



New South Wales

Legislative Assembly

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Sixth Parliament
First Session**

Tuesday, 21 February 2017

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 21 February 2017

The SPEAKER (The Hon. Shelley Elizabeth Hancock) took the chair at 12:00.

The SPEAKER read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

[Notices of motions given.]

Notices

PRESENTATION

[During the giving of notices of motions]

The SPEAKER: I intend to consult with the Clerks to introduce word limits for notices of motions. I have previously given warnings about this. I am disappointed that at least three members have missed out on giving notices because of the length of some motions this morning.

Private Members' Statements

CASTLE HILL ELECTORATE EVENTS

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Disability Services) (12:11): It gives me great pleasure to update the House on some wonderful achievements in my electorate. I note that the very capable Minister for Sport is in the Chamber. With the winter sport season about to kick off, I inform the House of the construction of much-needed new playing fields in the Hills area, at Caddies Creek, thanks to a partnership between The Hills Shire Council and Sydney Water. I had the great pleasure of turning the first sod on the project with the Mayor of the Hills shire, Councillor Yvonne Keane, and the Property Portfolio Manager at Sydney Water, Grant May. The project will see the construction of two new football fields, which will be used as a cricket oval during the summer, a standalone football field and a baseball diamond.

It should come as no surprise that the Hills is known for its wonderful parks and open spaces as well as its uniquely high participation and volunteer rates across a variety of sports and organisations. I am acutely aware of how important and necessary these new recreational facilities are to the local community. The new playing fields respond directly to the community's need for recreational facilities. The project also ensures the safeguarding of healthy water quality, flood mitigation and ecological sustainability, which was the original purpose for Sydney Water acquiring the site.

The new playing fields are a direct result of the community and two tiers of government, local and State, working together to ensure our growing community has access to recreational facilities. Under the partnership, land that was used by Sydney Water has been donated by the New South Wales Government, and many millions of dollars has been invested by The Hills Shire Council, resulting in the development of the facility. It is a wonderful partnership. The long-term agreement between The Hills Shire Council and Sydney Water will ensure that the open, green space continues to provide the facilities to support our growing community for years to come.

A great example of a wonderful community organisation that makes use of our area's recreational facilities is Castle Hill BMX Club. I had the great pleasure of attending the club's thirty-fifth annual BMX Open at Fred Caterson Reserve on Sunday 12 February. The club was also a recent beneficiary of an \$8,000 grant, as part of this Government's Local Sport Grant Program, to upgrade the first and second straights of the track at Fred Caterson Reserve. That track was put to great use by the more than 600 riders who competed for the prestigious State Series title. The Castle Hill BMX facilities are considered some of the best in the country, which is testament to the leadership of the club and the support provided by The Hills Shire Council.

The event attracted 639 participants, ranging from the ages of four to 65. Winners on the day included Castle Hill BMX Club members Kayden Underhill in the under-eight boys event; Harrison Craig in the 15-year-old boys event; Michael Carruthers in the 40- to 44-year-old men's event and the 40- to 44-year-old men's cruiser event; Julian Carruthers in the 11- to 12-year-old boys cruiser event; Veronica Robinson in the nine-year-old girls event; Sophie Craig in the 12-year-old girls event; and Paige Harding in the 14-year-old girls event. Castle Hill BMX Club once again proved itself as one of the strongest BMX clubs in the country, with a very impressive haul of winners on the day.

The day was a great opportunity to meet riders of all ages and to thank all the wonderful volunteers who helped throughout the day. In particular, I thank the Castle Hill BMX committee and all those who came to the

working bees, directed parking, helped in the canteen or barbecue, delivered water to those who needed it on a hot weekend, helped restock fridges, made burgers by the hundreds, prepared salads, made sandwiches, helped in the cake stalls, sold raffle tickets, were part of the track crews, cleaned toilets and were officials on the day, and finally those who helped clean up after the race was finished. It was a remarkable event involving many volunteers. Most of these volunteers were the parents of riders or riders themselves, and it is once again testament to the hardworking nature and community spirit of volunteers in the Hills.

In the light of the upcoming football season and upgrade to our local sporting fields, I will update the House further on the formation of the Hills Football Association—formed with 19 foundation clubs and the assistance of Football NSW in late 2016. The Hills Football Association is set to commence its inaugural season this year and will cater for approximately 12,000 to 13,500 girls, boys, ladies and men for players of all abilities, with a special needs program. As I have spoken about in this Chamber previously, the formation of the Hills Football Association stems from the hard work of community-minded people who fought valiantly to ensure a specialised competition for the Hills area. In particular I would like to commend once again former Hills mayor Andrew Jefferies, Hills Football Association members Craig Gough, Graeme Luck, Mick Pawelko, Bill Renton and Sue Torville, previous mayor Michelle Byrne and many others. I look forward to updating the House in the future about the great success of the Hills Football Association for the 2017 season.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Western Sydney, Minister for WestConnex, and Minister for Sport) (12:16): I support the words of the member for Castle Hill. In his contribution he demonstrated one of the great examples of how State and local governments can work together in a very practical and common-sense way to deliver better sporting facilities for his local community. Local government and Sydney Water have worked together to develop two new football fields, a new standalone field and a new baseball diamond, which is exactly what communities demand from members of this place. It makes sense that a series of government agencies work together with local government to ensure that people in our communities get access to better quality and expanded sporting facilities. I note the member represents one of the fastest growing areas in Sydney, and sporting facility access is always going to be at the forefront of community minds. Once again, the member has demonstrated his leadership in bringing together agencies of the New South Wales Government and local government representatives to deliver a fantastic outcome for his community.

SHELLHARBOUR HOSPITAL UPGRADE

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (12:17): In 2015 this Government's Minister for Health made a re-election promise to my community to invest \$251 million in a major redevelopment of the Shellharbour Hospital. One year later the same Minister announced that in spite of this promise the only way the Shellharbour community would see that hospital upgraded was if it was sold off to the private sector. The proposed public-private partnership plan would see private operators contracted to construct and operate a new hospital, thereby turning this facility into a profit-seeking enterprise. Since the proposed privatisation plan of the Shellharbour Hospital was announced, my local community members have made their feelings undeniably clear. From protests and rallies to rolling stoppages in services, my community members have spoken and they have rejected the Government's plans for privatisation. When will the Government listen to its citizens?

An announcement which once gave hope to my constituents is now a source of outrage. The redevelopment of the Shellharbour Hospital is undoubtedly overdue, and has been planned by this Government for more than six years. The Government has continued to make cuts to our State's health funding and watched facilities decline whilst demand has grown. Now the Liberal Government hopes to shirk its responsibilities and duty of care of our State's citizens by pushing its health needs onto the shoulders of a profit-seeking private operator. I remind this Government that health care in a modern and just society is not a privilege; it is a right that should be afforded to all our State's citizens.

The same Minister who once promised her Government would fund the much-needed Shellharbour Hospital upgrades then assured us this privatisation proposal would not impact upon the services currently offered at the hospital. A public-private partnership has, in the past, created two tiers of treatment in the same facility, disadvantaging the health care of public patients. Our citizens currently not only expect but also deserve a certain level of service from the New South Wales public health system. However, this Government has reduced our health system to a series price tags and profits. The staff at the Shellharbour Hospital are understandably disturbed about this Government's plans for their workplace. Those plans will lead to the loss of their job security and a decline in the quality and environment of that workplace. The Government promises the current permanent staff a position only "provided an equivalent position exists" in the new facility. Furthermore, those positions would be guaranteed only for two years, after which the private operators of the site could review the positions—based on their efficiency and profitability—and make any cuts they wish.

This is not the first time a Liberal government has attempted to privatise our public hospitals. Port Macquarie Hospital was privatised under a public-private partnership in the 1990s and operated for 10 years

under this structure. During that time it was marked by a poorer quality of health care, substandard working conditions and widespread community outrage—until 2005, when the Labor State Government was forced to buy back the hospital and to fix the previous Government's mistake. This Government should not leave us to clean up its mess again.

Furthermore, it is those who are the most vulnerable in our community, those who rely on the public health system to receive complex and labour-intensive care—the elderly, poor and chronically ill patients—who will be the most impacted by the Government's privatisation plans. Late last year, 27 Illawarra-based doctors wrote to their local newspaper, the *Illawarra Mercury*, to highlight their grave concerns for the Shellharbour Hospital under the proposed privatisation despite a gag order on this policy. In essence, those medical professionals chose to speak out against their employers due to their concern for their patients and the standard of care in the New South Wales public health system. I remind the Government that this announcement was made without notice, and without consultation with staff or the Shellharbour public. The Government has shown no transparency in the workings and development of this proposal and has consequently blindsided an entire community. I ask the Government to reconsider. It must not make the same mistake that was made before. Shareholders should not come before patients: profit does not trump care.

RURAL FIRE SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (12:21): I express my sincere thanks to all local rural fire service crews and other volunteers to whom we are all indebted. From 17 to 19 February in excess of 18 fires occurred as a result of lightning strikes within the Gunnedah and Tamworth areas, the majority of which occurred on the afternoon and evening of Saturday 18 February as a result of an electrical storm front that crossed the districts. Multiple brigades from across these districts responded to fires caused by the lightning, most within a few hours. Gunnedah District Rural Fire Service activated 13 of its 16 units, involving some 40 crews, while Tamworth responded by sending nine units and 18 crews to various locations.

Some brigades responded by assisting neighbouring brigades, only to have to turn around and return to their area to attend a fire behind them. Multiple brigades going to multiple fires in multiple areas stretched their ability to coordinate, but senior brigade management, under the manager at Tamworth, Allyn Purkiss, the superintendent, and others did a magnificent job in attending all of the fires, which, for the most part, were dealt with quickly. Only two fires in Gunnedah and one in Tamworth grew to any size.

During an electrical storm a fire started near Tamworth airport. A rapid aerial response helicopter that was on the ground at the airport at the time took off and landed near the fire. The crews fought that fire with tools and held it until two trucks responded and quickly extinguished it. It had the potential to severely impact Tamworth airport. I also offer my full support to local farmers affected by the recent bushfires, which have devastated property and livestock. I know how difficult it is when people on the land suffer significant loss. That is why it is important for us to rally behind them. Farming is a challenging industry at the best of times, so when disasters such as the recent bushfires occur they can not only cause emotional hardship but also strain finances.

