signed the petition, and the member for Sydney for bringing this petition to the House. I acknowledge the work of members on both sides who will be speaking on this matter today. There has been no decision to merge the National Art School with other institutions. The National Art School and the University of New South Wales have been engaged in conversations for some time to ensure the continuation of a high level of fine arts tertiary education in New South Wales. Students enrolled at the National Art School will continue their studies as before. The National Art School has been at the centre of Sydney's art scene for almost a century, and has nurtured the talents of generations of artists who have studied and worked in studios within the walls of the Old Darlinghurst Gaol.

The site and educational philosophy have made the school a unique institution. It not only inspires major artists but also encourages them to share their experience and knowledge with students and academics. The school has produced many acclaimed Australian artists, some of whom are key figures in the history of Australian art. They include Ken Done, John Olsen, Margaret Olley and Jeffrey Smart. Contemporary School alumni who enjoy outstanding success include Tim Storrier, winner of the Archibald Prize in 2012. Alumni from the National Art School are represented in prestigious collections around the world, from the United Kingdom to New York. Alumni are also represented in collections across Australian State galleries and the national galleries. I am sure that many more acclaimed artists will emerge from the school, inspired by the school's rich tradition of artistic practice within this historic complex.

In the early 1820s, with the old prison in The Rocks having become overcrowded, it was decided to build a larger prison on Darlinghurst Hill. Francis Greenway was commissioned to design it. The Old Darlinghurst Gaol was closed in 1914 after serving for 73 years as Sydney's major prison complex. Since that time, there has been much public debate about the use and reuse of this site. Because the buildings were neglected and badly damaged—and also because of the site's previous history—many thought the sandstone structures should be pulled down. Thomas Mutch, who at that time was the Minister for Public Works, was instrumental in ensuring that the Old Darlinghurst Gaol buildings would be converted into an educational institution. This inspired decision saved the threatened buildings and created a unique creative environment, which has had a remarkable effect on students who have studied at the National Art School.

The National Art School commenced operations as the Sydney Mechanics' School of Art in 1833. It was renamed the East Sydney Technical College. Subsequently the art school relocated to the converted Old Darlinghurst Gaol in Darlinghurst in 1921. Adapting a gaol complex to become an educational institution was an enormous task, and in a way the process is ongoing. In August last year the Minister for Education opened the newly refurbished Building 11 at the school. Because of that project, the old prison workshops, where convicts laboured, became home to studios and exhibition spaces within the centre. The postgraduate centre provides expanded facilities for Bachelor of Fine Art (Honours) and Master of Fine Art students and for the broader art school community. The centre comprises 50 new studios, exhibition spaces, climate-controlled collections storage and sculpture workshops. The project was undertaken by the National Art School and was made possible by funding grants provided by the New South Wales Government and by support provided by the Ian Potter Foundation.

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (16:41): For too long, Australians have undervalued our artists. As a global city, Sydney cannot afford to ignore its artists any longer. Art is vital to the social fabric of our city, to tourism, to how we see ourselves. Richard Florida, who is a well-known theorist, remarks on the central importance of art and culture to the life of our city. He notes that increasingly our cities are shaped by what he calls "the rise of creativity as a fundamental economic driver, and the rise of a new social class, the Creative class." But instead of respecting and supporting the contribution of artists and the creative class, in recent years conservative governments have slashed funding to the arts in budget after budget. Conservative governments have moved to deregulate universities, corporatise tertiary education and force out art institutions and courses that have been deemed to not be income-generating. Conservative governments have left in the lurch arts students from the Sydney College of the Arts or the National Art School.

The past few months have shown that young artists will not go quietly into that good night. Their activism and eloquence have sent a clear message that the arts must be valued and that they will not accept a substandard quality of education and training. I congratulate students, former students, artists and staff as well as the Friends of the National Arts School, who are present in the gallery, on their passionate and persuasive campaign. In

response, it is clear that the Government must act now to preserve the unique atelier approach to teaching at the school, which focuses on small class sizes, adequate studio space and a high number of contact hours. The Government must act now to preserve the independence of the school by protecting it from being subsumed by other schools. And the Government must act now by talking to its Federal counterparts so that the school will be guaranteed proper funding, similar to the arrangements in place for the National Institute of Dramatic Art [NIDA] and the Australian Film, Television and Radio School [AFTRS].

The Baird Government must shake off its ideological obsession and categorically reject now selling off the Old Darlinghurst Gaol site to property developers. We know that this Government does not care about our natural and urban heritage. We also know that nothing will get in the way of this Government making some money for developers. We see examples of that in the Government's sale of the Sirius Building and homes in Milsons Point; the destruction of heritage homes for WestConnex; the destruction of trees on Anzac Parade; the rezoning of the Parramatta Female Factory site; and the destruction of the Thompson Square at Windsor.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith): Order! The Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra and the South Coast will come to order.

Ms JO HAYLEN: It is clear that nothing will stand between this Government and developers rezoning to make a dollar. The National Art School should be given a long-term lease to remain at the Old Darlinghurst Gaol site. Our young and emerging artists deserve no less than certainty. They deserve nothing less than our support and our respect.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (16:44): I acknowledge all the people in the gallery who have made the trip to Parliament House today to hear discussion on the petition that has been presented by the member for Sydney. The continuation of high-level fine arts tertiary education in New South Wales is very important to this Government. An example of that is the awards presented last night for the Plein Air Painting Prize in Parliament House. As outlined by the member for Oatley, I assure the member for Sydney that no decision has been made to merge the National Art School with other institutions.

Ms Jo Haylen: Then rule it out.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Students who are enrolled in the National Art School will continue their studies as before. I know students of the National Art School who live in my electorate of Terrigal—two very talented young students from the Erina High School, twins Amelia and Harley Lynch. Both gained entry into the National Art School [NAS] in 2016. Amelia achieved two band 6 results in her Higher School Certificate [HSC]. There were only six band 6 results awarded in her year at Erina High School in visual arts, textiles and design for the HSC. Currently her body of work for visual arts is being exhibited in the Maitland Art Gallery. Previously, this work was exhibited in the New South Wales Art Gallery as part of ArtExpress.

When Amelia was in year 11 she applied to undertake the HSC intensive course at the NAS and was successful. I believe she may be the first student from the Erina High School to undertake that course. When Amelia started the course at NAS in 2014, she felt that she had found where she belonged. Amelia's HSC results qualified her to be accepted into university to study fine arts, but her focus was firmly on the NAS. Amelia gained early entry into the NAS through the School Recommended Scheme. She applied for the Brisbane Water Legacy Scholarship and was successful. Recently Amelia was informed that she also has been successful in gaining another local scholarship.

Harley Lynch, Amelia's twin brother, took a different route to Amelia's. He has his eye on a different academic path but he also is excited to be accepted into study at the NAS to study a Bachelor of Fine Art with his twin sister. Since starting the course, Harley believes that the NAS is where he should be. Harley has been awarded prizes in the Sydney Show for photography and was first in his HSC year with photography under the expert tutelage of Dr Aubry Byrnes.

It must be said that the National Art School has been the centre of Sydney's art scene for almost a century. It has nurtured the talents of generations of artists who have studied and worked in studios within the walls of the Old Darlinghurst Gaol, including the twins from the Central Coast. The reality is that investment in infrastructure must be accompanied by investment in content. The New South Wales Government is investing at an unprecedented level in cultural infrastructure by allocating \$600 million from Rebuilding NSW to fund projects such as the Walsh Bay Arts Precinct and the Sydney Opera House renewal. The Government will continue to provide significant funding in 2016 and throughout 2017 to support the operation of the National Art School. While I am on the topic of funding, I urge the member for Sydney to pursue the Federal Government.

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (16:47): By leave: I commend, and Labor commends, the signatories to the petition being discussed in the House this afternoon that calls upon the Baird Government to guarantee the ongoing funding and accommodation of the National Art School. As the members for Sydney and

Summer Hill have noted already, the work of the National Art School is vitally important to the cultural fabric of this city and our State. I am very fortunate to represent an area—the Blue Mountains—that is renowned for the creative industries, including fine art. I note that a Blue Mountains artist, Robert Malherbe, last night won the New South Wales Parliament's Plein Air Painting Prize for his work *Lithgow Wetlands*.

My community and I understand very well the significance and the importance of the National Art School, and we support it. It is a national treasure. Against a backdrop of the privatisation agenda that is at the heart of everything the Baird Government does, it is totally understandable that the artistic community in Sydney would not take Mike Baird at his word when he says through his pet, the Minister for Education, that there has been "no decision to sell the site". The statement had a drafting error, because the conclusion of that sentence should have a comma at the end of it, and then the word "yet", followed by a full stop.

Unless you get something in black and white from members of this Government saying, "We will not" or, "We will certainly", you cannot trust them. You just cannot trust them. They say, "There are no current plans" to privatise our trains. "There are no current plans" to sell off TAFE campuses. "There has been no decision" to merge councils. "No decision has been made to merge the National Art School." "There is no decision to sell the site." But all those statements should contain the word "yet". So no, I do not trust them. The Baird Government has shown through its actions and its words that it is a pet of the big end of town and that it sees no problem in gifting vital public property to the private sector for its benefit and advantage.

Already the Premier is trying to gift our heritage buildings, those majestic sandstone buildings that house the oldest government departments in the Sydney colony, to the private sector. He is trying to turn them into boutique hotels for the wealthy. I want to see the Minister for Education come in here, put it in the *Hansard* and put it in writing. Minister, make a commitment to the artistic community and our creative industries that you will not merge the National Art School, that you will guarantee the Old Darlinghurst Gaol site will remain in public hands for good and that it will be leased to the National Art School on favourable terms for the long term. Anything less than those guarantees, unequivocal and in black and white, should not be trusted by members of this House or by the signatories to this petition. I am proud to be from the Blue Mountains. I am a strong advocate for the arts. It encompasses our lives. The arts encompass the universality of human expression, the social capital that enriches our lives. That fact cannot be highlighted enough today.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (16:51): By leave: As the spokesperson for the arts and creative industries for The Greens in New South Wales and on behalf of the member for Ballina, who wishes to express her solidarity with and support for this petition but could not be in the Chamber this afternoon, I speak in support of the crucial work of artists and arts workers in this State. I applaud the commitment of students, artists and supporters of the National Art School who are here today demanding that we politicians listen to them and protect the independence of the historic and important National Art School by funding it. I found it offensive that some local members participated in the opening of the current art exhibition in Parliament House's foyer and took the opportunity to promote their electorates, and yet at the same time they do not support the petition signed by 10,000-plus people that we are discussing. Some of the artworks hanging in the exhibition are by graduates of the National Art School, and many graduates of the school have been finalists over the years.

These years of the Baird Government will go down in history as years when the New South Wales public was robbed of assets and our cultural heritage. Those opposite are attempting to privatise everything and they are ignoring the interests of the community. Members of the arts community and so many other communities are fed up. That is why we have received many petitions with 10,000-plus signatures and why many people have joined large protest marches to express their views outside Parliament House. I congratulate everyone in the public gallery today who joined the march about the National Art School. It was held on a rainy day, and I have never seen such a large rally on a rainy day. I also thank the person who gave me the great orange T-shirt I have from the march.

The Greens will not support a merger of the National Art School. It has been under threat by closure and merger time and time again. We all know that the arts have an intrinsic value in the same way that science or maths does, but unfortunately this Conservative Coalition Government does not seem to understand that. Those opposite do not understand the value of funding the arts and ensuring that our artists are supported. We need support for the arts. We need funding allocated to the arts. The Greens will cherish and nourish our artists and our art education institutions. We need to see a commitment to the National Art School funding to preserve its integrity. This Government needs to work with the Commonwealth Government to secure the National Art School's ongoing status as a vital national art education institution.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: I seek leave to make a contribution.