Local landowners need to know that when tragedy strikes we have their backs. I intend to do whatever I can to assist them. I again extend my sincere thanks to all local Rural Fire Service crews and other volunteers who turned out over the week of 17 to 19 February. That work continues. It has been heart-warming to see the community response to bushfires across the region, which is a true testament to the Australian way of life and a true reflection of our Aussie spirit. When times are tough, we do what we can to help—and that is exactly what is happening in our local communities and in communities across New South Wales.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Western Sydney, Minister for WestConnex, and Minister for Sport) (12:26): I endorse the contribution of the member for Tamworth. Many members in this place represent communities touched by bushfires and natural disasters. When confronted with so many different fires in so many different locations, we call on incredibly strong and important members of our community—members of the NSW Rural Fire Service, the NSW State Emergency Service and other emergency services—to stand literally on the front line, and that is what happened a couple of weeks ago in Tamworth. I have seen firsthand the amazing work that those special teams—almost special forces—of emergency services do, dropping in behind the fire line to fight fires up close and in incredibly risky situations. It is only right for the member for Tamworth to recognise in this place the exceptional work they have done and to speak in a heartfelt manner about the damage that has been done to those communities. I know he has their backs.

TRIBUTE TO LYNNE GOODWIN

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) (12:26): I pay tribute to the work and achievements of Lynne Goodwin, the principal of the Arthur Phillip High School. I extend my deepest sympathies to her family, friends and colleagues, and to the entire school community on her passing on 16 January 2017. I acknowledge the high quality

of Lynne's work as an educator in her various roles within the Department of Education, and particularly as the principal of the Arthur Phillip High School. Throughout her career, Lynne encouraged students to engage in all areas of learning. Her enthusiasm and passion for teaching were greatly appreciated by her staff and students. Lynne was well regarded by her colleagues and peers alike. She is remembered as an outstanding educator who shared her knowledge and expertise broadly across the educational community.

Ms Goodwin was a passionate advocate for public education and championed the values of tolerance and respect. Lynne also valued her staff and provided opportunities and resources for her teachers to harness their talents. Lynne developed innovative curriculum structures, including a digital curriculum aimed at meeting the learning needs of all students. Her leadership of refugee programs at the Arthur Phillip High School was recognised by State Governors and the Commonwealth Governor-General. Lynne was an early adopter of new technologies and was able to utilise those skills to enhance student engagement and learning. She was one of three Australian Apple Distinguished Educators and received international recognition for the use of Google Apps in education.

Students were part of the Digital Education Revolution pilot, and they have continued to benefit from one-on-one laptop learning. They continue to benefit from a school infrastructure that supports all teachers and students with technology access. Lynne's innovative approaches attracted State, national and international visitors to the school, and she was always happy to share the wonderful achievements of the school. Ms Goodwin will be fondly remembered by her family, many friends and colleagues and by the entire school community. She leaves a lasting legacy in a school community that is undergoing much change.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Western Sydney, Minister for WestConnex, and Minister for Sport) (12:29): On behalf of the House I offer my condolences for Lynne Goodwin. I met her only twice in my time as a member of Parliament, although her short engagement with me and the member for Parramatta left a mark and showed that she was a woman who was incredibly passionate about her commitment to education, particularly in Western Sydney. The member for Parramatta recognised her willingness to adopt and adapt to new technologies, which the international organisation Apple also recognised. It is people like Lynne who make our schools the great and fantastic locations they are. I express my deep sympathy and condolences for Lynne's family and colleagues and recognise the fantastic contribution Lynne made as an educator in New South Wales.

CANTERBURY-BANKSTOWN COUNCIL 2017 AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (12:30): This Australia Day I had the chance to celebrate some of our community role models and reflect on the importance of acknowledging those who work to ensure that our world is a better place. This year I attended the Canterbury-Bankstown Council 2017 Australia Day Awards ceremony, which was held at the Bryan Brown—one of our favourite sons—Theatre in Bankstown. The event acknowledged local residents of varied ages from a range of endeavours. The 33 nominees in the categories of Citizen of the Year, Volunteer of the Year and Young Citizen of the Year showcased the hard work and achievements of our community. If I were to list all of the nominees and discuss all of their virtues we would be here all day. I appreciate we do not have time for that.

However, I am fortunate enough to know many of the nominees personally and have seen the significance of their contributions to our local community. There can be only a handful of winners but they are all role models. It is always important to acknowledge, where possible, those individuals who work not for reward or profit but for the betterment of our society. The winners in each category represent a cross-section of our community and I was delighted to see each of them acknowledged at the ceremony. Citizen of the Year Colin Chen is a volunteer with the Chinese Australian Services Society and has been instrumental in supporting recent migrants through the complexities of adjusting to life in a new country, including providing free English lessons, support and advocacy services and creating a place for people to belong.

Mr Chen also established the recreational Hua Xing Activity Group for the Chinese community in Bankstown and surrounding areas to ensure that they can get out of their homes and feel comfortable among people with whom they share common interests. Volunteer of the Year Bob Beer has worked tirelessly to ensure that people with disabilities have access to sport and recreational services and programs in our community. For more than 20 years Mr Beer has volunteered with the Recreation Sports and Aquatic Club to deliver those essential services. We all know the importance of inclusion in our society and ensuring that people with a disability are not precluded from participating in sporting or cultural events.

Our Young Citizen of the Year was Sarah Mansour, who took out the award for her work as the co-founder of the Bankstown Poetry Slam. I tried my hand at the Poetry Slam but it seems I am a better writer than poet. I admire their ability to speak for one minute in a way that I cannot. Some of their poems were very touching. I commend Ms Mansour for her encouragement of children. Aside from the monthly Poetry Slam she

also coordinates the Real Talk Youth Impact Program and competition in a number of Western Sydney high schools. I have been lucky to be involved in the program, which gives young people a platform to talk free of the complexities of the language that we use. They say it as it is. Sometimes it is quite confronting and boundaries need to be set, but I love the concept of Real Talk where kids tell us exactly what they are feeling and let us know how we can fix things. There is no shortage of opinions, which is a really fantastic.

As I noted, each of the winners reflects a cross-section of our community. From the arts, to disability services and migration support, the winners and nominees exemplify everything I love about being Australian. A nominee who I must acknowledge is Sister Kalo from the Samoan community. I have had a lot to do with Sister Kalo. She is one of the most genuine and loving people I have met. We could all learn from her work, particularly with young people, in keeping a culture alive in a very proud Australian context.

I thought I was not going to have enough to say but I have plenty to say. I had the great privilege of once being an Australia Day ambassador. One of the things I most enjoyed about it was going out to country towns. I went to Moama, Bombala and a few others. I saw that regardless of whether a person lives in Canterbury, Bankstown, Lakemba, Punchbowl, Moama or Tweed Heads that same spirit is everywhere. Our Australia is made better through the tireless work of our heroes. They do not do it for money or recognition; they do it because they make our society better. Whilst there may at times be some controversy around Australia Day, I find that the spirit of who we are is what we celebrate on that particular day. We embrace the fact that regardless of our varied personal heritage, colour or faith, our best Australia is one that is defined by a shared vision and a love for the country in which everyone belongs and everybody does all that they can to make it better.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Western Sydney, Minister for WestConnex, and Minister for Sport) (12:35): The member for Lakemba has articulated well what all members in this place love and understand about the importance of Australia Day. It does not matter where you come from, your history, your background, your religion or the colour of your skin. Those things are irrelevant on this most sacred of Australian days. I speak from the other side of the Chamber to my learned colleague from Lakemba. That we can both speak so highly of what brings this country together in such a strong way says that, whilst we might have many differences—policy differences or differences in the way we live our lives—there are always many more things that bring us together. It is an opportunity to recognise people in the local community—whether they are in the arts, in disability services, young people or people of religion—who make the spirit of Australia so strong on Australia Day.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (12:36): Today I speak about domestic violence. Domestic violence is a matter of great concern to the constituents of the Myall Lakes electorate. As deputy chair of the Friends of the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault group in Parliament, and with my wife Sue and I having five daughters, this is very important to me and something about which I feel very deeply. Many constituents ask me what the Government is doing about domestic violence and what the Government is doing about it in the Myall Lakes electorate, so I will address those questions.

This Government will never apologise for getting tough. It will never apologise for targeting these criminals. Domestic violence has always been a vicious crime. The Government says, "Enough is enough." As men, we should be saying, "Enough is enough." As a man, I do say, "Enough is enough." Something has to be done about this. The Government has to do something about it. The Government is getting tough on perpetrators. The Government continues to invest a record amount of money for victims—and victims deserve nothing less. The 2016-17 budget doubles the investment in specialist domestic violence initiatives to more than \$300 million over four years. This is in addition to the hundreds of millions of dollars the Government spends each year through mainstream services in justice, police, health, child protection, social housing and homelessness services.

I am delighted that the It Stops Here Safer Pathway, the integrated multi-agency response to high-risk domestic violence victims, is now operating in 18 sites. Importantly for the people of Myall Lakes, that includes the Manning-Great Lakes area. This year's budget allocates \$53 million over four years to take it throughout the State. Safer Pathway is only part of the Government's reform. It is about getting all of the different government agencies and the police into the room together to look at high-risk perpetrators and victims and work out what can be done to help the victim and to get tough on the perpetrator to stop these things from recurring, because we know that domestic violence perpetrators are recidivists. If we want to reduce violence for women, men and children, we need to target the perpetrators of violence as we never have before. That is what Safer Pathway is about. Crime statistics show that more than one in five domestic violence offenders will be convicted of another domestic violence offence within two years. This is a shocking statistic. We need to change that so the violence stops and the victims are kept safe.

That is why the Government has invested \$22 million over four years to roll out police high-risk offender teams. These teams complement the wonderful work the police are doing already to target perpetrators, and the work of our domestic violence liaison officers. I am very pleased to see that the Manning Great Lakes Local Area Command has put on a second domestic violence coordinator in my electorate. The area now has not one but two officers totally dedicated to targeting domestic violence. The message to perpetrators from the Government and from the community is clear: There is no place to hide, the police will track you down and they will get you. Domestic violence is a crime. Assaulting your partner, wife or members of your household is no different from going to the pub and king-hitting someone or committing an assault anywhere in the street. Domestic violence is a crime and it should be dealt with as a crime. Because of its seriousness it should probably be treated as an aggravated crime and dealt with more harshly.

Changing the attitudes and behaviours of perpetrators is essential. For a long time the Australian culture was going to the pub, having too much to drink, going home and bashing the missus, and then laughing about it over the weekend with mates. Those days are long gone. The Government has committed \$15 million over four years to community-based perpetrator interventions run by the non-government sector. I am advised that more than 130 perpetrators have attended the programs since they commenced last year. This support for non-government organisations is in addition to \$237 million the Government is investing to reduce the rate of reoffending in our prisons. This Government is leading the nation. In my electorate the Taree women's shelter is still active, is fully funded and is doing a fantastic job in our community. Any talk that the shelter has been closed or changed is wrong; only the management has changed. The Great Lakes Community Shelter at Forster has received two grants of \$15,000 to assist with its facilities, and funding has been provided also from the seniors concerts. I congratulate President Julie Brady and patron Jan McWilliams.

LIGHT RAIL EXTENSION

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (12:41): I bring to the attention of the House the widespread support throughout my electorate of Balmain for the extension of light rail. I thank and congratulate the thousands of people who have signed petitions, attended meetings and spoken to me at my community stalls about the need to extend light rail not only along Parramatta Road but also into Balmain. We have had a great deal of success with our advocacy of light rail. The Lilyfield to Dulwich Hill light rail line has been operating for several years and is incredibly popular. The CBD and South East Light Rail is under construction and, with the Government unveiling the first stage of the new Parramatta light rail linking Westmead to Strathfield, there is now an opportunity to provide a link from Strathfield to the central business district by light rail along Parramatta Road.

Light rail will make a significant difference for those people who reside along Parramatta Road because it will reduce the noise from buses, which affects the amenity and quality of life of so many. Importantly, it will address one of the major transport management challenges in Sydney by reducing bus congestion in the central business district, which is already at an unacceptably high level. Buses fill the city and often clog it, making timetabling incredibly difficult when they create queues and delays in the central business district. Commuters in my electorate and across this State want reliability. Unlike buses, light rail provides a reliable, timetabled service that allows travellers to predict when transport will arrive at their stop and when it will reach their destination.

The existing light rail service from Lilyfield to Dulwich Hill has been a resounding success, with the uptake far in excess of predictions. In 1999 when I was first elected to the Leichhardt council one of the first motions I moved was to have the council support the Lilyfield to Dulwich Hill light rail line. As the Minister for Transport told us last year, customer journeys increased 60 per cent between 2014 and 2015, jumping from 3.9 million to 6.1 million. That shows the need to increase the capacity of services on that line. Compared with a general traffic lane, which carries fewer than 2,000 people per hour, light rail carriages can carry up to 7,500 people per hour. Every light rail vehicle can carry 200 passengers, which is equivalent to a single lane of traffic two kilometres long.

The Parramatta Road light rail service would therefore carry twice as many commuters as a bus express lane. We also have the former freight rail line, which links Lilyfield to White Bay in my electorate. The renewal of the White Bay Power Station provides an opportunity to have a light rail line there as the power station must be serviced adequately by public transport. There is also the opportunity to have a short tunnel from the White Bay line into Gladstone Park, which would not require the excavation of the park and would allow for discrete entrances to take commuters from that very dense area of Balmain onto light rail and into the central business district and beyond.

I have spoken to many public and private sector organisations that have made it clear that light rail is important for Parramatta Road and for our community. The University of Sydney is seeking to drive the innovation agenda by linking existing health, creative, media and technology nodes with a centralised knowledge hub. It has the potential to play a key role as a catalyst for Sydney's first innovation district, and a light rail service along

Parramatta Road linking the University of Technology Sydney, the University of Sydney and so on would be critical to this development.

Light rail is also important as the claim that WestConnex will reduce traffic on Parramatta rail has gone up in smoke. Contrary to the claim by the former Minister that Parramatta Road would be a nirvana, the Camperdown access ramps are to be scrapped, which means that traffic will move from Ashfield and Haberfield along Parramatta Road, not under it. Despite the fact that the Parramatta Road Urban Transformation Strategy relied on that reduction in traffic along Parramatta Road as one of its justifications, that justification no longer exists, which makes the transformation strategy incredibly unreliable and unjustified.

It is now clear that those transport links are important. Light rail works; it must be connected. There is an opportunity to connect light rail along Parramatta Road and into Balmain. We know that the knowledge sector wants it, the business community wants it and ordinary travellers from my electorate and greater Sydney want it. It is time for us to examine the opportunities in that corridor. I call on the Government to work seriously with my community and all interested stakeholders to progress the discussions that are already underway. I look forward to working with the Minister and the new Premier to realise these important projects, not just for the people of my electorate but also for the people of greater Sydney. The project will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, support fair transport and ensure that Sydney has a public transport network of which we can all be proud.

PENRITH COUNCIL AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Ms TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Women, and Minister for Ageing) (12:46): I acknowledge and commend the 2017 Penrith City Council Australia Day award recipients as part of the 2017 Australia Day honours. In total, eight locals were recognised in categories ranging from Local Appreciation to Local Hero, Sportsperson of the Year, Citizen of the Year and Young Citizen of the Year. All those men and women ought to be incredibly proud of their efforts, work, and tireless contribution to enhancing our local community.

I highlight the extraordinary efforts of Mr Ross Hutchison—known affectionately throughout Penrith as "Rossco"—and that of Mr Mitchell Beggs-Mowczan, Penrith's citizen and young citizen of the year respectively. These men have made substantial impacts within our Nepean Valley region, and I am deeply encouraged and inspired by their work. I turn to Rossco, Penrith's Citizen of the Year for 2017. Rossco has lived in Penrith for more than 50 years—an achievement in and of itself, which demonstrates his love for the community that he cherishes and calls his own. Prior to his business career Rossco spent most of his early childhood growing up in Penrith and Kingswood. Yet Rossco's natural talent and ability, combined with his creative nous and ingenuity, meant that opportunities and exciting adventures beyond Penrith were calling. He has been a dancer, singer, actor, choreographer, producer, writer, broadcaster, teacher, master of ceremonies, a master coach and even a reverend minister.

Upon moving back to Penrith more than 30 years ago, Rossco became an indispensable and iconic pillar of our community. As part of the work he is most renowned for in the Penrith community Rossco established the first Performing Arts Academy in Penrith and subsequently went on to teach thousands of children in the profession, even touring as part of overseas festivals. Rossco has served our local community with distinction and purpose, giving back through his work in community radio, Rotary and the Penrith Carer Car, which is responsible for providing transportation options to those with a disability or those who are disadvantaged. Just last Saturday I attended the Luddenham Show and came upon Rossco. During a great chat, he told me that he is about to take charge of yet another carer car. Rossco is unstoppable. I cannot express in words my gratitude and that of the Mulgoa community for Rossco's service.

I highlight Penrith's Young Citizen of the Year for 2017, Mr Mitchell Beggs-Mowczan, and what he has achieved, at just 24 years of age, in putting others first and selflessly sacrificing. In his role as Indigenous Health Project Officer at Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network, Mitchell is heavily involved with programs and campaigns aimed at improving the livelihood of Indigenous Australians. This is exemplified most by his engagement with the Closing the Gap program.

Beyond the requirements of work and official campaigns, Mitchell works with young Indigenous men in his own time as a way of connecting with Indigenous youth and supporting them in transforming their lives for the better. Mitchell frequently goes above and beyond what is required or is expected by our society. He regularly trains young men for free at his local gym. One of his gym buddies, Craig, is visually impaired and has a pacemaker. They celebrated a milestone together when Craig dropped his weight recently to under 100 kilograms. Most notably, Mitchell is best known for his remarkable work in raising funds for lifesaving surgery—performed by Dr Charlie Teo—for Ziad Soltani, a young St Clair boy. The fundraising campaign was spearheaded by 24-year-old Mitchell and raised more than \$200,000. It is hard to believe that a young man can have so much drive, conviction, love and selfless passion. Mitchell has all of that and much more.

On the evening of the award ceremony I had an opportunity to speak at length with Mitchell and his mum, who recalls the night that Mitchell heard about Ziad's condition and his parents' inability to afford to pay for the operation. He was agitated by the situation and could not rest. He said, "Mum, we have to do something. I have to do something." Many of us are moved by compassion; Mitchell is moved by empathy, and I commend him for taking action. I reiterate the gratitude and thankfulness that the people of Mulgoa have for the worthy reward recipients. I have only respect for the exemplary work of those individuals who contribute and serve their community in a meaningful and profound manner. They add to the wonderful, vibrant and exceptional community that already exists in Western Sydney. On behalf of the New South Wales Government, I commend the reward recipients. I salute them and thank them on behalf of the thousands of people that they help directly through their efforts. I look forward to working with them this year to further promote Western Sydney.

"TALK ABOUT IT" REPORT

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (12:51): A little under 200,000 students will be starting their university degrees in New South Wales this month, of which 55 per cent will be female. Parents wish for their children to have a safe transition to university and that universities are safe places. A 2015 report by the National Union of Students about women's experiences of university life entitled "Talk About It" showed that 75 per cent of respondents had experienced harassment, sexual assault and/or violence while studying at university, which is a frightening statistic. Let us break it down. Of those, 14 per cent said they had experienced rape or attempted rape and 75 per cent of those who reported violence or sexual assault to the university said the response was inadequate. The real horror comes not only in the statistics but also in the culture of sexual abuse and bullying that exists in our universities.