Leave not granted.

*Community Recognition Statements***GERRINGONG LIONS RUGBY LEAGUE FOOTBALL CLUB**

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (16:54): I congratulate the Gerringong Lions Rugby League Football Club on winning back-to-back South Coast Group 7 premierships, defeating the Warilla-Lake South Gorillas 10-0 in front of a record crowd of more than 5,500 at Collegians Sporting Complex. The experienced Lions defence held out the Gorillas and secured their second successive title, something that has not been done since the Albion Park-Oak Flats Eagles in 2006-07. Man of the match was Kal Collins and best on field was Peter Cronin, Joel Roberts and Nathan Ford, while the Gorillas were led by Josh Kent, Jesse Dee, Josh Dowell and Blake Colgan.

I acknowledge and congratulate the entire 17-man Gerringong Lions Grand Final winning squad, including Patrick Cronin, Peter Cronin, Rixon Russell, Corey Mulhall, Peter Ford, Taylor Hudson, Jackson Ford, Kal Collins, Nathan Ford, Isaac Russell, Timothy Moore, Bradley Davidson, Joel Doosey, Joel Roberts, Steven Evans, Michael Brown and Lloyd Bowen. I also acknowledge the coach, Mick Cronin, and the club committee: president Darryl Hobbs, vice-president John Quinn, secretary Jan Brett and treasurer Tracey Ford. Congratulations to Gerringong Lions. You are a cracking team. Well done yet again.

MARRICKVILLE STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (16:55): I was delighted to inspect the headquarters of the Marrickville State Emergency Service [SES] at Sydenham. The state-of-the-art facility opened in 2015 and was built by the former Marrickville City Council at the instigation of the late deputy mayor Manny Tsardoulis. The SES is a wonderful organisation that responds to calls for assistance from the community in times of disaster such as storms, bushfires and flooding. A volunteer-based organisation, its members embody the essence of what it truly means to be an Australian: to be ready and willing to help others in their time of need.

Local Commander Michael Cleary took me on a tour around the facility. He was over the moon with their new digs as it allows them to train more volunteers and coordinate responses to multiple dispatches from the one room. Michael, along with Adam Jones, Debbie Burns and Peter McIntosh, have recently returned from volunteering in the flood-ravaged towns of Condobolin, Tumut, Parkes and Wagga Wagga. I particularly thank Adam, who showed me around the emergency vehicles and some of the home-made modifications they have adopted for a more efficient response to emergencies.

**KATHRYN MURRAY, MINISTER'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT
RECIPIENT**

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (16:56): I acknowledge Kathryn Murray on her 2016 Minister's Award for Excellence in Student Achievement. This award recognises achievements in the secondary school years, with a particular emphasis on achievements in years 11 and 12. Kathryn was one of 13 students honoured with this award and was recognised for her high standards in leadership, academic excellence and the service of others. She is school captain at Jannali High School and an active participant in the Student Representative Council. Kathryn has also participated in community events, including the Night of Excellence, NSW Education Week launch, Sutherland Shire Anzac Day Dawn Service and Nanga Mai State Aboriginal Education Awards.

Over the past year I have had the pleasure of observing Kathryn execute her duties as school captain, be presented as a debutante and participate in the Student Leadership Program at Parliament House and at several community events. Bearing this in mind, I can sincerely attest to her advocacy for her community and I can wholeheartedly say she is as impressive as she sounds. Kathryn is an incredibly talented and promising young lady with an undoubtedly bright future ahead. I wish her the very best luck for her Higher School Certificate exams.

TRIBUTE TO RUDI KOLKMAN

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (16:57): I acknowledge my former Campbelltown council colleague Mr Rudi Kolkman for his contribution and public service to the people of Campbelltown for 21 years. It is a proud record of achievement, service and dedication to our community. Rudi is well known for his detailed knowledge of our planning system and his continual efforts to ensure that local input is at the forefront of urban planning decisions. Rudi has served as deputy mayor and has held a number of chairmanships. His love of the arts and cultural activities and his efforts to bring those events to the Campbelltown Arts Centre is well known and much appreciated. On the sporting front, Rudi has been a long-term patron and avid supporter of the Macarthur Rams Football Club. Rudi is a valued colleague and I know that the end of his elected civic duties does not mean the end of his service to the community. He will continue to contribute in so many ways. I wish Rudi, Diane and their family all the very best for the future.

ALBURY ELECTORATE EVENTS

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) (16:58): Congratulations to Gisella Henry, co-owner of Albury's Taco Bill restaurant, which won the New South Wales Regional Specialty Restaurant section at the Savour Australia Awards for Excellence held in Sydney recently. What a great achievement. Well done, Gisella, and congratulations to all the staff at Taco Bill. Congratulations also to Paul and Wendy Smith of Green Zebra on winning the award for best regional breakfast restaurant. Great results for exceptional businesses. Heather Hubbert has worked at Rosewood Public School for 23 years and retired in September.

Heather will be missed by the students and teachers at the school and we wish her all the best in her retirement. Albury Public School student Avi Bailey won gold in the New South Wales statewide creative writing competition WriteOn. Well done, Avi, you are an inspiration to your fellow students. Congratulations to 13-year-old Noah Esplana of Corowa, who has defied bullying in his endeavour to follow his dream to become an accomplished dancer. Noah has been offered a position at the Regional Academy of Performing Arts. All the best, Noah. May all your dreams come true.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (16:59): Quality of palliative care is a basic human right and one that too many people continue to be denied. Today I recognise the commitment and work of Cancer Council NSW and its many volunteers in my electorate and indeed across the State. The Cancer Council NSW is committed to guaranteeing that each and every patient with terminal cancer who needs specialist palliative care can access it whenever and wherever they need it. We should remember that patients in regional New South Wales and Indigenous Australians face the largest challenge when it comes to accessing quality care.

Last week I met with local representatives from Cancer Council NSW to talk about a way forward to assist those in the end stages of life. The Cancer Council estimates that New South Wales needs an additional 10 physicians and 129 nurses trained to meet the needs of those with life-limiting illness. It explained that quality palliative care improves clinical outcomes and patient-centred decision-making and reduces hospital costs over the long term. I thank the Cancer Council and the many volunteers for their important and ongoing work. I pledge to stand with them in their fight for this most basic of rights.

THE OAKS RURAL FIRE SERVICE

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (17:00): I acknowledge those volunteers from the Oaks Rural Fire Service [RFS] who dedicated their time last year ensuring that Light Up The Oaks, for which I was the master of ceremonies, was an amazing success. The Oaks RFS has an amazing history of community involvement, including taking part in a Santa run on the fire truck around Belimbla Park as well as The Oaks each and every Christmas. It also has a great history of handing out lollies to children at the Light Up The Oaks night and even produces a community calendar every year.

This calendar is its main fundraiser and proceeds go to purchasing new equipment for the RFS. These little actions go a long way in promoting the actions of the RFS and how crucial it is to the Southern Highlands and Wollondilly community. Special mentions go to Brigade Captain Colin Brown, Brigade President and Deputy Captain Terry Bruce, Brigade Secretary and Senior Deputy Captain Jeremy Wilson, Deputy Captain Rodney Wellington, Debborah Kerr, Patrick Reeve, Shane Thomas and Thomas Sinclair. Not only are they out and about during times of adversity, but they are also there to support the community all year round.

CENTRAL COAST VOLUNTEER AWARDS

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (17:01): On Wednesday 5 October I had the pleasure of attending the Central Coast Volunteer Awards at Shelly Beach. People and organisations from right across the Central Coast were represented, and it was truly humbling to be amongst these great, passionate people. In particular I recognise the winner of the Youth Volunteer of the Year up to age 24, Wyong Creek local Jamie Carter from Conservation Volunteers Australia. I also recognise student volunteer Chantelle Johnston from Mardi in my electorate, who is part of the Wyong Shire Council Action Team, and the overall winner and senior winner, Gaynor Hobart, from Watanobbi, who assists at the Central Coast Riding for the Disabled Centre at Somersby. The contribution volunteers make to our regional community is of great significance for emergency services, environmental conservation, homelessness services and care for the elderly. Volunteers provide vital services that we would not otherwise have. Statistics show that on average people who volunteer are more happy and healthy. These awards are just a small in-kind repayment for the happiness and health they bring our community.

RADIO FIVE-O-PLUS 93.3FM

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (17:02): Radio Five-O-Plus 93.3FM came from humble beginnings in a storeroom above a chemist shop at Umina Beach on the Central Coast, where the broadcast was a window of

two hours per night two nights a week for the adjoining a few streets. Now in its twenty-third year, it occupies modern premises in North Gosford and broadcasts across the Central Coast and beyond 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This includes an hourly broadcast of Australia's premier news service, Macquarie National News, to more than an estimated 100,000 listeners.

Radio Five-O-Plus 93.3FM is staffed solely by volunteers and features music and information for the over-fifties population of the Central Coast. Its music timeline features an unmatched variety of music primarily from the 1940s to 1985, including all the greatest hits and memories. I thank Wayne Fleet, Jill Sutton and the team, who were more than happy to give me a detailed tour and overview of the station. Volunteers are always welcome at Radio Five-O-Plus 93.3FM for the love of music and the good old days.

TRIBUTE TO SANDRA MCDONALD

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (17:03): I acknowledge and congratulate Sandra McDonald, the founder of local mental health group, Beautiful Minds, on her New South Wales Volunteer of the Year Award in recognition of her dedication, service and commitment to people and families living with mental illness. It is a deserved award but, true to her character, Sandra was humble and stated that everyone at the awards ceremony was just as deserving. It is people like Sandra and many others in the electorate who make public representation such a joy and privilege. Seeing her build Beautiful Minds from scratch into a well-known and highly respected community organisation in service to the vulnerable is one of many sources of pride in our community. I am confident that this is not the last award Sandra and Beautiful Minds will receive as she continually comes up with new ways to raise much-needed funds and create greater awareness for mental health. I very much look forward to working with Sandra and Beautiful Minds, and I wish them every success.

SWEETNESS THE PATISSERIE

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (Epping) (17:04): Sweetness the Patisserie is a boutique confectionary in my electorate of Epping. After more than seven years of creating truly incredible sweets, Sweetness will close its doors this Saturday 15 October. It is a bittersweet occasion for me to wish Gena Karpf and her team all the very best as they enter a new chapter of their lives. Gena and the team at Sweetness are well-known for their candour, their good-naturedness, and above all, their dedication to crafting sweet foods that are as beautiful as they are delicious. I can personally attest that the team at Sweetness make every effort to bring only the very best to the table. I once again thank Gena Karpf and her team for bringing Sweetness into our community of Epping and I wish them all the best in the future.

TRIBUTE TO ALLISON MCGRATH

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (17:05): I recently had the pleasure of nominating Allison McGrath from Belmont High School for a New South Wales State Government Representative Award. Ally represented New South Wales in the NSW Country Cyclones 14 and under girls' indoor cricket team and competed at Cricket Australia's 2016 National Indoor Cricket Junior Championships in Dubbo this year. The championships saw more than 200 girls and boys take part in the Australian Cricket Pathway tournament with the tournament's top performers vying for selection in the Australian all-star teams. Ally's team placed third and Ally was voted second player of her age group based on runs scored, wickets taken and points awarded after each game by the match umpires. Allison also played three games with the New South Wales 17 and under girls, who were runners up to Victoria in their age division. At the end of the tournament, Ally was selected in the Australian 14 and under girls' all-star team. Well done Ally, and all the best to her all-star teammates.