Some students at an on-campus residence ran a Facebook page where they photographed sexual behaviour on campus and made explicit comments about it. Five students accused of sexual harassment were expelled and two others were suspended from a residential college for sharing photos and videos of the clothed breasts of female residents on a Facebook message group. Students at a university college have published an annual journal of sexual exploits on campus, which rated students according to criteria such as cleavage and number of sexual partners. Students at the college also infiltrated a brothel, and students at another college burnt a gay pride flag. College leaders have regularly broadcast intimate details of people's sex lives to students gathered at functions, which often resulted in shaming and derisive comments being made. The near death of a female student has also been reported.

Those kinds of incidents are not new and have been reported for generations, but universities have been slow to respond and when they do, the response is often one of defensiveness. The member of Summer Hill, who is the shadow Minister for Women, and I met recently with university officers for women to hear their concerns about sexual assaults on campus. They are contacted by students who are concerned about the lack of appropriate responses by universities to incidents and the lack of proactive policies on consent training, best practice reporting and services for victims. The women's officers have no specialist training and are experiencing vicarious trauma after hearing stories of rape, sexual assault, violence and harassment. When an assault is reported, victims are encouraged to make a complaint to police; otherwise, no action will be taken because it might be a case of hearsay. This makes the issues much more complex as the students feel they are impacted by the many levels of control and responsibility-shifting, which goes to a culture of victim blaming.

The way that victims are treated often makes it unclear who the criminals are. At a recent domestic violence and sexual assault roundtable at a regional university I was appalled when told that victims of sexual assault were forced to travel to Canberra or Adelaide for forensic examination following sexual assault. They were transported in a police car without eating, drinking, toileting or showering. Who are the criminals? Students at university campuses are told that they were too drunk, should have worn something different and to report incidents more quickly—apparently eight minutes was considered a delay. Who are the real criminals here?

Universities spend more time and resources stopping plagiarism than they do preventing sexual assault. Unlike the punishment for rape the punishment for plagiarism is strong and consistently applied. Reports of rape or sexual assault are made through online complaints and feedback portals. Who are the criminals? It is clear that universities are not providing a safe environment for students. I fear public policy will silo sexual assault victims. It should not matter whether you are in your home, on the street, in a residential care facility, a residential college or anywhere else on campus, how old you are, your gender, or your level of ability or cultural background—everyone should be safe from rape and sexual violence.

All institutions must have clear and strong methods to deal with sexual assault that include appropriate services for victims of rape and sexual assault. Victims must be treated in a dignified manner. Presently the Federal Liberal-Nationals Government is putting the axe through 1800Respect. Last year it tendered the triage for that service to a private provider that requires victims to tell their story twice in order to receive help. Advocates have been silenced and there is now a profit to be made from rape and violence. Labor is working with the community

and universities to end sexual assault and ensure that victims are treated with dignity. I urge members to sign the petition to stop sexual assault on campuses and to work towards increased funding for victims' services.

CENTRAL WEST FIRES

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES (Barwon) (12:56): I will give the House an update on the emergency fire situation in the Central West. The Sir Ivan fire started in the Dunedoo-Cassilis area and spread north to Coolah and the surrounding region. It has burnt out nearly 60,000 hectares. To assist members to understand the scale of the fire, 60,000 hectares would cover from the Sydney Harbour Bridge to the bottom of the shire and if it started at Bondi it would end up west of Parramatta. It is a big area. The fire has incorporated several hundred landholders and a number of small villages, such as Uarbry. There is only one house left standing in that village.

Whilst Rural Fire Service members were protecting property in the community, a number of firefighters lost their own properties. Last week and yesterday I visited a number of towns affected by the fires. I acknowledge the community groups within those towns. Last Friday the Premier, Shayne Fitzsimmons of the Rural Fire Service, and the emergency services Minister visited the region. Yesterday and this morning the police Minister informed the community of the services and processes that are triggered when disaster declarations are issued. I pay tribute to the Country Women's Association [CWA], also known as the country army, which last Wednesday had its volunteers commence house visits to properties in the Dunedoo area. They do an outstanding job.

The Dunedoo showground has been taken over by Country Women's Association and BlazeAid. Those groups are supporting a significant number of families and volunteers. At the other end of the fire in Coolah, 60 kilometres to the north, a group of volunteers known as Care for Coolah has taken up residence in a shop in the main street and is distributing clothes and food. They also provide accommodation link-ups. Care for Coolah is providing a washing and ironing service for those affected by the fire and for the volunteers. Some of those people had not had a change of clothes in four days. It is something I have not seen before. The volunteers in the area are struggling to keep up with the day-to-day response required.

I thank the CWA and the Caring for Coolah group, which is affiliated with a number of churches in town, for dispensing goodwill and plenty of hugs in the main street. I thank Laurie Dawson, who heads up BlazeAid—the group that comes in after disasters to provide fencing and volunteer support. About 5,500 kilometres of fencing has been burnt out; it is very difficult to restock areas if animals cannot be fenced in. Laurie rolled his car the other night on the way back to Coonabarabran, where he stays. He is back on deck today. With his help and the help of the Australian Rail Track Corporation, John Holland and NSW TrainLink, we will be ripping out some of the old rail line that has been unused for quite some time to assist in the re-fencing program.

Warrumbungle Shire Council has done a fantastic job. I acknowledge Anne-Louise Capel, who is one of the councillors. She has been involved in the recovery centre in Coolah. The Red Cross, from day one, has been doing an outstanding job in providing a fantastic role model. Coolah is holding a community support day to say thank you to volunteers. That will be held at the sports ground this Sunday as part of the debriefing exercise. Many of these people have been traumatised by this disaster. They have lost everything, although most of them have not lost their sense of humour, which is fantastic. They feel lucky and blessed that they still have their health.

Essential Energy, Telstra, the NSW Police Force, the Rural Fire Service, the NSW Volunteer Rescue Association, health staff, the Insurance Council of Australia and local council staff are all doing a fantastic job. The Local Land Services and the vets—in particular Jillian Kelly—have had to oversee the putting-down of several hundred animals. That number will only grow. They have been doing an outstanding job, and should be supported. The stock and station agent Milling Stuart has been out there providing coordination of agistment right across the area in an operation that is second to none. I wish the rural financial counsellors all the best, as they go into that community next week and listen to heartfelt stories. That will help us formulate our response to that disaster.

INGLESIDE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Education) (13:01): I will update the House on the future of the Ingleside precinct in my electorate of Pittwater. Ingleside is nestled between Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park and Garigal National Park and the escarpment at Warriewood. It acts as Pittwater's western gateway to the rest of northern Sydney. Ingleside has been designated for residential subdivision since the 1920s, and after many decades of inaction, Ingleside is now positioned to become Pittwater's newest village. Late last year we released draft precinct plans for public exhibition, which will conclude at the end of this month. The new community will have its own village centre and up to 3,400 new homes providing a range of housing choices such as terrace homes, apartments up to three storeys, and traditional detached houses on larger blocks.

Pittwater is growing, and this is one way we can respond to the demands for growth in a way that is sustainable and which will provide a greater diversity of housing options. It will also respect the enormous

ecological diversity of this part of northern Sydney. The New South Wales Government is working alongside our community to ensure we manage growth and change in the most sustainable way possible. The new Ingleside precinct will provide much-needed new housing, community benefits and education to respond to our community's growing needs. The new community is designed to be a benchmark for sustainable development in Sydney, New South Wales and Australia, with one-third of the precinct dedicated to environmental conservation, one-third to community open space and one-third to housing.

There is more biodiversity in Ingleside than in the entire United Kingdom and, while this is an important opportunity for increasing housing supply in our community, we need to be mindful of the unique character of Ingleside and how special this area is environmentally. More than 200 hectares will be retained as public environmental lands, recognising Ingleside's amazing biodiversity and natural landscapes. Wildlife corridors, including fauna-crossing tunnels under Mona Vale Road, will help protect movement patterns of native animals between the adjacent national parks. Important heritage sites such as Whale Rock, Ingleside House and the Katandra Bushland Sanctuary will also be preserved and protected. The draft plan proposes 15 hectares of sportsgrounds and active parklands. Another three hectares is set aside for the creation of a new public school to serve the Ingleside community.

New public transport connections to Macquarie Park and the North Shore railway line, and the inclusion of up to 10 per cent affordable housing, will mean that Ingleside will be attainable for younger working families as well as retirees and downsizers. There is a clear need for a greater diversity of housing options so that younger families can move into the area and older families can downsize to a style of housing that is appropriate to their needs. Future residents will also benefit from upgrades to Mona Vale Road, which will see that key traffic artery expanded to two lanes in each direction and will implement a number of essential safety measures. Upgrades to Powder Works and Chiltern roads will also provide better infrastructure for the new community. Ingleside will showcase unprecedented environmental standards for new development in Sydney, with water sensitive and energy-efficient urban design, light-emitting diode street lighting and infrastructure for electric vehicles.

While the former Labor Government planned to build more than 4,800 homes in Ingleside, detailed transport modelling and environmental analysis over recent years has meant that we are now aiming for 3,400 instead. This will enable a more appropriate and sustainable settlement pattern, while also allowing greater protection for the natural environment. It will also avoid congestion on the expanded Mona Vale Road. Mona Vale Road requires attention in any event. We need to be careful that the upgrade of Mona Vale Road is consistent with future settlement patterns in Ingleside to ensure that as we expand and improve the road we do not increase congestion at the same time. The Ingleside precinct is a commitment by the New South Wales Government to focus on better environmental outcomes and greater coordination of planning, environment, heritage and local government issues. Our Government is continuing to deliver for Pittwater. I look forward to updating the House on the progress of the Ingleside precinct in the near future.

The Indigenous heritage of the area is also important. Yesterday I was present at the dedication of Moon Rock, an important Aboriginal cultural heritage site adjacent to Garigal National Park. That is an example, along with Whale Rock, of the incredible legacy of Indigenous artwork in the local area. It is testament to the rich history of Aboriginal occupation of the northern beaches. It is really important that we acknowledge Aboriginal ownership and continuous settlement of the area. That must be appropriately recognised in our plans to expand the opportunities for more people to call Pittwater home.

AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (13:06): Port Stephens is a beautiful place in which to live, work and play. But when one looks deeper, beyond the dolphins and koalas, one sees where the real beauty lies: in its people. Today I share with the House the Port Stephens residents who were recognised for their contributions to community on Australia Day this year. I was delighted to learn that three hardworking locals were recognised with a Medal of the Order of Australia [OAM]. Leonard Graff, or Len as I know him, was awarded an OAM in recognition of his service to the Western Region Academy of Sport.

Len was a longstanding resident of Bathurst, where he served on the boards of the Bathurst Harness Racing Club and Harness Racing New South Wales. Len has a great fondness for a range of sports and is a strong proponent of the sports academy model, which seeks to train and mentor talented young sportspeople as they pursue a career in sport. I was told by Len's daughter that she has not seen him cry often but that on learning of his OAM the tears started to flow. I know he will really appreciate my mentioning that here!

Colin Edwards was awarded an OAM for his advocacy service on behalf of local veterans. Colin is a life member of the Returned and Services League [RSL] and a former director of the Nelson Bay Diggers club. Port Stephens is home to many current and former defence personnel, and it is so important to have local advocates such as Colin to assist them. Former mayor of Port Stephens Ron Swan was awarded an OAM for services to

local government and the community. Following a career as a police officer, Ron continued to give back to his community through his involvement in the Police Citizens Youth Club [PCYC] and other local community groups. Ron is also the founder of the very successful Port Stephens Clans on the Coast event.

A number of other impressive Port Stephens locals were recognised with Australia Day Awards. Raymond Terrace Senior Citizens Club is an institution in Port Stephens. It was terrific to see the treasurer of that group, Hazel Grey, recognised as the Port Stephens Citizen of the Year. Hazel is well known to many in Port Stephens. This great-great-grandmother has been serving her community for more than 60 years through the Red Cross, the RSL, the Country Women's Association and the Raymond Terrace Senior Citizens Club. The recipient of Young Citizen of the Year for Port Stephens was no surprise to me. Having nominated young women to represent Port Stephens at the YMCA Youth Parliament, I knew that we would see more of her.

Carissa Maher graduated as dux of Medowie Christian School when she completed her Higher School Certificate last year. She was also awarded the Australian Defence Force Long Tan Youth Leadership and Teamwork Award. Carissa's studies were interrupted in 2013 when she was diagnosed with Crohn's disease, and it is testament to her resilience that she has persevered and will be commencing her legal studies at the University of Newcastle this year.

Martial arts instructor Tony Gillespie was named Sportsperson of the Year. Tony and his partner, Kelly, run the Imugi Taekwondo and currently train around 60 Taekwondo students as well as 40 fitness clients. He has also recently started training people with a disability in martial arts. Tony has been competing in national martial arts competitions since he was 12 and was awarded the National All Styles NSW Champion Open Male Black Belt in 2015 and 2016, and the National Champion Middleweight Male Black Belt Point Sparring in both 2015 and 2016. We are fortunate to have Tony and Kelly in Port Stephens, inspiring children and adults to grow personally through martial arts.

Three Port Stephens Medals were awarded on Australia Day. Tomaree Accommodation Service [TAS] is a not-for-profit organisation that runs an accommodation service for people with a disability. Its purpose-built accommodation is operated by qualified and caring staff. The Tomaree Accommodation Service is perhaps best known for its monthly social events for people with a disability, which are also open to the community. These events provide an important social connecting atmosphere for the approximately 100 people who attend and are organised by valued volunteers. It was terrific to see Pam Raeburn representing the very special team at Tomaree Accommodation Service collecting the award.

The Boat Harbour Parks and Reserves Committee is one of the many residents committees which keep Port Stephens beautiful. In recent years the committee has focused on the southern headland of Boat Harbour, working to convert an underutilised reserve into a welcoming community space. Walking tracks lead from the car park to a rock cairn and onto the headland where the committee has constructed a barbecue area and seating for whale watchers. This area is also a place of solace and reflection for families touched by suicide. Peter Murray and his team do an amazing job, and this is one of my family's favourite places.

I was pleased to see local legend Dave Sams recognised, but I am not sure where to start because his contributions are so many. Dave helped to start the not-for-profit Salamander Recycling centre 20 years ago. He still works there and volunteers with Landcare. His life took a turn after a family tragedy, which saw him work to spread the message of suicide prevention. He is a founder of the Port Stephens Survivors of Suicide and is a driving force within the Port Stephens Suicide Prevention Network. Dave also volunteers with Tomaree Youth Community Action. Dave does all this whilst walking with the assistance of two crutches due to a hereditary condition which affects his legs. Dave is a quietly inspiring man. Congratulations to all of Port Stephens' award recipients. On behalf of all Port Stephens residents, I thank them for all that they do to make our community stronger, more caring and even more beautiful than it looks.

COOGEE BEACH STORMWATER OUTFLOW

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) (13:12): The problem with the Coogee Beach stormwater outflow is not a new issue for my electorate; it is one that has received quite a bit of press coverage lately and has generated a number of constituent contacts with my office. The outflow runs into the northern side of Coogee Beach. It is important to understand some of the history of this stormwater outflow from a creek that formed the valley that today is called Coogee. This creek is fed by four other major creeks that have flowed mainly from the northern side of the valley for thousands of years. With the continuing development of Coogee and the loss of permeable land, increased rainwater flows into these creeks and ends up at the northern end of Coogee Beach.

Substantial flows are not a new phenomenon. Back in 1859, when the Randwick Municipal Council was incorporated, one of its first capital works projects was to build a bridge on Beach Street across this creek line. The first storm washed away that bridge. Another bridge was built, and another storm washed away that bridge.

Finally, the council got it right and built a stone bridge, which stood for years. Even as recently as 1999 there was a major storm event in Coogee, which ripped the gates surrounding the culvert at the Eastern Suburbs Tennis Club from their foundations and took them downstream to Coogee Oval.

This stormwater pipe has significant flows that have been calculated at up to 30,000 litres per second—that is, 30 tonnes of water pass each point every second in a major storm event. However, the base flow may contain contaminants that cannot be directed out to sea whilst we are accommodating major storm outflows. I have been working on this issue for a couple of years with the council and with Sydney Water. Sydney Water, which has been particularly helpful in this regard, has allocated funds, conducted a significant number of inspections and realigned its sewerage network to ensure that contaminants are not entering this stormwater drain. Sydney Water has to be forever diligent as it is dealing with a system that dates back to the twentieth century.

There is also an issue with private connections. In 2008 when I was mayor of Randwick and sewage was leaking onto the southern end of Coogee Beach, fingers were immediately pointed at Sydney Water. However, it was later found that the sewage was coming from a private residence further up the catchment. I contacted the current Minister for Regional Water and asked him to consider some of my proposals, and I have been working with council to ensure that we improve environmental outcomes for all beach users. There is no silver bullet solution but we must ensure that the thousands of people who swim at Coogee Beach—the best beach on the eastern seaboard—and the community are confident that the council and Sydney Water have done everything they could to ensure they have the best water quality.

TAXI INDUSTRY

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale) (13:17): I bring to the attention of the House an incredibly stupid matter that is affecting my constituents and I am sure the constituents of other members. More than six months ago I referred to the reckless treatment that taxi plate owners received under this Government and, in particular, the shoddy treatment they received from senior members of this Government. Members might remember my friend and constituent Kerry Koliadis, a retiree who has seen his savings wiped out in a massive betrayal of good governance by those opposite.

Late last year Mr Koliadis and a group of his elderly friends were peacefully protesting outside Parliament House when Mr Koliadis received assurances not just from former Premier Mike Baird but also the current Premier Gladys Berejiklian and the transport Minister Andrew Constance that he would be looked after. Not long after that Mr Koliadis found out just how much the Government's reassurances were worth when he was offered the grossly inadequate sum of \$20,000 for each his taxi plates when he had already lost hundreds of thousands of dollars of value thanks to this Government treating taxi plate investors like second-class citizens. This Government lied to this poor man, who watched his retirement investment, for which he had worked hard all his life, crumble around him.

This has been the experience of far too many people across our great State who believed that this Government would uphold one of the core principles on which the Liberal Party was founded—that governments have an obligation to enforce citizens' property rights. Nevertheless, many taxi plate owners accepted that the Government had made a genuine—although paltry and inadequate—concession through the provision of \$20,000 transitional assistance payments to replace the hundreds of thousands of dollars those investors have lost in the capital value of their taxi plates due to the Government's reforms. I repeat that I am no opponent of reform, but if those opposite were fair dinkum they would not be allowing taxi plate owners to be robbed of their hard-earned savings by the very Government upon which they rely to regulate and provide an implicit guarantee of their investment.

Taxi plate owners accepted this concession, but I now turn to the incredibly stupid issue that my constituent Mr Koliadis has brought to my attention. Given the unusual nature of this adjustment payment that this Government provided to partially compensate taxi plate investors for their loss of capital value, Mr Koliadis sought further information from Minister Constance's department regarding the tax treatment of this payment. While it would have been nice for Mr Koliadis to have been able to assume that this payment would be treated as a capital adjustment to his investment, as a small recompense on his massive government-facilitated investment loss, unfortunately it appears that the then Treasurer Berejiklian and Minister Constance either did not think to speak to their Federal colleagues or did not care enough to argue for fair tax treatment for the taxi plate investors whose savings they have wiped out.

I have a letter from the Federal Minister for Revenue and Financial Services, Kelly O'Dwyer. Mr Koliadis has had to pursue this himself. No-one had the decency to explain to him that his payment was taxable; he had to go all the way to the Federal Minister to get that answer. The letter states in no uncertain terms that Mr Koliadis and the many thousands of other mum and dad investors like him across New South Wales are going to be forced to pay income tax on this small amount of compensation that the Government has offered them. They are giving

him \$20,000 and taking nearly half of it. How pathetic, how absolutely stupid, and how grossly unfair that the State and Federal governments have concocted a plan that will see these hardworking investors paying the Government for the privilege of being ripped off! This sort of ridiculously idiotic outcome could happen only as a result of a senior ministerial team that has no business experience and no real understanding of our taxation system and which could not care less about the interests of the people who rely on it.