ELENA DUGGAN, MASTERCHEF WINNER

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (17:06): When Elena Duggan cooks up a storm she really means it, which is why Ms Duggan ultimately became queen of the Masterchef kitchen. Before finding fame on *Masterchef*, Ms Duggan was hiding amongst the staff at our very own Galston High School as the relieving head of Creative and Performing Arts. She was teaching visual arts, photography and digital media. Ms Duggan has been cooking since she was two with her beloved nan, and was cooking full meals by the age of eight. With an abundance of artistic talent, creativity and a love for food, *Masterchef* was the perfect test for her.

Ms Duggan applied to compete in Masterchef 2015 but was unsuccessful. However, this year, she applied again with a recipe for ginger beer battered fish and chips—which you can find on the *Masterchef* website. Ms Duggan attributes her capacity for dealing with time pressure to her work in the classroom where she learnt to coordinate and work on a number of projects at once. Ms Duggan says that the honour of being able to cook for the show's judges, Matt Preston, George Calombaris and Gary Mehigan, along with names like Nigella Lawson and Heston Blumenthal, allowed her to grow in confidence and to learn the nuances of cooking. Following her *Masterchef* win, Ms Duggan has returned to Galston High to see her students and to tell them about her

experiences on *Masterchef*. I look forward to hearing what else Ms Duggan has planned and to trying out many of her recipes in the future.

SALT ASH PONY CLUB

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (17:07): I recognise the hardworking members of the Salt Ash Pony Club for their willingness to stand up for what is right. In August last year, club members arrived at the Salt Ash equestrian complex to find that 50 to 60 tonnes of dirt had been dumped in the car park. It was subsequently discovered that Port Stephens Council had dumped the dirt at the direction of the mayor because he wanted to build a BMX bike track. The mayor had dumped the dirt in contravention of the wishes of the users of the complex. There was no development application and no risk assessment.

The users of the grounds continued to seek answers and their concerns were finally confirmed by the Environment Protection Authority [EPA]. The EPA has fined the Port Stephens Council \$45,000 for the "unlawful transport of waste and use of land as a waste facility". The company engaged by the council to provide soil testing was also fined \$16,000 by the EPA for providing false and misleading information about the waste's composition. I thank the Salt Ash Pony Club for its pursuit of the truth for the benefit of its members in the face of many lies and much deceit.

KINGSGROVE BUS DEPOT

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (17:08): On 23 September I had the privilege of opening a new bus depot in Kingsgrove which will have the capacity to house as many as 60 buses serving approximately 20 passenger and school routes, predominantly covering parts of southern and south-west Sydney. This Government is always looking to make investments in infrastructure that helps us improve the services we offer to our constituents. That is why we have invested \$4.8 million in this project.

The majority of services to be covered by the depot and operated by Transdev will be in the Kingsgrove, Kogarah, Rockdale, Beverly Hills, and Hurstville areas. Previously, buses servicing these areas were based at Transdev's Taren Point and Menai depots. The depot is bigger than a football field in size, at around 9,000 square metres, and is equipped with the latest CCTV technology as well as bus maintenance and repair facilities. Having a depot located closer to the areas the buses are serving will make operations more efficient as buses that have finished their routes will have less distance to travel back to the depot.

LIONS CLUBS

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) (17:09): On 1 October 2016 I was honoured to be able to attend the Charter Night for the newly formed Southwest Sydney Lions Club. Lions Clubs throughout Australia and internationally do a fantastic job raising money for charities and worthy causes. The Southwest Sydney Lions Club was formed by a group of young activists, many of whom are from my electorate. They are community-minded and want to give back to our community. Even before the Charter Night, which served as a launch for the organisation, they have been actively raising funds at the annual Cabramatta Moon Festival. I extend my congratulations to Harry Wong, the inaugural president; Lina Lim, the secretary, Sandy Luc, the treasurer; and Vivian Thi, Adrian Hoang, Sera Yilmaz, Isabelle Vo, Adrian Wong, Alex Glumac, and many others. It is inspiring to see such an active group of young people, all under the age of 30, who want to do something for the community.

QUOTA CLUBS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (17:10): I draw the attention of the House to the Taree Quota Club. The club held a Fancy Nancy Fashion Parade that saw more than 70 people gather at the St John's Hall on 8 October for an afternoon of fun and fashion with a fundraising focus. The event raised about \$1,500, which will be donated to a number of local charities. That amount is in addition to the \$20,000 the club raises each year. The parade featured clothing from Ashlea Road Boutique in Wingham and Margaret's Underfashions in Taree. I congratulate the beautiful models: Romany Low; Di Hawkins; Cathy Baker; Jan Woods; Jackie Wiseman; Carolyn Erickson; Di Greaves; Robyn Herps; and Lilian Else.

ST MARYS POLICE OFFICER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (17:11): I acknowledge the annual St Marys Police Officer of the Year Award, which is organised by the fabulous St Marys Rotary Club. The Police Officer of the Year award is awarded to a St Marys Local Area Command [LAC] officer for outstanding service and bravery. This year will be the eighth anniversary of the award, and I encourage anyone in the local community who knows an officer at St Marys LAC to get involved and to nominate someone. I am biased, but I believe that our men and women in blue do a fantastic job while putting their lives on the line each and every day. It is great to see the community get behind them and thank them for their work. I extend my special thanks to the 2016-17 St Marys Rotary Club board:

Cheryl Deguara; Terry Bulloch; Lesley Daly; Evan Whitley; Phil Martin; Robert Owen; Peter Genellos; Colman Young; and Chris Miller. Well done to the St Marys Rotary Club for all its work in the community. I thank them for celebrating our fantastic local police.

TRIBUTE TO WILL GRIFFITH

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (14:12): Will Griffith is a year 9 student from Lindisfarne Anglican Grammar School in Benora Point in my electorate. Will recently participated in the New South Wales Youth Parliament, organised by the YMCA, as the Minister for Transport. Will wrote to me about the experience. He states:

I am writing to update you regarding the progress of our community service project at the YMCA NSW Junior Parliament. Mr Provest, today as Junior Member for Tweed I participated in the Graceades Community Cottage at Bidwill/Mount Druitt. It was empowering to meet such an variety of people from different socio-economic backgrounds. I learned about the hardships that the members of this community face especially the young people. It was such a rewarding experience to help this community out through our community service day.

Will is a fine example of a young person seeking to spread goodwill in the wider community. I wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

ROUTE 370 BUS SERVICE

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (17:13): By leave: I draw the attention of this Parliament to the trials and tribulations of all those who have caught—or attempted to catch—the 370 bus which runs from Glebe to Coogee, travelling through the electorate of Newtown. Dubbed "the worst bus in Australia", it is a haphazard bus that is now famous for extended delays. I wish to recognise each and every person who has braved the elements to wait for the 370, often to simply watch it drive on past their bus stop without actually stopping, and those who have waited patiently for one to arrive long past when it was due to then see three appear in a row. To the few special people in our electorate who have successfully hailed and boarded the 370, and arrived at their destination on time, we salute you. The 370 is the worst bus. Congratulations to anybody who has managed to use it to get somewhere on time.

JAMBEROO SUPEROOS

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (17:14): By leave: I congratulate the Jamberoo Superoos women's league tag on winning the grand final, defeating minor premiers Milton-Ulladulla Bulldogs 6-4 in a titanic battle at Collegians sporting complex—thrashed! I acknowledge all the players including inspirational Jamberoo Superoos captain Carly Ryan. The best on field for the Roos were Brooke Smith, Abby McParland and Kaela Thomas. I also congratulate the support staff, John Barnard, Mandy Chaplin, Deb Barnard, Emma Smith, Andrew Adams and Rosco Thomas. It was an absolutely outstanding finish. I congratulate Ulladulla but they were pipped at the post by the best team. Long live the Jamberoo Superoos.

WALTZ-SING MATILDAS

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (17:15): By leave: I acknowledge an extraordinary group which brings smiles to the faces of many people with special needs in my community. In 2002 a group of nine families headed by John and Carolyn Thoroughgood began a group called the Waltz-Sing Matildas. Those families each had a child of their own with Down syndrome or other disabilities. From weekly dance classes for eight young people and with a view to staging a debutante's ball for special needs people, the weekly classes now regularly get 80 people on the dance floor. Last month I was proud to attend their fifteenth debutante ball with some 350 people in attendance.

So popular has this group become that it now performs other concerts throughout the year and at community events. It provides people with special needs with not only a bit of fun but enjoyable exercise programs and a valuable social network. The not-for-profit group is supported by the business community, most significantly by Wests Cardiff. Many of the founding families still play active roles in the ongoing success of the Waltz-Sing Matildas. The Lake Macquarie community is much richer for the work these people carry out, while the lives of many special needs people are highly enriched. I am sure members of this Parliament will join me in congratulating all involved.

TRIBUTE TO ANGELIQUE HRISTODOULOU

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (17:16): By leave: Today I acknowledge Angelique Hristodoulou, a young sporting star from Sylvania who travelled to Vietnam from 25 August to 3 September to represent Australia in football. Angelique was selected as part of the 23-player squad known as the Mini Matildas, who competed in the Asian Football Confederation [AFC] under-16s women's championship qualifiers against Palestine, Hong Kong, Iraq, Vietnam and Uzbekistan. The team was undefeated throughout the competition and only conceded

one goal over the five games. It came first in its group which has secured it a place in the 2017 AFC championships.

Angelique played three full games in the tournament and scored a goal in the final match against Uzbekistan which is a very impressive achievement especially given that she plays in defence. Angelique played for Sylvania Heights Football Club from 2010 to 2012, participating in a State cup in 2012. She progressed to the Sutherland Shire Football Association women's premier league team and from there was selected to represent Australia in the Mini Matildas. It takes years of devotion and commitment to become an athlete of this calibre. I congratulate Angelique on her achievement and wish her the best of luck for the future.

LAKE MACQUARIE WINDS SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (17:17): By leave: Last month I had the privilege of presenting Alyssa Ayling, a very talented flautist from the Swansea electorate, with the inaugural Lake Macquarie Winds music scholarship at the 2016 Bands Day in the Schools event. Lake Macquarie Winds, a community concert band based at Valentine Public School, received a sum of money from music enthusiasts including former members of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Recognising the value of musical education, it was decided to invest the money in a scholarship to encourage the highest possible standard of musicianship.

The scholarship of \$1,000 provides financial assistance for expenses such as lessons, materials and instruments. Alyssa has been with Lake Macquarie Winds for a number of years, and during that time has progressed significantly. As an active member of the band, she has impeccable attendance at rehearsals and performances, and her personality enhances the convivial atmosphere promoted within the band. It was a delight to present such a significant award to a worthy candidate like Alyssa. I wish her and the band all the best in the future.

HIGHLAND GRACE

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (17:18): By leave: In the festive period of Christmas, people often forget the struggles of those in society who are not well off and who may be experiencing a distressing period of their lives. The Wollondilly and Southern Highlands community is home to an amazing charity which raises funds to provide a Christmas to those who may be alone or homeless. The Highland Grace raised funds through sausage sizzles and through their partnership with Coles Bowral and provided struggling families with gifts on Christmas Eve. Highland Grace and Coles Bowral also led a food drive through which members of the Wollondilly and Southern Highlands community had the opportunity to donate non-perishable food items, presents and vouchers to assist with Highland Grace's undertaking. Highland Grace runs a café called Soul Warmers Café which provides the Christmas celebration. Soul Warmers Café is currently run out of the Highlands Christian Church.