No wonder the light rail has gone off the rails! For Mr Koliadis and people like him, the flow-on effects of an increase in taxable income can snowball costs, with the potential loss of the Senior and Pensioners Tax Offset, Seniors Card, pension and pension payments, all because they decided to call this payment income rather than a capital adjustment—all because the Government wanted to give Scott Morrison those extra few pennies rather than give them to taxi plate owners. It is disgraceful. We all know that the Federal Government is in the red, but if the State Government wants to dump our State's money into propping up its mates in Federal Treasury, it should be honest and do it directly: It should not cause further pain to decent citizens like Kerry Koliadis, who are simply trying to make it through their retirement without this Government kicking them in the guts again and again.

RYDE LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (Epping) (13:23): I was pleased to attend the Ryde Lunar New Year celebrations that took place in Eastwood over the weekends of 4 and 5 February and 11 and 12 February. I was joined by our newly appointed Minister for Finance, Services and Property, the Hon. Victor Dominello; the Federal member for Bennelong, John Alexander; and Ryde Mayor, Bill Pickering. It is a great privilege to represent my electorate of Epping, which boasts some of the largest Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese communities in Sydney. It has been my joy to work closely with so many people from various backgrounds who are passionate about contributing to the traditions and values that Epping is proud to uphold. New South Wales is a State built upon the wealth of many, and the Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese communities have earned a name for themselves for their hard work, loyalty and harmony.

I am proud to say that this is reflected in my electorate of Epping through the consistently high achievements of these communities and the many valuable contributions they make to the Australian way of life. Lunar New Year is a time for these communities to welcome the year ahead and to refocus their efforts on the things that really matter: good food, friends and family. In particular, the Year of the Rooster is symbolic of initiative, energy and fresh beginnings. It stresses the importance of motivation and a strong sense of responsibility in all facets of life. These are especially uplifting attributes to help guide us in these times.

On Saturday 4 February 2017, the morning event was marked by a cooking competition that is regularly held as part of the commencement of the celebrations. Last year I had the privilege of participating in the cooking competition. I think I came last, but it was great fun in any event. Some of the participants are very good cooks indeed and would not disgrace themselves on any reality TV cooking show. Of course, this year there were lots of chicken dishes. I am pleased to report that representatives of the Ryde Local Area Command won this year's competition, which was a great tribute to them. I am sure the judges had a significant task in deciding the winner.

The event on 11 February 2017 was marked by exceedingly hot weather. Members may recall that temperatures reached 45 degrees. I had to sympathise with the person who volunteered to parade around in the rooster suit that morning. I do not know his name but he deserves some specific commendation of his own. The grand celebration day on 11 February featured a day-long program of music, dance and other performances, including Korean drumming and Chinese dances. It started with an official welcome at which there was a lion and dragon-eye dotting ceremony to bring luck and good fortune. The dragon parade was something to behold. The day concluded with a traditional lion dance and fireworks to scare off the devil and bring wealth and good fortune for the new year. In the afternoon there were performances from vocalists, instrumentalists and dancers demonstrating modern and cultural dances. Of course, there were also the fabulous food and market stalls.

I commend the outstanding efforts of the Eastwood community over those weekends in celebration of the Lunar New Year. I thank in particular Mr Hugh Lee, OAM, who chaired the Eastwood Lunar New Year committee. Through his enormous input and guidance he made the festival the great success it was. I also thank the Ryde Lunar New Year organising committee, including founding chairman Justin Li; Dr Anthony Ching; Melissa Kong; Jeffrey Tse; Wilson Fu; Danny Yu; Councillor Roy Maggio; Dr K. G. Choo; Joe Yu; Tony Tang; Esther Lee; Greg Barclay; Michelle Carter; and Stephanie Foley. They achieved an excellent result. To conclude, I acknowledge the significant contribution of the Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese communities and look forward to the generations of partnership to come. I wish everyone a very happy Lunar New Year.

CAMDEN ELECTORATE HSC HIGH ACHIEVERS

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) (13:28): Today I speak about the very successful high achievers in the 2016 Higher School Certificate [HSC] in my electorate. In the past few weeks I have had the opportunity to attend ceremonies at St Gregory's College and Magdalene Catholic School to recognise the students who excelled in the exams last year. Last Monday evening I also had the privilege of attending a Camden Council high achievers recognition event. All of the students received scores over 90 and their efforts are to be commended.

I acknowledge the students and their schools for their wonderful efforts. It is fitting to mention them all by name. From the Camden High School were Kirsty Alexander, David Barnott-Clement, Emily Flanagan, Melissa Fonti, Maddison Newport, Blake Rogan, Erin Rae and Claire Villanueva. From the Elderslie High School were Isabelle Ford, Matthew Kynaston, Isaac Lewis, Emily McCarthy, Emily Morgan, Mai O'Regan, Marialee Truong and Benjamin Valente. From the Elizabeth Macarthur High School were Elena Bozic, Joshua Costlow, Nicholas Leech, Kiran McNamara, Emma Moore, Supakkanit Rerkdee and Wilfred Thorne.

From the Macarthur Anglican School were Mitchell Biggart, Elle Burke, Emma Bywater, Mingqian Chen, Patrick Dickinson, Madaline Elliott, Sabrina Harris, Jemima Henry, Julian Jankowski, Rachel Jessen, Ante Kolanovic, Tate Lindsay, Elise Mackie, Ernst Nel, Natasha Panapiti and Dante Petrin. Dante has an interesting story. He has a twin in my daughter's year so he should be going into year 11. He finished year 12 last year as a high achiever. He is an extremely academic young man. Also from the Macarthur Anglican School were Aimanur Rahman, Sabrina Singh, Meghan Sproule, Liam Tucker and Christopher White.

From the Magdalene Catholic High School were Emily Averro, Elyse Beauchamp, Claire Bonnano, Sophie Cornett, Mathew Geering, Damon Koulouris, Scott Miller, Madison Moser, Alexandra Nagle, Tegan Sereno, Isabelle Staunton, Victoria Stuart-Smith, Warwick Suters and Teegan White. From the Mount Annan Christian College were Euan Frew, Caragh Herringe, Blake Johnson and Jayden Ollis. From the Mount Annan High School were Goras Ali and Damian Hall. From St Benedict's Catholic College were Erin Coppin, Christopher Sandrone and Astrid Turner. From St Gregory's College were Richard Bahamondez, William Bottom, Harry Brown, Liam Clarke, Bradon Clissold, Murray Cooke, Brock Cooper, Mitchell Duncan, Nathaniel Evans, Flynn Fielding, Sam Hackett, Bailey Ivancic, Derek Komban, Frank Lopresti, Cathal McMahon, Josiah Moehau, Callum Parr, Trent Peoples, Bradley Rego and Matthew Zappia.

From St Patrick's College were Amy Abdilla, Lauren Abdilla, Chelsea Barker, Stephanie Damaso, Karen De Raya, Courtney Druery, Rebecca Ellsmore, Portia Ferdinand, Charlotte Gray, Patricia Hernandez, Megan Kay, Emily Kirk, Bronwyn Langkamp, Rosie Larkin, Senali Madagammana, Shai Malone, Brittany Monk, Ally Peng, Natalie Perera, Lauren Ripoll, Sahanuja Thiyagesan, Laura Tranby, Alexandra Whelan and Katarina Zrnica. From the Broughton Anglican College were Brianna Dooner—my niece, who I am very proud to acknowledge did a wonderful job—Sarah Engelbrecht, Georgina Garrett, Claire Hudson, Lachlan Kennedy, Gemma Maranthou, Yasmin Morkaya, Lachlan North, Edward Price, Dean Shiels, Justin Streater and Samantha Webb.

I thank the House for its indulgence. Each and every one of those students put in a wonderful effort. We should be looking to the results of those students as leaders within their school communities and promoting their efforts to students in year 12 this year, and all high school students, as achievements to aspire to and to follow in their footsteps. Just as they have been leaders within their school communities, I have no doubt they will be future leaders in whatever career they choose—whether in education, trades or other areas of the workforce. I look forward to working with many of them in whatever career they enter into. To each and every one of the students, their schools and their families I say: Well done, and congratulations!

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Anna Watson): I will now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.15 p.m.

*Visitors***VISITORS**

The SPEAKER: I welcome everybody who has joined us in the gallery this afternoon for question time. I hope you enjoy your afternoon.

*Commemorations***CENTENARY OF FIRST WORLD WAR**

The SPEAKER (14:17): We are forever reminded through tragedy that history repeats itself, and that lessons not learned will always be paid for. Between December 1915 and April 1916 the strategic town of Kut al-Amara, in what was then the Ottoman province of Mesopotamia, was the site of a major battle in which the British

were forced to surrender. Some 13,000 British and Indian troops were taken into captivity. Seventy per cent of the British and 50 per cent of the Indians were to die as prisoners. It was the worst surrender of British troops since Yorktown during the American War of Independence in 1781, and has been described as the greatest single defeat of an Allied army in the Great War.

On 25 February 1917 Kut al-Amara was retaken by the British and the push to defeat the Ottoman empire gathered pace. The consequences of their defeat and the subsequent partitioning of its Middle Eastern empire have had implications to this very day. During the remainder of the month, Allied forces took the cities of Baghdad, Ramadi and Tikrit. A few years earlier, the names of those cities, other than historic Baghdad, would have hardly been known to most Australians. The names of these battlegrounds of the Great War have become much more familiar as exactly one hundred years since they had first been fought over in a clash of mighty empires, they are again surrounded by conflict. The extent to which innocent civilians suffer in these conflicts gives us cause to reflect on the events of history. Lest we forget.

Members

MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I inform the House that:

- (1) The Minister for Finance, Property and Services will today answer questions in the absence of the Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation.
- (2) The Attorney General will answer any questions today in the absence of the Minister for Police, and Minister for Emergency Services.

ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF NORTH SHORE

Vacant Seat

The SPEAKER: I advise the House on 20 February 2017 I received a letter from Jillian Gell Skinner resigning her seat as member for the electoral district of North Shore.

[Interjection]

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I note the way that those of us on this side treated the resignation of the member for Wollongong, who took a number of months. I remind all members of this place to treat each other with a bit more respect because one day those of us here will either resign or not be required to turn up after an election. This is a great opportunity for us to show a little less hubris and a little more compassion. With that in mind, here endeth the lesson. I move:

That in accordance with section 70 of the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912 the seat of the member for North Shore be declared vacant by reason of the resignation of Jillian Gell Skinner.

Motion agreed to.

Question Time

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATIONS

Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (14:24): My question is directed to the Premier. Did the Premier personally promise people in the last election campaign that there would be no forced council mergers under this Government?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:24): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I was very interested to hear that question because, interestingly, this is what he had to say in December 2014 about council mergers:

Our local government is focused on the micro urban issues—

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! It is too early to take a point of order on relevance, if that is the subject of the member's point of order. The Premier is speaking about amalgamations and is contextualising.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Leader of the Opposition said in 2014:

Our local government is focused on the micro urban issues, and all too often oblivious to the city-wide issues. A big state government, combined with small local councils, sees Sydney get lost in between.

The differing demands of 41 local councils frustrate school authorities and delay decisions on where to expand existing schools and where to locate new schools.

In 2014 the Leader of the Opposition said there are too many councils in Sydney.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier remains relevant to the question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Leader of the Opposition said in 2014 that there are too many councils in Sydney. But we know he is a man with no principles and no policies and that he would sell his soul to the highest bidder.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: What the Leader of the Opposition has highlighted today in his question is his utter hypocrisy.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier remains relevant to the question. Does the member for Maitland have a different point of order?

Ms Jenny Aitchison: Madam Speaker, the other day you directed—

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

Ms Jenny Aitchison: It is your ruling that you made the other day.

The SPEAKER: Order! Which standing order has been breached?

Ms Jenny Aitchison: You made a direction about quoting members and that members should table the document they are reading from.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member must state the standing order that has been breached.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: But it was your ruling. I do not think it was in relation to a point of order.

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not recall events of last week. I need to know which standing order has been breached. The member for Maitland knows that.

Mr Michael Daley: You made a ruling and you say you cannot remember it seven days later.

The SPEAKER: Order! I need to know which standing order has been breached. If members raise points of order in the correct manner I am happy to deal with them.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I was remiss in not welcoming the new member for Wollongong to this place last week, especially given that after we announced our position on local government amalgamations he said, "This is a great victory." That is what he thought of our Coalition policy. The member for Wollongong is on the right course when commending us for our council policies.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! Which standing order has been breached?

Mr Michael Daley: It is Standing Order 73. Three and a half minutes into question time and there is no answer to the question. If the Premier wants to debate council amalgamations let us have a motion.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier remains relevant to the question. The member for Maroubra will resume his seat.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I also wish to thank the member for Shellharbour. When we announced our position on council amalgamations last year she said, "I'm very pleased." That was in her media release of 14 February, which I am happy to table.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Shellharbour and the member for Kiama will restrain themselves, and will not argue across the table when the Premier has the call.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I also thank the member for Port Stephens for her comments. She said she was relieved following the decision we took. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition should consult his own colleagues because his own colleagues support the Liberal-Nationals' position on council amalgamations.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order. There are too many interjections. Last week it was not necessary for me to remove a single member from this Chamber.

Mr Clayton Barr: How do you remember that?

The SPEAKER: Some things I remember; some things I do not. I remember the member for Cessnock very clearly. He is very memorable and always on notice.

COST OF LIVING AND ELECTRICITY PRICES

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (14:29): My question is addressed to the Premier. How is the Government delivering on the election commitment to place downward pressure on electricity prices?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:30): We know that the Liberal-Nationals is the party of the worker and also the party that will put downward pressure on the cost of living. It was very interesting before the last election that the Leader of the Opposition said electricity prices will rise under the Government's 99-year lease of the poles and wires. He told everybody who would listen every day—day in, day out. He even hugged power poles and claimed prices would rise. We remember that image of him hugging power poles saying that prices would rise.

In fact, in 2015 during the campaign launch he said, "Will prices go up? Of course they will." Even at Labor's so-called country campaign launch on 11 March—I am not sure how many people turned up—he went further by saying, "Prices will go up ... higher prices are coming to your region". That is what he waxed lyrical about before the last election and since that time. When we announced the successful TransGrid transaction with over \$10 billion in gross proceeds he said again, "Somehow I don't think they're buying our electricity grid to lower families' power prices in NSW over the next 99 years."

We know that the Leader of the Opposition ran a truly disgraceful scare campaign during the election and he continued his rhetoric well after their campaign. He is not one to let facts get in the way of a chance to mislead the public. In contrast we put the facts on the table. We made the point over and over again that all the evidence showed that electricity network prices were lower in private management than they were under public management. In fact, we had the Ernst and Young report which said that under public ownership network prices had risen by 122 per cent in New South Wales and 140 per cent in Queensland and yet in privately owned Victoria and South Australia they had fallen in real terms.

As members of this House would well remember our Government put in place an electricity price guarantee, backed by legislation, to make sure that network prices would be lower in 2019 than they were in 2015. Of course we also had Allan Fels, perhaps Australia's most highly regarded consumer advocate, appointed as the Electricity Price Commissioner to sign off on each of the poles and wires transactions to ensure that we are putting downward pressure, not upward pressure, on prices. Now I am pleased to say the evidence is in. We can see whether the Leader of the Opposition was right that electricity prices would rise or whether he was wrong. I think we all know where this is heading. The Leader of the Opposition was wrong, wrong, wrong.

In fact, last Friday TransGrid put in its proposal to the Australian Energy Regulator for electricity transmission prices for the period 2018 to 2023. What did it propose? It proposed a 2.5 per cent reduction in average transmission tariffs. This means a fall in the transmission component of household electricity bills. At the same time, whilst we will see a reduction in those prices, TransGrid also has committed to investing \$1.6 billion in capital expenditure over the next five years to maintain the reliability of our electricity network. That includes the inner Sydney network, which supplies electricity to more than 500,000 customers, including homes, businesses, hospitals and public transport as well as to Australia's financial hub, the largest airport and one of the busiest ports in the country.

This good news on Friday follows a 7 per cent reduction in electricity transmission prices across the previous five years under our Government. The further price reduction being proposed by TransGrid can be achieved whilst securing the reliability and sustainability of our network. What was predicted by the Leader of the Opposition has not happened; in fact, quite the opposite. How does that compare to Labor's record in government? We know that under Labor electricity prices rose by 60 per cent. [*Extension of time*]

We all remember that under Labor electricity prices rose by 60 per cent and that was a shameful record. What will the cost of electricity prices blow out to if the former Leader of the Opposition got his way and shut down the pole industry altogether? Labor's plan is all about fewer jobs and putting prices up. We are very pleased that, in addition to the great news we received on Friday, since 2011 the rate of increases in electricity prices has slowed dramatically—down to 6.2 per cent from the 10.4 per cent annual pace under the last five years of those opposite. Not only are we demonstrating our commitment to consumers in the cost of living by putting downward pressure on prices but most importantly our communities have \$20 billion extra to spend on infrastructure. What the Leader of the Opposition has demonstrated time and time again is that he cannot be trusted. He will say anything for a headline. We know that we are delivering for the people of this great State.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATIONS

Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (14:36): My question is directed to the Premier. Will the Premier confirm that at a public meeting in the Dougherty Community Centre in Chatswood on 19 March 2015 she said about local government amalgamations that "there will be nothing people will be forced into". Given this clear statement a

week prior to the last election why is the Premier now forcing people into the merger of Willoughby, North Sydney and Mosman councils?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:36): Again, I find this question very rich coming from somebody who said there were too many councils in Sydney.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come the order. Government members do not need to assist the Premier.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: In case the Leader of the Opposition has forgotten, or perhaps has chosen to forget, our Government spent a lot of time saying to councils, "Find a friend. You tell us who you want to merge with. You tell us who you would like to merge with in relation to this process."

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We gave local communities ample opportunity to participate in that process. Only the Labor Party would think it is okay to change its position on having 41 councils in Sydney.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. The question was why the Premier forced Willoughby, North Sydney and Mosman councils.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier remains relevant to the question, which doubtless is based on the comments I made last week. The member for Maroubra will resume his seat. The Premier has the call.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Only those opposite would think it is okay for Brisbane to have one council and for Sydney to have 41 councils.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: What the Leader of the Opposition's question highlights is the stark difference between those opposite and those on this side of the House. This Government will make decisions based on what is in the best interests of the State, not what is in the best interests of individual members. That is the key difference.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Issues have arisen following some council mergers.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Many bad practices have emerged. Will the Labor Party explain why it supports bad practice? In the City of Botany Bay the new council discovered—those opposite do not want to hear this—

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier remains relevant to the question. The member for Strathfield will resume her seat. There is no point of order.

Ms Jodi McKay: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. The Premier is correct; I do not want to hear the answer. This goes to hypocrisy and the question of the Premier's position.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Premier remains relevant to the question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: What do those opposite have against cleaning up the joint? The new council for the City of Botany Bay discovered 28 outstanding legal matters, mostly in the Industrial Relations Commission. The new council was able to broker a solution for those matters and resolve them within three months. Future legal costs are estimated to be decreased by \$1 million annually. That is one example. In Canterbury, the new council discovered misuse of facilities policies. Canterbury council had paid for councillors' groceries, for extended family members to attend conferences, for hairdressing and for replacing expensive bags.

Mr Luke Foley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier remains relevant to the question. The member for Drummoyne will cease interjecting or will be called to order.

Mr Luke Foley: I have waited patiently. I asked the Premier to confirm that she said—her words—"There will be nothing people will be forced into on 19 March 2015". The Premier has not gone near it.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has remained relevant to the question. There is no point of order. The Premier's time has expired.

Members

PRESIDENT OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

The SPEAKER: I announce for the benefit of those members who are interested in the affairs of the other place that the Hon. John Ajaka has been elected unopposed as the new President of the Legislative Council.

Question Time

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (14:42:5): I address my question to the Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional New South Wales, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business. Will the Deputy Premier explain to the House how the Government is reducing the cost of doing business for the 690,000 small businesses, who in turn deliver a greater range of goods and services at better prices to New South Wales consumers?