YFOUNDATIONS

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (17:19): By leave: I draw the attention of this Parliament to the amazing work of YFoundations in supporting young people who are at risk of and experiencing homelessness. YFoundations works collaboratively with non-government organisations, government and community members to provide policy and structural advocacy services for young people. Earlier this year I was pleased to attend the Youth Homelessness Matters Day and congratulate YFoundations chief executive officer Michael Coffey, senior policy officer Chris Stone and the YFoundations youth ambassadors, Alice Zhang and Sarah Maynard. I commend them for their ongoing commitment to the organisation. I acknowledge the contribution of Australia's first National Children's Commissioner, Megan Mitchell, who launched the event. I thank her for her tireless advocacy for the rights and interests of children, and the laws policies and programs that impact on them.

Private Members' Statements

CANTERBURY-BANKSTOWN CITY COUNCIL

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (17:20): It has been only a few months since Premier Baird shamefully forced the merger of Bankstown City Council with Canterbury City Council. This decision was made despite the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] report recommending Bankstown stand alone. The merger occurred despite Government assurances that there would be no forced amalgamations, enormous community opposition in both Bankstown and Canterbury, and the simple fact that Bankstown was forecast to save more money alone than in a merger. The newly branded City of Canterbury-Bankstown is presently the biggest local government area by population, with over 350,000 residents. Recent revised projections released by the Department of Planning expect the population to reach over 500,000 within the next 20 years. In the Premier's media release dated 12 May 2016, the Premier hailed the creation of the council as an "historic decision". The Minister for Local Government, Paul Toole, states:

... the creation of the new council would free up money for important projects like local roads, parks, playgrounds and footpaths.

On the Government's Stronger Council's website, it states that the merger will deliver substantial savings and benefits for many years to come and run the same community facilities, including libraries, seniors centres and swimming pools. Despite the short timeframe since this forced marriage between Bankstown and Canterbury, we are now being told that the name Canterbury-Bankstown is not good enough. With tens of thousands of dollars already spent on signs and insignia bearing the name "The New City of Canterbury-Bankstown", a private consultant has been contracted for approximately \$400,000 to rebrand our community yet again. As a lifelong resident, former mayor of Bankstown and the member for Bankstown, I am proud of the name Bankstown and of our community.

There is no fault in the name Bankstown. Our community does not require nor want to remove Bankstown from the council's name. Upon European settlement in 1798 the district was named Banks Town in honour of Sir Joseph Banks. Bankstown was declared a municipality in 1895 and a city in 1980 by Her Majesty the Queen. This proud history must not be brushed away by the mere click of a graphic's designer's mouse. If the entire purpose of the forced amalgamation of our council were to save money, then why would we continue to spend hundreds and thousands of dollars of ratepayer's money on repeated name changes? It does not make any sense. Instead of wasting ratepayer dollars on another name change greater focus must be placed on the more pressing issues facing council in the short term such as stopping inappropriate over-development of our area, and preventing the fire sale of council assets such as car parks and local pools to reach supposed efficiency savings.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith): The member for Oatley will come to order.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: I am greatly concerned that following the merger council assets will be sold off under the pretext of efficiency savings. On Tuesday 27 September the recent council determined that it would not open Greenacre Swimming Pool for the 2016-17 season. Many residents have also shared with me their concern regarding the long-term future of the Greenacre Library. Over many decades these much-loved community facilities have helped to forge a strong sense of community spirit, identity and harmony in Bankstown.

The Government must continue to play a role in community infrastructure investment, particularly if plans proceed to increase the population density of Bankstown and surrounding suburbs under the Sydenham to Bankstown Urban Renewal Corridor. This plan provides that the City of Canterbury-Bankstown will be forced to house up to 80 per cent of the expected 100,000 residents that will be crammed between Sydenham and Bankstown as part of the South West Metro project. In order to cope with this population increase the Government must assure Bankstown residents it will provide funding for the widening of roads, construction of new schools, health care facilities, car parks and recreational centres.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith): The member for Oatley will come to order.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: At present, this Government has not provided any assurance that funding for crucial infrastructure will be available to support the requirements of higher density living. Many of Bankstown's schools are already at capacity, and Bankstown Hospital is in great need of further investment. Bankstown cannot afford to accommodate the brunt of Sydney's population growth without first receiving upgrades to its vital services and infrastructure. The Government must ensure that the necessary infrastructure and services are in place prior to making drastic zoning changes that will overdevelop this part of Sydney.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith): I call the member to Oatley to order for the first time.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (17:25): After listening to the member for Bankstown anyone would think she was the only person opposed to amalgamations in Canterbury-Bankstown, but the reality is different. Although she is the only person opposed to amalgamations in Canterbury-Bankstown, there is a list of Labor luminaries who supported the merger, including the Labor mayor of Bankstown, Khal Asfour. He is a champion for lower rates, more infrastructure, and better services in his community. The only person wanting to stand in the way of lower rates, more infrastructure and better services is the member for Bankstown. Members on this side will not be deterred for delivering for the people of New South Wales. Labor wrote the playbook on council amalgamations. They merged South Sydney Council, they merged the Clarence Valley Council, they merged Canada Bay council. If we want to see what hypocrisy looks like, look at Labor.

TRIBUTE TO JOANNA GASH

Ms SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast) (17:26): Tonight I pay tribute to the dedicated service of the former mayor of Shoalhaven City Council, Joanna Gash, and welcome its new mayor, Councillor Amanda Findley. Jo Gash has led a long and distinguished career, advocating for the people of the Shoalhaven in one role or another for more than 20 years. I have known her for almost all of those 20 years and can attest to her tenacity, commitment and passion to truly represent the Shoalhaven in the best way possible. Jo was born in the Netherlands and migrated to Australia with her family at the age of six. She was forced to leave school at 15 and eventually

ended up working in the tourism industry. By the age of 21, she had two young daughters, who she raised as a sole parent. To her credit, they too have led successful careers.

Jo's political career began in 1991 as a councillor of the Wingecarribee Shire Council. Five years later, in 1996, she was pre-selected and then won the election for the Federal seat of Gilmore, under the Liberal Party leadership of the Hon. John Howard. She was the first ever female candidate elected to this seat and would go on to win elections again in 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007 and 2010. At one stage she gained the biggest swing to the Coalition of any seat in Australia. Her parliamentary appointments included Temporary Speaker, Government Whip, positions on several committees and delegations, and shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism.

Jo served as the member for Gilmore for an incredible 17 years and, to date, is the longest serving member of Gilmore. Included amongst her achievements whilst serving federally was the realisation of infrastructure projects such as Main Road 92; the Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre; Wollongong University campuses at Nowra, Moss Vale, and Bateman's Bay; the medical and nursing school; the installation of security cameras in Nowra central business district; championing the cause of a youth cadet training program; as well as the expansion of the naval air station HMAS Albatross, resulting in a continued contribution to the local economy. In 2012 Jo announced her so-called retirement from Federal politics. Her intention was to return to local government and run for the mayoralty of Shoalhaven City Council.

Not one to sit idle for long, Jo explained the decision as wanting to give something back to the community that had sustained her for more than 60 years. On 8 September 2012, Joanna Gash was popularly elected as the Shoalhaven's first female mayor, winning 63 per cent of the first preference vote. Of the 13 positions on council, eight were filled by elected Team Gash councillors. For the past four years under Jo's leadership, Team Gash and Shoalhaven City Council were responsible for helping to facilitate some incredible projects for our area, including the Nowra Aquatic Park, the pontoons along the Shoalhaven River and Huskisson Wharf. Due to Jo's extensive experience and guidance, and the council's diligent and committed research, Shoalhaven City Council was declared Fit for the Future, as I knew it would be. The decision was made for it to stand alone from Kiama council. I pay tribute to the member for Kiama, who is in the Chamber tonight, for fighting the good fight, and winning.

In 2014 Jo was diagnosed with breast cancer. However, she soldiered on, seeing out her term as mayor. At the age of 72 she decided to run again in this year's local government elections. She is almost indestructible, and her energy and determination are inspiring. As some members would remember, in my inaugural speech in this place I acknowledged the role Jo played during my first campaign and at the start of my political career—more than 13 years ago now. I had the great honour of being able to attend her valedictory speech in Canberra in 2013, on the floor of the House of Representatives. She warned me then that the biggest challenge I would face would be having to deal with the member for Kiama, and as usual she was correct.

We are linked professionally and personally by our great love for the South Coast community and the desire to continue to serve that community through public office. She has always been a trailblazer. When the day comes that Joanna Gash truly retires it will be deeply felt across the Shoalhaven. I wish Jo the best of luck as she continues to serve on Shoalhaven City Council as a ward 2 councillor. I sincerely welcome our new mayor, Amanda Findley, and wish her well in the role, along with newly elected councillors Nina Cheyne, Annette Alldrick, John Levett, Mitchell Pakes, Kaye Gartner and Bob Proudfoot, and re-elected councillor Greg Watson. I thank the outgoing councillors, Lynette Kearney, Jim McCrudden, Jemma Tribe, Clive Robertson, Karen Anstiss and Allan Baptist for their years of wonderful service to the people of the Shoalhaven.

FORSTER TUNCURRY DOLPHINS RUGBY CLUB

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (17:30): I pay tribute to the mighty Forster Tuncurry Dolphins, who are the 2016 winners of the Lower Mid North Coast Rugby premiership. This is the fourth year in a row that the mighty Dolphins have won the premiership. Sue and I had the privilege of attending their presentation night on Saturday last. The night was ably compered by master of ceremonies Chris Edwards, vice-president of the club. I congratulate the club and its president, Damian Daczko, who has held that role since 2011. I congratulate his committee, including Gerry and Sue Hobbs. Sue Hobbs is a life member of the club. They are the joint secretaries and look after the canteen. I also congratulate the treasurer, Lee Crozier, who is one of the players. None of this happens without a lot of work being done in the background by people like Ron McCarthy, who is the head coach and a life member of the club, Mark Hudson, David Birch, trainer John Hassett and their first-aid officer, AJ.

A number of awards were presented on the night. The award for Most Improved went to Jonathon Paff. Lachlan Daczko won Best New Player to Rugby. If the name is familiar, yes, he is the son of Damian. This is his first year in the senior ranks. The award for Hard Man went to Brad Murray. Liam Brady won Best Team Player. Mark Colless was Most Exciting Player. The award for Highest Try Scorer went to Jack Nicholson. Sadly, Jack is moving to Sydney for work. We are likely to see him playing for one of the Shute Shield clubs in Sydney. Lee

Crozier won Highest Point Scorer. The Best Back award went to Mark Haggarty. Jesse Logan won the Coach's Award. Colin Harris won Best Forward. Rucker's Mug, which is the players' player and is often the award most sought after by players, went to Thomas Homer. For the first time, the award for Best and Fairest went to joint winners. Three people are picked randomly every week to award players one, two or three points and two people came out with the same numbers: Matt Nuku and Thomas Homer.

The Bus Traveller of the Year Award—members can imagine what a player has to do to win that—went to Zach Palmer. Five players got 50 games, and the winners of the 50 Game Player Award were Nigel Pereira, Chris Simon, Jack Wood, Matt Nuku and Sean Hassett. The winner of the 100 Game Player Award was Mark Haggarty. The 150 Game Player award went Lee Crozier, the treasurer of the club. Lee was also given a special award for scoring more than a thousand points for the club. Many would say the major award is Club Person of the Year. That can be awarded to a player or a member of the committee. It is awarded to someone who goes above and beyond what would normally be expected of a person in that position. Often people fill several positions.

The Peter Picken Memorial Award for club person of the year went to Mark Coble. Like Damian Daczko, Mark is a foundation member of the club. The club started in 2004 and Damian and Mark went on the very first club trip to Crescent Head for the Crescent Head Sevens. In those days they were players and now one is the president and the other is receiving an award for being club person of the year. It was a great night. The club won the premiership for the fourth time in a row. They were the minor premiers; they won every game during the year. Members of the club recall horror stories about 2012, when they won every game in the year as well as a bonus point but lost the major semifinal and then went on to lose the final. They did not even make the grand final that year. But the club has put those demons to rest and has had a wonderful year. I congratulate all of them.

ST GEORGE COMMUNITY HOUSING

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale) (17:35): I bring to the attention of the House the fantastic work of St George Community Housing, and thank that organisation for recently inviting me on a tour of their facilities across St George and the Sutherland Shire. It is a coincidence that Temporary Speaker Evans is in the chair, because it was wonderful to catch up with him during that tour. That was the highlight of my day. St George Community Housing is one of the largest community housing providers in our State, and has been providing housing services for more than 30 years. Starting with fewer than 25 properties under management in the St George area, St George Community Housing has grown to have 4,300 homes either within its direct ownership or under management across the Sydney Basin, and is providing stable accommodation and homes to more than 8,500 individuals.

I had the opportunity to witness some of the fantastic new projects being undertaken by St George Community Housing at Riverwood, Sutherland and Menai, and I recommend that all members take the opportunity to have a look at these high-quality housing developments, which will be housing 140 new households by Christmas. I believe St George Community Housing has been so successful in growing and flourishing as a housing provider because it recognises that best-practice community housing providers must not simply dump their tenants into housing and forget about them. Instead, it takes a holistic approach, recognising the many issues typically faced in conjunction with housing insecurity, and providing practical programs and a sense of mutual obligation to its tenants. Its services include common-sense employment and training programs, accessible loan schemes for essential household goods, access to computers and internet services, scholarship programs to help finance basic education requirements, as well as incentive schemes for tenants who successfully care for their properties.

Coupled with this, St George Community Housing takes its obligations as a landlord seriously, seeking to provide timely maintenance and repairs in line with private tenancy standards. Social and community housing tenants are not second-class citizens, and if we expect people to lift themselves up out of poverty and to break cycles of intergenerational poverty, they must be treated with dignity and respect. St George Community Housing sees itself as entering into a partnership with its tenants, working with them towards mutual goals, rather than dictating terms to people who are already disenfranchised.

Public housing does not work if all we do in Government is to create second-class citizens. Outside the public housing sector, all landlords are expected to maintain their properties for their tenants in a state of reasonable repair and cleanliness. If we want public housing tenants to raise themselves up, we must ensure we also raise the standards of accommodation provided through public and community housing. We in this place have a great deal to learn from effective community housing providers such as St George Community Housing, and while I would encourage a continuing expansion of the partnership between the State Government and great not-for-profit community housing providers such as St George, we should be seriously disappointed that the State is failing to provide the same level of service to its own tenants in New South Wales public housing.

As the Sydney housing market is becoming increasingly unaffordable, particularly for those at the bottom end of the market, the demand for subsidised housing is marginalising those in society who were previously able to care for themselves. I pay tribute to chief executive officer Scott Langford, the board of directors, and all the brilliant staff who make the inclusiveness of the St George Community Housing model possible. The dedication and passion of the team at St George Community Housing is evident in all the work they do, the satisfaction of their tenants, and the high regard in which they are held in the broader community, and they should be commended for that. The vision of St George Community Housing of "Better lives, stronger communities for affordable, quality housing" provides a model for best practice in community housing providers. Once again I acknowledge my admiration and respect for the excellent work they are doing.

CAMDEN POLICE LOCAL AREA COMMAND

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (17:40): In times of emergency our police are there and do a fantastic job protecting life and property. They face challenges on a daily basis in the line of duty. I have experienced firsthand the amazing work they do. I am lucky to have two fantastic commands in my electorate, the Camden Local Area Command and the Southern Highlands Local Area Command. Today I refer to the Camden Local Area Command [LAC] and note our region is at the centre of massive growth. Geographically, the Camden LAC is the largest in the Sydney metropolitan area with 2,600 square kilometres under command and is the largest growing region, with a population in excess of 100,000 people. Recently 12,000 new people called the region home.

It is important that we do not overwork our NSW Police Force. A recent report by the Camden branch of the Police Association of New South Wales notes that its police officers have put in more hour-by-hour work than those in Green Valley, Cabramatta and Macquarie Fields, for example. Using a proxy of car crashes to police officers, the Camden LAC had 15,788 car crashes to 97 staff, while in Cabramatta there were 8,773 car crashes to 117 staff. This is one illustration of the necessity for Camden LAC to have additional police numbers. Calls for assistance to Camden LAC have overtaken nearby LACs with Camden LAC experiencing nearly double the priority 3 calls at Cabramatta and far exceeding Green Valley.

The increase in calls for assistance between 2014-15 and 2015-16 has been telling. Calls for assistance in Cabramatta and Macquarie Fields increased by some 300 calls, whereas Camden LAC increased by roughly 1,500 calls. It is imperative that we continue to invest in the growth of our Police Force. I acknowledge the work of the Government in increasing police numbers and providing funding to the force. I note that the allocation of police is a responsibility of the police commissioner, for whom I have nothing but admiration. He has spent a lot of time in my electorate and with me supporting our commands and our community, particularly following the recent storm event.

I am pleased with the Government's announcement to restructure the NSW Police Force to ensure that it continues to protect the community into the future, including an increased focus on the evolving terrorism threat, the scourge of ice and other crimes impacting on our communities. The new structure will have a focus on shifting demographics and changing crime trends. Regional communities have their own challenges that are different from the city: the tyranny of distance, the scourge of ice that is tearing towns apart, higher domestic violence rates, and rural crime such as stock theft. The regions and Sydney will both benefit from a tailored focus rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

The Police Association of NSW Vice President Pat Gooley welcomed the announcement and said "Re-engineering the force is aimed at delivering police on the ground where they're needed and when they're needed, which means our communities will reap the safety benefits". Currently our command has approximately 20 fewer police than comparable commands, and having to cover a large geographical area means they have to do much more with much less. Crime rates in my electorate of Wollondilly are low but if we do not do something now, with population growth this will turn around. I recently met with the police Minister's office to put to him the plight of Camden LAC and Wollondilly and their need for extra police.

I was extremely pleased that there is a plan in reviewing police numbers and their allocation across the State within Police, and I am excited to learn that in the short term it is likely our numbers will see a small increase. Further, with the police allocation review I am confident that our numbers will increase to where they need to be in coming years. I will also be in touch with the police commissioner about this issue. I call on the Government and the police commissioner to ensure that this occurs as soon as possible and I am confident the recognition of the challenges that face our command due to population increases will be addressed.

I will not shy away from bringing the important issues to the Government and by resolving this issue it will ensure that police are adequately resourced, the welfare of police officers is maintained and our communities are kept safe. In particular I thank officer Daniel Ryder and all those from the Camden, Southern Highlands and Wollondilly local area commands for raising the issue with me. I take this opportunity to send a shout out to a

good friend of mine, Officer Brad Neate, who also does a fantastic job. I am pleased to raise this issue in the House today and stand side by side with our Police Force.

EPHING ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (Epping) (17:44): I endorse the sentiments expressed by the Parliamentary Secretary for Trade and Investment, Major Events and Tourism, Mr O'Dea, who acknowledged students currently undertaking their Higher School Certificate [HSC] assessment. My niece, Maryanne Carmody, who lives in my house, is one of them. I have to say that she is a remarkable student. I generally arrive home reasonably late to find she is still studying. I also get up early in the morning to find that she is already up studying. She is a great student and I take this opportunity to acknowledge her. That all leads me to say that my electorate of Epping is known for being a great place in which to live and raise a family. One of the primary reasons that families are so eager to move into the area is the quality of the electorate's educational institutions. My electorate has some great schools that are in high demand by aspirational parents who want to give their children the best possible start in life.

The schools in my electorate are diverse and offer a wide range of education models to suit the needs of any family. One of the schools in my electorate is the Karonga School, a school I am very proud to support. Under the leadership of Principal Mark Gosbell, Karonga is a welcoming and thriving environment for children living with significant disabilities where they learn to live and grow. Earlier this year I was pleased to be able to present the Karonga School with a grant of \$30,000 to help the school to improve accessibility to the oval for students with impaired mobility. The Cherrybrook Technology High School, which is the largest public school in New South Wales, with a student population of more than 2,000, also is located within my electorate. Principal Gary Johnson and his team do an outstanding job of ensuring that the school consistently performs well academically, which has given the school an outstanding reputation as one of the best public high schools in New South Wales. I look forward to the completion of a multimillion-dollar upgrade currently taking place at that school.

The Cheltenham Girls High school is a single-sex State school, which is also in high demand. Cheltenham Girls High School is one of the best. Led by principal Susan Bridge, Cheltenham consistently performs well and has a great reputation. Some members may recall that Susan played an instrumental role in supporting a student at the school who was connected to the tragic Lin family murders. Her commitment to the welfare of that student was exceptional. One might say, "What about Epping Boys?" Despite being another outstanding single-sex school led by principal Tim O'Brien, Epping Boys High School is not actually in Epping. There are a number of students from my electorate who attend the school and I am always pleased to visit the school and support it whenever I can. My electorate also is fortunate to have a healthy mix of public and private education, with great schools in both categories giving parents a range of choices that best suit their needs.

My electorate not only has a range of diverse education options available to families but our local schools often perform well across the board. That is why I was not surprised to see a number of my schools feature prominently in the latest round of National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy [NAPLAN] scores. In the primary school category, among the top 100 schools in Australia four schools in the Epping electorate featured: Beecroft Public School, Epping West Public School, Epping Public School, and Our Lady Help of Christian Primary School. In the secondary category, two Epping schools featured in the top 100 schools of Australia: the Tangara School for Girls and the Arden Anglican School. Of those four primary schools and two secondary schools, I first mention Beecroft Public School.

My most recent visit to Beecroft Public School was to open the new Beecroft pedestrian bridge, which is part of the New South Wales Government's Active Transport Pedestrian Bridges Program. The bridge provides a safe crossing across Beecroft Road for students of the school. Principal Tanya Rose is doing a great job at the school. I was pleased to catch up with her when she joined me in the opening of the bridge. The second school is the Epping West Public School. The Minister and I visited this school earlier in the year where we met with principal Therese Hinder, who introduced us to her team and gave us a tour of the school. Principal Hinder is always welcoming and her school has a great reputation. The third school is the Epping Public School, which is another great local school with a great principal, John Ford. I hope to catch up with John again very soon, although I was with him at a recent local fete.

Mary Hor is the principal of Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Primary School, which is located a short distance from my office. She runs a very school that is a great example of why Catholic education is so strong. Tangara School for Girls Principal Dr Katrina George is someone I know very well as all my daughters attended that school. She does an outstanding job and it is great to see Tangara recognised for its consistently high standards. Last but not least, Arden Anglican School Principal Graham Anderson runs another brilliant school in my electorate. Graham and his team should be proud of the result they have achieved. I am very proud of the schools in my electorate.

LIVERPOOL ELECTORATE BUS SERVICES

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) (17:49): I advise the House of issues concerning bus services in the electorate of Liverpool, most particularly in the Orange Grove Estate and especially the No. 819 service. In short, buses have stopped using bus stops that have been used literally for decades. That is bad enough, but the lack of any sensible response from the bus company concerned simply adds to the aggravation of residents and the local member. The company concerned is Transit Systems. According to a claim in the *Liverpool Champion* on 21 September this year, Transit Systems is Australia's largest privately owned public transport contractor. It had a fine time with the media release it issued about a new depot at Hoxton Park which Minister Constance opened last month. I wish their service was as good as their rhetoric. Quoting a Transit Systems official, the article stated:

"Liverpool will continue to prosper in terms of residential and commercial development", Transit Systems Chief Executive Clint Feuerherdt said.

Our vision is to stay ahead of demand for public transport with adequate planning and of residential growth, as well as connecting businesses and services like the new Badgery's Creek Airport.

As I say, the rhetoric of Transit Systems staff outstrips their service, which includes removing bus stops that have been in use literally for decades. That is made considerably worse because some customers are quite elderly and struggle with walking distances to bus stops. I first wrote to Transit Systems in July this year concerning service 819 and the bus stop in front of 91 O'Brien Parade at Liverpool. I was fairly unceremoniously told in a letter from the company:

As of November 2015 the bus stops located outside of No 91 O'Brien Pde is no longer in use.

There was something in the letter about undertaking a review of "all bus stop infrastructure", by which I assume they mean bus stops. Of course, there has been no suggestion of a time frame for this. There was another stop at the corner of Marsden Road and O'Brien Parade at which drivers were refusing to stop. Transit Systems said in a letter dated 18 July that it was a valid bus stop location, but there had been vandalism there and the signage was now replaced. Apparently the bus did not stop there because, although it was a bus stop, it did not have a sign. That is not an explanation that provided any solace to my constituents. As one of them pointed out, that had been a bus stop for 50 years. Notwithstanding the fact that in its 18 July letter Transit Systems told me that the sign had been replaced, I was still receiving complaints in early August that the bus was not stopping at the corner of Marsden and O'Brien. As of last week I checked and the sign had actually been replaced.

There are two other locations that traditionally have been bus stops but that Transit Systems says are now not. They are both midway along O'Brien Parade at No. 22 on one side and Nos 23 to 25 on the opposite side of the road. Critically, these locations are near to a walkway that goes through to Wildman, Medley and Rogers avenues. A significant number of residents have raised these issues with me. A number of them have contacted Transit Systems, but have had absolutely no success in getting it to agree to change its position. Transit Systems says that the location on the north side of O'Brien Parade at Nos 23 to 25 has never been an official bus stop. That is despite buses having stopped there for decades. One resident tells me that buses have been stopping there for 50 years. The stop on the southern side of O'Brien near No. 22 must have been an official bus stop at some stage because there is still a sign with black letters on a yellow background affixed vertically to the telegraph pole saying that it is a bus stop.

There is a great sense of anger about this issue among residents of Orange Grove. Annette Tay pointed out to me the significant number of older people who are affected by this approach and who have to walk a substantial distance now to get to bus stops. That is particularly a problem if they have things to carry such as everyday shopping. It is an even greater problem for people living in Medley and Wildman avenues. Effectively they can only catch buses at the two ends of O'Brien Parade. All of a sudden, buses no longer stop where they have stopped for decades.

Kerrie Bull is another resident who has contacted me. She had also contacted Transport NSW without a successful outcome. She stressed the importance of older residents having access to public transport. Many do not own a car, or if they do parking in Liverpool is too expensive when they want to do their ordinary shopping. She pointed to residents she knows who are in their eighties and have significant health issues who are expected now to walk long distances weighed down by shopping because buses no longer stop where they have for many years. Ms Bull points out that some buses do apparently still sometimes stop—it depends on the driver concerned, although Transit Systems denies they are bus stops. This suggests two things. The first is that some Transit Systems drivers are much more decent and civilised than the company itself. It also suggests that stopping at these O'Brien Parade locations is hardly the end of the world for bus company efficiency. If some can do it, why not all? Ms Bull also points out that this service is deteriorating with fewer stops. It is quite serious for people who rely upon public transport.

I have also spoken to Mrs Norman. She has lived there for 50 years and confirms that these disputed locations have always been bus stops. She also confirms that some bus drivers still stop there, regardless of what the bus company says. She is, understandably, outraged that there is no official bus stop at 91 O'Brien Parade. That location is directly opposite the stop on the corner of Marsden and O'Brien. It is quite stupid that Transport Systems says there is a stop on one side of O'Brien Parade but not on the other. That does not make any sense to Mrs Norman or to me. Transit Systems should match its service with its rhetoric and provide bus stops that have been there for up to 50 years.

WHEELS BOOK LAUNCH

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour) (17:54): I had the privilege to attend in my electorate on 30 September the launch of a new book called *Wheels* by Caroline Rhodes celebrating the social impact, volunteers and history of Coffs Harbour, Bellingen and Nambucca Community Transport. Probably more than 100 people attended the launch and I was privileged to address them. As I said at the launch, the people who attended actually own the service, not physically but emotionally. The people who use the service have no other means of getting to doctors appointments, shopping or any of the huge number of reasons why they need transport. These people do not have their own vehicle or they are aged, infirm or have a handicap of some sort. People with needs have utilised the service for more than 30 years.

Unfortunately, the first Chief Executive Officer of community transport in Coffs Harbour, Jan Ryan, was not able to join us on the day. Jan is probably one of the greatest advocates for community services and community transport. The community transport office is next door to my office in Coffs Harbour, and I remember Jan coming into the office with a pile of four orange ring binders containing the application form for accreditation issued under the former Labor Government. The Department of Transport required these forms to be filled out for accreditation of the service. Jan was livid about having to fill out these forms. She said that by the time she completed the forms, community transport would have missed its chance for funding for the next year. Jan retired and left a fantastic legacy. Volunteer drivers have given thousands of hours to transporting members of our community.

I was sad to learn at the launch that a fellow called Bill Jones had passed away the week before the book was launched. Bill was one of the volunteers who drives the bus or car to pick up people. Someone told me that they used to get a lift with community transport. I asked them if they knew Bill. They said, "He is a lovely fellow, the most obliging bloke you would ever meet, but he cannot drive you know". That is the kind of volunteer that community transport has. Bill would be so busy talking to his passengers that he would not have his eye on the road. The service's current Chief Executive Officer is Bethany Langford, now Bethany Simmonds. She is not only the CEO of Coffs Harbour, Bellingen and Nambucca Community Transport but also the State chair of community transport and now on the board of the national organisation.

I believe *Wheels* is the first book on community transport in Australia, if not the world. Beth does a fantastic job and she is under the tutorship of John Rooth. He is a retired academic who came to Coffs Harbour. He is chairman of the community transport board. When he walks past my office it is rare that he does not drop in and update me on community transport. He does a great job, as does his board. Trevor Wilson, an Aboriginal elder, is also on the board. He is a wonderful bloke who cannot help but lend community service. These are just a few of the wonderful people who are involved. These volunteers have given up innumerable hours to the service. They provide a fantastic service on a tiny budget in comparison to what it would cost to run transport in any part of New South Wales.

They do it on the smell of an oily rag. They now own a fleet of vehicles, which provide a phenomenal service. I do not believe the community of Coffs Harbour, Bellingen and Nambucca realise the amount of work they do or the great job they do within the community. I commend all the people involved. As I said, I have probably missed out many people. The service they provide is something that governments cannot provide. It is a service that is second to none and it helps people who otherwise cannot help themselves. I commend the author and I commend Coffs Harbour, Bellingen and Nambucca Community Transport.

LIFE EDUCATION OCTOBER CAMPAIGN

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (17:59:5): We often enjoy alcohol at gatherings with family and friends, celebrating momentous occasions with a toast of champagne or a glass of wine. Yet we should be conscious of the far-reaching repercussions of excessive alcohol consumption. According to the Australian Education and Rehabilitation Foundation, alcohol abuse is estimated to cost Australia \$36 billion annually and, according to the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education, in 2014 it caused more than 5,500 deaths and more than 157,000 hospitalisations. A National Health and Medical Research Council report found that approximately one in five people aged 14 years or older drink alcohol at levels at which they risk harm from alcohol-related disease or injury in their lifetime.

Mindful of these sobering statistics, I decided to abstain from alcohol for 28 days as part of Life Education's Ocober campaign. The campaign's message, "Take a break from the booze to help break the cycle of alcohol abuse", is worth widespread support in New South Wales communities. I am proud to stand alongside Deputy Premier Troy Grant, who launched Ocober in Dubbo recently, as well as with the 590 New South Wales residents who have chosen to participate in Ocober and raise funds for Life Education. Last year, Life Education successfully raised more than \$500,000 from the Ocober campaign to fund ongoing child health, alcohol and drug education programs. This year it is aiming to raise \$700,000.

Life Education equips youth to make good life choices, beginning from when kids start preschool until students finish high school. Each year, Life Education delivers drug, alcohol and health education programs in more than 34,000 schools and teaches more than 64,000 children how to live a safe and healthy lifestyle. For example, children in primary school learn about the impact of drugs and alcohol from "Healthy Harold", the well-loved giraffe mascot, empowering them to make well-informed choices for when they will be exposed to drugs and alcohol as teenagers.

Unfortunately, some children are exposed to alcohol abuse from a young age. In 2015 more than a million children were affected by the drinking habits of those around them. According to the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education and the Centre of Alcohol Policy Research, alcohol is a major factor in half of all child protection cases and half of all reported domestic violence cases. The ramifications of alcohol abuse radiate from homes throughout society to our roads and public areas. The Australian Transport Council states that drink-driving accounts for 30 per cent of road fatalities in Australia. Life Education research shows that two-thirds of the public say it is more dangerous to go out at night now than it was 10 years ago, with alcohol involved in around three-quarters of one-punch assaults resulting in death. It is clear that we must embrace the responsible service and consumption of alcohol in order to mitigate the potential for harm to individuals, families and New South Wales communities.

Many restaurants, pubs and clubs in my electorate are vibrant social hubs that practise responsible service of alcohol principles and make great contributions to our local community. Two such establishments that come to mind are the Belrose Bowling Club and Forestville RSL Club. The Belrose Bowling Club has served the public and facilitated community events for more than 60 years. Likewise, Forestville RSL Club serves the community admirably. Alcohol is enjoyed and appreciated with responsibility in these environments. However, considering the adverse outcomes for many children, families and communities, the current general prevalence of alcohol abuse in New South Wales is unacceptable. I encourage people to consider supporting Life Education's Ocober campaign, empowering future generations to make informed decisions about alcohol and to minimise harm in our local communities.

WARNERVALE AIRPORT

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (18:04): Tonight I call for a forensic audit by the Government of the former Wyong Shire Council, now the Central Coast Council, of all dealings regarding the Warnervale Airport. There is a long history of strange dealings when it comes to this airport and the former Wyong Shire Council, which has now been transferred to the new Central Coast Council. In 2012 it was going to build the Wallarah Airport near Bushells Ridge—which it forgot was full of hills, so a plane would not have been able to take off. In 2013 it changed to the Kiar Ridge airport and the council purchased \$17 million worth of industrial land from a company called the Terrace Towers Group—again, one only had to go to Kiar Ridge to know there was never going to be an airport built there.

Interestingly, the Chief Executive Officer of Terrace Towers, who did the deal for the \$17 million, mysteriously became the new director of property development at the council after the deal was done. Quite a few locals scratched their heads and asked what was going on. In 2016 we have the Warnervale or Central Coast airport, where the council went back to the original Warnervale Aerodrome. There is currently an investigation underway as to how the runway at the airport was extended and whether or not it was done legally. The results of that inquest are yet to come. All up, over \$20 million of ratepayers funds have been spent on this airport, which is supposed to become a regional international airport at some stage.

People are really scratching their heads about the latest episode in the saga. Unfortunately, Premier Mike Baird has been sucked into the dealings to try to bring some authenticity to what the council is trying to do because there are so many questions. A company called Amphibian Aerospace Industries [AAI] has signed a 40-year lease with the Central Coast Council to work on amphibious aircraft. This is very interesting because since council proudly announced a \$100 million aircraft factory at the Central Coast airport, employing 240 people as well as providing thousands of indirect jobs, it knows nothing. It has a signed commercial lease but that is confidential—everything to do with the airport is confidential. Council got the Premier to make the announcement for it and I think the Premier has since found out that he was sold a pup.

One just needs to look at the detail to see why he was apparently so upset last week when he found out what was behind this particular company. He said he only went because he was invited and that AAI's non-existent plane-building experience came as a shock to the council after the parties had been negotiating for a year. Interestingly, AAI is a \$140 company. Its head office is a fibro house in Petersham—we have a photo of the house—and it has no assets and no capital. Unfortunately the Premier was given a press release and announced AAI was moving its entire aircraft operation from the United States to Australia. That sounded really exciting—its whole operation, which consisted of two certificates. There is no operation. The chief executive officer behind the company has had to admit it has never actually built a plane, but somehow the Central Coast Council bought that this would be a good use of a 40-year lease of public land at Warnervale.

It gets worse, because the council claimed it was the first aircraft manufacturer since World War II—it forgot to count the two that operate in Victoria. The former mayor was on radio saying, "We had to keep this secret because there was stiff competition to get this company to come to Warnervale, so we rang Avalon airport and Avalon airport said, 'They spoke to us once; we can vaguely remember it'." Illawarra airport said, "They spoke to us a couple of times." There are some serious questions about the council and the airport dealings and it should be forensically investigated.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (18:09): While I understand that the member raises some issues and some questions that ought to be investigated, I did hear an interview between the general manager and Ray Hadley on 2GB. The member for Wyong reminded me of Ray Hadley with that private member's statement. I make two comments. First, while I respect what the member is saying, it is sometimes too easy to attack local councils. Sometimes it is good to provide a balanced perspective. The general manager is unable to defend himself in this place but he made several strong points on 2GB about due diligence going back about five years, with expertise being demonstrated by that organisation to the satisfaction of council in a somewhat commercially sensitive environment.

That entity, as with a lot of entities in our commercial world, may not have built aeroplanes before but has demonstrated expertise to the council's satisfaction. As I understand it, there is no council investment in the company itself; there is a lease whereby council would receive income. I put those matters on the record in the interests of fairness because of the inability of council to defend itself in this forum. However, the issues raised by the member for Wyong ought to be looked at in a fair and balanced way. I counsel the member about attacking councils. In a normal environment we should be supporting councils as they work to provide employment in local areas, which is important.

CRONULLA SHARKS LEAGUES CLUB

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, and Assistant Minister for Planning) (18:11): When I gave my inaugural speech in this place in May 2011, I made the following solemn observation:

While I have watched other grand finals on TV, in 1978 I saw the Cronulla Sharks play in the rugby league grand final replay at the Sydney Cricket Ground. But alas, 33 years later, we are still waiting for a Sharks grand final win.

The late Jack Gibson famously said, "Waiting for Cronulla to win the premiership is like leaving the porch light on for Harold Holt". Well, the wait is now over. After Cronulla's thrilling 14-12 win over the Melbourne Storm on Sunday 2 October, households across the shire can now switch off the porch light. The Cronulla Mall has been a sea of black, white and blue with businesses flying balloons, streamers, flags and displaying posters. Enthusiasts sport their team's colours and logo and the catch-cry, "Up, up Cronulla" is emblazoned across shop windows and there are thousands of Sharks supporters with voices as hoarse as mine tonight.

The shire community is known for its parochialism, its strong sense of character and its passion for the National Rugby League [NRL]. Those attributes were displayed in spades as Cronulla celebrated the Sharks' historic win—their first win in their fiftieth year in the competition. The long road to the premiership has been plagued with heartache for the Cronulla Sharks. Cronulla-Sutherland joined the competition in 1967, the year St George's run of 11 straight premierships ended. The Sharks' first year in competition saw solid results—three wins and a draw. By 1973 the club was into its first grand final and played off against a formidable Manly side which soundly defeated them in the first versus second semi-final a couple of weeks prior. The Sea Eagles emerged victorious by a narrow margin in that encounter, again infamously remembered as the most violent grand final in history. Rugby league historian Steve Haddan described the game as "unrestrained mayhem". The grand final five years later was a rematch of the 1973 classic. On that occasion the two sides produced an 11-all draw. There was no extra time and so, three days later, the two teams met again to battle it out for the title. Cronulla decisively won that encounter 16-0. To add insult to injury, Cronulla was seen as an even stronger chance in 1978, given they had defeated the Sea Eagles 17-12 in the opening week of the playoffs, and had had a convincing win over Western Suburbs in the major semi-final.

There have been many difficult losses and near misses in the years since. The 1988 season—a minor premiership year for the Sharks—ended in a disappointing fizzle, with losses to Canterbury and Balmain in the playoffs. Their second minor premiership in 1999 saw a similarly difficult loss to the Dragons, after Cronulla led 8-0 at half time. As recently as 2014, there was talk of relocating the embattled club interstate amidst controversy, financial difficulties, and a woeful season that saw them finish last on the ladder. However, on 2 October, in front of 83,625 fans at ANZ stadium, the elusive dream finally came true. Leading 8-0 at half time, Cronulla was looking magnificent early on, but the Storm quickly found some impressive form in the second half to shoot to a 12-8 lead. Andrew Fifita's solo run late in the game, perhaps the most memorable moment of the game, turned things around for the Sharks, with James Maloney's conversion securing a 14-12 win.

With that, the Sharks would be bringing the Provan-Summons Trophy back to the shire for the first time. Unsurprisingly, Sunday night saw plenty of revelry on Cronulla's streets and beaches and, of course, at Shark Park at Woolooware, where the team returned to meet ecstatic fans in the early hours of Monday morning. Like you, Mr Temporary Speaker, and the member for Tweed, I was born and bred in the shire. It has been a thrill to share in this very proud moment for my community and its iconic club. I congratulate team captain Paul Gallen—who is celebrating his first premiership at age 35; coach Shane Flanagan; second-rower Luke Lewis—recipient of the Clive Churchill medal for best player on the field for the grand final; and all the players who competed for the Sharks throughout the season. This is a tremendous result of which they can all be enormously proud. There is little else I can say to convey the excitement, the relief, and the sheer joy this win has brought to Cronulla's multitudes of league lovers. So instead, I will conclude with some tried-and-tested words:

Up, up, Cronulla,
the boys in the black white and blue.
Up, up, Cronulla,
name of the sharks fits you.
Sharks, sharks, forever
go out and play without fear.
Now's the time to see good football,
for the sharks are here!
Up the sharks!

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I remind the member for Cronulla that he should not use props or music.

FIREARMS REGISTRATION

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (18:17): I draw the attention of the House to an important issue for my constituents. This House and the community struggle to deal with issues relating to firearms and, in particular, long arms and firearms registration. More than 3,500 members of my community belong to a firearms club of some description, whether they use pistols, rifles or shotguns. As I understand it, there are more than 5,000 licensed firearm owners and 13,000 registered firearms in my electorate. We all remember the Port Arthur massacre that occurred 20 years ago. In response to that event, the Howard Government introduced its most significant and welcomed reforms, which dealt with firearms registration.

I am not suggesting for one moment that that reform should be wound back. However, the registration process for firearms is tedious, it has a number of faults, the paperwork is excessive, the Firearms Registry appears to be understaffed, frequent errors are made, and the police personnel who are charged with responsibility for undertaking inspections of firearm storage do not appear to have accurate lists of the weapons on site. I emphasise that lawful, licensed, registered firearms owners are not committing crimes using their firearms.

Every time we introduce legislation into this place around tightening firearms registration, licence conditions, registration of different weapons and things such as that, it only ever applies to the most law-abiding and respectful of our community. To carry a firearms licence and to be registered in this State a person has to be absolutely crime free. Charges as simple as driving under the influence of alcohol or being subject to an apprehended violence charge are not seen as serious in the courts' determination—although they are significant and important—but if a person's record has any of those blemishes then they are immediately suspended from having their licence and immediately withdrawn from the system. The people who are licence carriers are in the top 10 or 20 per cent of our community in their ability to follow the laws of the land.

Recently one of my local dealers came to see me, ironically just 24 hours before we had yet another break-in in Cessnock in which firearms were the target. This is a frightening and frequent occurrence in my area. Somehow these criminals seem to know where the firearms are. They seem to know which houses to break into and they do not go in to steal jewellery or money; they go in specifically to steal the firearms that they seem to have some knowledge of. Approximately five years ago I spoke in this Chamber on the ammunition bill, which would see people required to register with their name and address the ammunition that they were going to purchase. The purpose of that was that if a crime were committed with a certain type of ammunition the police

could pursue persons who had purchased that particular ammunition. I am informed that there has not been a single occasion since that time when the police have sought to see the books of the ammunition dealers to see who might have purchased particular ammunition.

Think about that: There are 3,500 ammunition dealers in New South Wales. If someone is shot with a .22 slug, how many dealers can the police go to to pursue those details? Those records are kept on-site and cannot be removed from a shop. They contain the names and addresses of the people who have purchased particular material. I welcome a registry and the tightening of gun laws. I welcomed the amnesty that we had in 1996. Perhaps it is time to have another amnesty because a number of people are inheriting rifles that they did not know about from an uncle, a pop or someone like that. If a person turns up with a longarm firearm there is a bit of an inquisition into where that firearm came from and its history. We need some bipartisan, across-the-Chamber improvements in this regard and we need to have a sensible conversation because it is affecting people in my community.

TRIBUTE TO PAULINE GALLAGHER

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (18:22): Even though it is not related to the topic I will speak about, I congratulate the member for Cronulla and the Cronulla Sharks. I admit they are not my team, but congratulations to them. I hope one day my team gets to taste that same glory. I speak on another matter. I congratulate Ms Pauline Gallagher, who is now the former chief executive officer of the Riverwood Community Centre, on her recent retirement and I thank her on behalf of the Lakemba electorate for her tireless work for the community of Riverwood.

I have previously spoken about Pauline in this place. I have often said that she has provided courageous and creative leadership to the Riverwood Community Centre and local communities for more than 40 years. Pauline, often referred to as the "mother of Riverwood", is a local icon and her work has been considered integral to the positive changes in the local community. Riverwood Community Centre was established in 1974 and has been the beating heart of Riverwood for 40 years. Under Pauline's leadership the centre has grown from a small house with three part-time staff to 94 workers and 160 volunteers. As well as offering services for youth, families and the elderly, Riverwood Community Centre is a community hub offering a space for individuals to participate in community activities that foster a greater sense of belonging. Riverwood Community Centre continues to serve the community that grows around it.

The centre is located near Riverwood Housing Estate. Pauline Gallagher has ensured the core aims of the centre focus on the ability to empower people, many of whom are the most vulnerable in society. Activities such as the monthly multicultural morning teas celebrate the diversity of our residents and provide a place for people to meet. The Riverwood community garden fosters teamwork and harmony and provides green space for people who do not have access to a garden. I visited the garden and considered having a plot there, but gardeners must be a resident of the estate. It is not only a place to grow vegetables but also a meeting space where people can interact rather than remain in their homes. It creates a sense of community.

In 2003 Pauline was awarded the Centenary Medal for her services to Riverwood, and this year I was delighted to announce as part of the New South Wales Woman of the Year Awards that Pauline is Lakemba's Woman of the Year. Pauline has an unwavering sense of social justice and selflessness. Wherever there is a need, Pauline will respond without question. Her familiarity with residents and visitors to the centre will be missed. Her legacy of putting people first has shaped the community centre's objectives. There are many stories that tell of Pauline being a rock during difficult times. She assisted those with literacy difficulties to fill in applications for basic services, provided an ear and wisdom to people when they needed it, or simply provided a hug when it was required. Pauline has always been there.

Riverwood is a different place to the suburb it was 20 years ago. It has a high social housing density. As a youngster living in Hurstville I knew Riverwood as a suburb of hard knocks, crime and very little aspiration. Fast forward to today and we see a suburb that is slowly transforming. There is a mix of social and private housing with a suggestion of more to come in the estate. There has been a huge effort to improve facilities in the area. The exterior is very different, but at heart it still has a high density of social housing. It now has a sense of renewed hope and optimism. People no longer look down on the suburb; they see aspiration and hope. Much of that change has been channelled through the community centre.

Throughout this change the centre and Pauline's leadership have remained constant. Last Christmas I conducted a toy drive for families in need. I could not look beyond the Riverwood Community Centre as a place to distribute them because I trusted it to do the job well. Pauline's tenderness, love and fussing over people that others do not give the time of day to is something I will not forget. During Breast Cancer Awareness Month Pauline supported a lady she had taken to have a mammogram when it was discovered she had a breast lump. When asked what she would like to do next, Pauline said she would like to volunteer at a local hospital identifying

the gaps where people could use little bit of extra help. Even in retirement Pauline's service to the community will continue. On behalf of our community I thank Pauline and wish her the very best.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): I remind the member for Tweed that he is not permitted to use props.

HUSK DISTILLERS

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (18:28): I inform the House of a great industry that has begun in the Tweed: Husk Distillers, set up by Paul and Mandy Messenger on the banks of the Tweed River. They hand cut and crush the sugar cane and make a limited supply of rum. It is called Husk Rum. There are only 200 bottles made with each run. It has become a tourism industry.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): The bottle is half empty.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: It may come as a surprise, but there are a number of rum connoisseurs within the halls of Parliament on both sides of the political divide. About six years ago they were on holidays in the Caribbean and witnessed first hand the production of rum. The Caribbean is renowned for that. Husk Distillers has set up on the banks of the Tweed River not far from the great village of Tumbulgum and have gone from strength to strength. In recent times they have increased their range to include a new gin called Ink Gin. Husk Distillers Ink Gin received the best innovation award in the spirits category at the Australian Drinks Awards held recently in Sydney. It is the country's most prestigious drinks industry competition.

In a highly competitive category, Ink Gin competed against some of the biggest global brands, including Jack Daniel's, Woodford Reserve, Bundaberg Rum, Suntory's Yamazaki Hakushu and Hibiki Whiskeys. Ink Gin was selected as the best innovation in the spirits category due to its strong performance across key measures, including purchase intention, excitement and relevance. Ink Gin is the world's first colour-changing gin, derived from the infusion of organic butterfly pea flowers. The floral ink gives the small batch gin a distinctive colour and pH sensitivity, which changes from blue to bluish pink when mixed with lemon juice, lime juice or tonic water.

Handmade at the Husk Plantation Distillery in the Northern Rivers of New South Wales, Ink Gin blends 13 traditional and native Australian exotic botanicals to create a citrus and juniper rich gin with a spicy, bush pepper finish. Previous winners of the award have been Absolut Unique, Smirnoff Double Black and Jim Beam Devils Cut. Never before has a non-global brand won the prestigious award. Ink Gin is the first spirit from the craft distillery to win the title, proving how far the Australian craft spirit industry has come in recent years. With their three daughters Claudia, Harriet and Edwina, the Messengers have plans to expand the distillery and to conduct regular tours. They are also talking to the Gold Coast airport about international people coming through. They are adding value to a local product. It is great to see the cane being hand cut and hand crushed to produce this beautiful, mellow Husk virgin cane gin.

Mr Nick Lalich: Can we have a taste?

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: Tastings will be available later for the member for Cabramatta. The Husk Distillery is expanding its range and its tasting house. I had the pleasure of attending its premises recently and I was amazed at the high level of professionalism and their concern for the product. They have been courted by a number of leading nightclubs in London and Europe that are interested in supplying the gin. Ink Gin is available in many of the leading liquor outlets in Sydney and it retails for around \$80, so it is a high-end gin. I thoroughly recommend it to gin drinkers along with the rum. It is great to see local people take a dream they had six years ago in the Caribbean and turn it into a viable business in regional and rural New South Wales. They have success now and I wish them even more in the future.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): It is amazing that one private member's statement tells us to stop drinking and another one encourages us to drink. It is a rich tapestry today.

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH WEEK

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) (18:32): On Tuesday 4 October I had the great privilege of welcoming Acting Deputy Commissioner Carlene York to the launch of Neighbourhood Watch Australasia at Freedom Plaza in my electorate of Cabramatta. This event was hosted through a joint effort of Cabramatta Local Area Command and Fairfield Cabramatta Neighbourhood Watch to celebrate Neighbourhood Watch Week. Neighbourhood Watch Week took place from Monday 3 October to Sunday 9 October to raise awareness and to promote interaction between the NSW Police Force and the community. This organisation was established in Australia in 1982, but it expanded to the Australasian region this year. It is an excellent community program aimed at preventing crime in local areas.

This initiative presents a great opportunity to contribute to the safety of the community, creating a positive environment to live in. Neighbour Watch assists police in detecting concerns in the community under conditions of finite resourcing by having locals as their eyes and ears. After all, who would know better about the community than the locals who live there? Becoming involved in Neighbourhood Watch is very simple; all it takes is agreement to participate amongst a group of neighbours. They register their Neighbourhood Watch team with the local area command and meet on a regular basis. Should any problems or concerns emerge among the team, one member should liaise with the local area command to ensure that the police are aware of the situation. The daily commitment is just as simple.; it requires members of the team to look out for the properties of their neighbours, to in touch with one another and to be sure to raise any problems should police involvement be required.

If somebody needs a helping hand, the team should reach out and be there for them in their time of need. If they see any problems or anything unusual, they should let the police know. These are small and simple tasks to ensure that the community remains safe and happy. The benefits from such small and simple actions are enormous. Neighbourhood Watch team members maintain contact and make friends with people throughout their area. It nullifies social isolation and creates a feeling of community. Participants also have the satisfaction of knowing that they have made a positive impact on the lives of others. Safer communities are happy and healthy communities; healthy and happy communities are better communities.

I am delighted to say that the Cabramatta Local Area Command has been active and supportive in the establishment of Neighbourhood Watch groups in my electorate for many years. I recognise and thank Acting Deputy Commissioner Carlene York and Neighbourhood Watch Australasia Chief Executive Officer Ingrid Stonhill for hosting this important event. It is an excellent community initiative that is a great asset in keeping neighbourhoods safe. By working together with small pockets of the community we can ensure that neighbourhoods throughout New South Wales remain safe places to live in.

BUSH TELEGRAPH WEEKLY

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (18:35): Hornsby is a rich and diverse area with many resourceful, innovative and successful residents. I will share with the House one of the best -and longest-running success stories, the *Bush Telegraph Weekly*. In 1986 a group of five dedicated Berowra women, Kathie Comb, Aynette Towill, Colleen Holland, Jeanette Hannam and Kate Lamrock, identified that communication was lacking in their neighbourhood and decided to start their own newspaper. This group of community-minded friends came together with a shared idea to present local news in a different way. They wanted to include such initiatives as the newly formed Neighbourhood Watch, which was not being covered by existing publications. The new newspaper needed a name, so the five owners launched a naming competition to give the company its very own masthead. The owners initially dubbed the paper *The Berowra*, but it was not until an L. Coop of Berowra Heights suggested the *Berowra Bush Telegraph* that the Bush Tele was officially born.

The *Berowra Bush Telegraph* started out as a small but reliable American foolscap folded paper that formalised the news, views and reliable information of the Berowra district in a compact fortnightly edition. On 8 March 1986, the *Berowra Bush Telegraph* published its first edition. The Bush Tele ladies are an institution in our area. They provided our news and current affairs long before the days of desktop publishing. Producing papers in the mid-1980s was painstaking and unforgiving. Kathie Comb and her hardworking team initially produced the paper on an electric typewriter. The artwork was then a matter of cut and paste. It was not until later that Sue Beskin of Mount Kuring-gai typeset the handwritten copy on her high-tech typesetting machine, giving a newfound relative ease to the process.

The first ever Bush Tele was printed locally in our shire, with each of the pages collated and folded by hand. I am told that Jan Lloyd and her mother, Mrs Lucas, oversaw this lengthy process and would coordinate the many paper boys and girls to deliver the paper to thousands of local households each week. The success of this family-orientated and trusted local publication was immediate. In its third year the Bush Tele was delivered to more than 4,500 homes. Initially covering only editorial content, it expanded to include the community business directory and, later, the famous bumper car sticker competition. Looking back, it is easy to see why the local community had and still has such an affinity with the Bush Tele. It has become a household name. This success saw the Bush Tele move from being a fortnightly paper to a weekly edition, including, for the first time, in school holiday periods.

As the population of Hornsby grew during the mid-1980s, so too did the Bush Tele. The paper's circulation increased in 1986 to take in the Brooklyn area. In 1991 the paper crossed the Hawkesbury River for the first time to take in the northern riverside community of Mooney Mooney. This new growth meant many new opportunities for the Bush Tele and a wider geographical readership. By 1992 the Bush Tele had grown in editorial and advertising size to become a fundamental part of the Berowra community, bringing together local businesses,

community groups and sporting clubs for the first time. This was the catalyst for the Bush Tele to shift from an American foolscap design to the modern A4 magazine we all know and love today.

The work of its contributors did not go unnoticed. In 1994 the *Bush Telegraph* was nominated as a finalist in the 1994 Hornsby and District Small Business Awards. In 2003 Kathie Comb was formally recognised with a Centenary Medal for her service to the local community, presented by then Federal Minister for Immigration Philip Ruddock. The award, which was given to only a handful of recipients across the electorate, recognised Kathie's significant contribution to the area and her willingness to support community issues through her role as editor of the *Bush Telegraph*. Later, in 2004, the *Bush Telegraph Weekly* celebrated its eighteenth birthday by switching from its older mono-coloured design to a new full colour publication. This edition also featured the reopening of Berowra's long-awaited fire-spotting tower; the *Bush Telegraph* was there on location to cover the opening in full.

Over recent years, the *Bush Telegraph* has expanded its masthead to include a new publication known as the *Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Visitors Guide*. This glossy magazine showcases our beautiful Hornsby bushland shire as a destination for visitors to enjoy. Kathie and her hardworking team have now released nine tourism editions to date, and are very passionate about sharing the fantastic sights, restaurants and events that the shire has to offer. In 2016 our beloved *Bush Telegraph* is now delivered to 23,000 homes and to businesses from Hornsby to the Hawkesbury. Over the years, many things at the paper have, but one thing that has not changed throughout the paper's history is its wonderful editor Kathie Comb. To our community's delight we have been able to keep hold of Kathie as the paper's editor-in-chief now for three decades, where she has grown Bushland Shire Publications and expanded the business.

Kathie has taken this once small, niche publication and transformed it into the successful, growing company that it is today. Kathie and her hardworking team, including Barbara, Christine, Denise, Liz, Lorraine, Moira and Ashlie now manage two mastheads and an emerging online platform to keep our local community informed of current news and events. Today I congratulate Kathie Comb. She represents what is best about our community and what is best about our country. I also congratulate the whole *Bush Telegraph Weekly* crew in celebrating 30 years of this wonderful publication. From a hand-folded paper to the professional publication we know and love today, the *Bush Telegraph* staff deserve nothing short of our utmost admiration and respect for their dedication to the local community.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders at 18:41 until Tuesday
18 October 2016 at 12:00.**