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional New South Wales, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business) (14:43): After two years of this term of government without receiving a question about small business from those opposite, I thank the member for Myall Lakes for his important question. Small business underpins the economy of regional and rural communities. The mid North Coast is serviced by 20,000 small businesses. There is no better way to help people with the cost of living than by creating jobs, and the small businesses in our economy continue to contribute their fair share. Members must not forget that 98 per cent of New South Wales businesses are small businesses that employ 1.75 million people, which is almost 50 per cent of employment in the State's private sector.

Small business cannot be taken for granted. It is important in regional and rural communities. That is a contribution of \$47 billion paid in salaries to employees who in turn support their communities. We must recognise the importance of small business to regional economies more broadly, as 36 per cent of small businesses exist outside the extended Sydney metro area. Since 2011 the Government has ensured that small business has had the tools to grow, thrive, innovate and look at new ways to deliver services in a different landscape, particularly in the global market. The Easy To Do Business program cuts red tape and the cost of opening a business in New South Wales. That program was introduced to support a thriving small business community.

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Our Small Business Friendly Councils Program works with 70-plus councils and has impacted time lines for a range of regulations that impact on small business, including development applications and parking. The Government has been working hand in hand with local government to ease the way forward for small business. When this Government was re-elected in 2015 it delivered on its election commitment and abolished mortgage duty, share transfer duty and non-real transfer duty, saving businesses more than \$400 million per annum.

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

Ms Jenny Aitchison: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. The question concerned small business and those tax cuts did not help small businesses; they benefited the Government's big end of town mates.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Minister remains relevant to the question. The member for Maitland will cease yelling.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: At the last election the Opposition stated that it would defer the abolition of those taxes for 10 years to pay for its \$1.5 billion infrastructure plan. This Government removed the taxes and is investing \$73 billion in infrastructure over four years. The best thing for small business is to grow the economy. The \$73 billion investment in roads, schools and hospitals is about growing the economy. Young people will learn new skills and small business will benefit from the prosperity that this State is enjoying.

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO: This Government supports small business through providing an opportunity to scale up or to invest in innovation through Jobs for NSW. That is a \$190 million fund that assists small business to thrive. This Government increased the payroll tax threshold to \$750,000.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. The Premier, as the Treasurer, admitted in the last budget that payroll tax did not help small businesses.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is ridiculous. The member for Maitland will not take a point of order simply because she is on three calls to order. There is no point of order.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: I explain to the member for Maitland, who claims to be the shadow Minister for Small Business, that by increasing the tax threshold an extra 1,300 small businesses do not pay payroll tax. *[Extension of time]*

The Government then introduced the payroll tax rebate to support businesses to create jobs in this State. The Government introduced the \$2,000 small business employment initiative to support small businesses, which are not paying payroll tax, with a grant that will assist with employment costs. The grant program has registered 2,382 businesses with 5,381 new positions. That is almost \$2 million invested in small business to grow the economy and create jobs in this State. The Government does not create jobs; it creates the environment for business to create jobs. It is the mums and dads who take the risk and have the courage to mortgage their homes to be part of the small business community who will create the jobs. Hundreds of thousands of jobs have been created in this State because small businesses are working day and night, every day of the week. They are the engine room that we all rely on. They are providing employment and supporting families across the State. After 16 years of Labor Government we inherited its red tape, regulation and heavy-handed style. It was all over the small business community.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Opposition members will come to order.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: We have started to remove government involvement in small business. As I travel the State the message is loud and clear: Small business owners want government to get out of their hair and out of their pockets. We are doing that by reducing red tape and lowering taxes.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

CBD AND SOUTH EAST LIGHT RAIL PROJECT

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) (14:50): My question is directed to the Premier. Is it true that Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] has repeatedly expressed serious concerns to Transport for NSW and the light rail operator about traffic congestion and interruptions caused by 67-metre trams along the route and that it has still not given approval for trams to drive through key intersections such as Anzac Parade and Alison Road, Kensington?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:50): Last week Opposition members did not exactly cover themselves in glory on the topic of light rail. Last week the Opposition told us that nobody wants to use the light rail network. Today I read that the Opposition is telling us that too many people want to use the light rail network. In one week the Opposition has changed its position. Remember that the Opposition predicted "carnageddon" when light rail construction was about to start on George Street: The whole city would come to a standstill, pedestrians would not be able to get around, and the sky would fall in.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will come to order. I am having difficulty hearing the Premier.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I pay tribute to all those involved, including the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. After two years of reconfiguring the entire bus network into and out of the central business district, we ensured that once construction began on George Street there was minimal disruption to pedestrians, motorists and anybody coming to and from the city. Not only have we successfully embarked on what is an extremely complex project; we have also ensured that some intersections will better manage traffic conditions. If Opposition members had bothered to read the environmental impact statement, which runs to hundreds of pages, they would know that it talks about every intersection. It talks about those intersections that might be the same, those that might be better, and those that we have worked on to ensure minimal disruption. Before Opposition members open their mouths to talk about infrastructure they should do their homework. Opposition members have never built anything in their lives.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order goes to relevance. My question was a narrow one. I want to know whether the RMS has signed off on Anzac Parade and Alison Road.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier remains relevant to the question. There is no point of order. The member for Maroubra will resume his seat.

Mr Michael Daley: The Premier should be very careful. This is not the time for bravado.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra will resume his seat. He should not wave his finger around. That is threatening behaviour. The Premier has the call.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I do not blame the member for Maroubra for getting hot under the collar. He has to pretend that he does not support the light rail project when in fact he wants it to go to Maroubra. The Leader of the Opposition said to the member for Maroubra, "You ask today's question on light rail. I had my go last week. You have a go at it." We know that the member for Maroubra secretly wants light rail to go to Maroubra. What we say to him and to every Opposition member is: People want us to get on with the job of building infrastructure in New South Wales. Whether it is light rail, roads, rail lines, schools or hospitals, they want us to get on with the job.

Guess what? People like light rail. The Inner West Light Rail Extension was a project that Labor failed to deliver. When we were building the project Labor kept saying that nobody would use it. Guess what? Not only did people want to use it but we had to put on extra services to meet demand. People want to use light rail. Opposition members not only demonstrate a lack of knowledge and an inability to deliver infrastructure for the people of New South Wales but also demonstrate how out of touch they are with what people want. I say to the Opposition that we are not only building light rail in the central business district and out to the south-east but also building light rail in Parramatta. We know that "Crackers"—

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order: The Premier did not refer to the member for Newcastle by his correct title. I ask that the Premier be directed to refer to the member for Newcastle in the correct manner.

The SPEAKER: Order! I uphold the point of order. The Premier will refer to the member by his correct title. Members will cease shouting across the Chamber.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It is a term of endearment, but I will refer to him as the member for Newcastle. Even he secretly supports light rail coming to Newcastle. We support these projects because the public supports these projects. [*Time expired.*]

SCHOOL SYLLABUSES

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (14:55): My question is addressed to the Minister for Education. How is the New South Wales Government raising education standards for students and preparing them for the future?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Strathfield will come to order. She will not scream across the Chamber.

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Education) (14:56): I thank the member for Terrigal for his question. I take this opportunity to congratulate the member for Terrigal on his performance at school. I understand that it was a time when he broke many records and many hearts. I will talk more about that later.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order. This is an important subject.

Mr ROB STOKES: A lot of people here should be pleased at their performance, and I am here to help shine a light on that. The New South Wales Government is committed to providing the highest-quality syllabuses for study in New South Wales schools. That is why today the NSW Education Standards Authority [NESA] released new English, science, mathematics and history syllabuses for next year's year 11 cohort, with the first year 12 students to sit the Higher School Certificate [HSC] in 2019. The previous syllabuses were designed—

Mr Guy Zangari: Syllabi.

The SPEAKER: Order! Let us all correct each other on grammar. I advise the member for Fairfield that both words are acceptable, and I say that from an English teacher's perspective. Usage makes them so. Members should not try to be experts on something they know nothing about.

Mr ROB STOKES: I acknowledge the interjection. I note that the English syllabus has a clear focus on English language skills, literacy, vocabulary and grammar. We recognise that those basic skills are very important in preparing students for further study or for the workforce. Barry McGaw undertook a review of education 16 long years ago, at a time when the world was very different from the way it is today. The syllabus needed a lot of work. That work has been done to ensure that our students have the best materials available so that they can succeed in the future. The new syllabuses released today provide a set of broad learning outcomes to summarise the knowledge, understanding, skills, values and attitudes essential for students to succeed in and beyond their schooling. To do this, the NESA undertook robust and focused consultation with teachers, experts in academia and the wider community. In total, more than 7,000 surveys, written submissions and meeting attendees provided feedback during the development of the English, mathematics, science and history syllabuses.

The syllabuses were reviewed to ensure appropriate and authentic representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. We are releasing them now so that schools and teachers are able to become familiar with the materials that have been developed and so that they can be supported before they are required to be implemented. I thank the many teachers who have provided assistance and advice to NESA in the process of developing and reviewing the syllabus, and also wish them all the best in coming to terms with the new materials that they will use to engage with students from next year.

In science, students will investigate modern and emerging scientific concepts through depth studies in each course. These might include topics such as desalination, genomics, gravitational waves and prediction of future seismic events. There will be a new year 12 science extension syllabus to extend and prepare the most able students for further study and participation in science, technology, education and maths endeavours, which will be released later this year. In English, mandatory units on the craft of writing in all English courses in both years 11 and 12 will be introduced with explicit reference to structure and grammar, spelling, vocabulary and punctuation as well.

In modern history, there will be a mandatory study of the shaping of the modern world, including the Enlightenment, which may come as news to some in this place; the French Revolution—that was a nasty business; the age of imperialism, the industrial age and also, sadly for many of those opposite, the development of liberal democracy. In mathematics, the new syllabuses are focused on important skills such as the application of technology, financial concepts and statistics. [*Extension of time*]

Mr Jihad Dib: Tell us about the critical thinking element.

Mr ROB STOKES: I appreciate the interjections of those opposite, who are very excited about these issues.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Lakemba will come to order. The Minister is answering the question and will be heard in silence. The member for Lakemba did not ask the question.

Mr ROB STOKES: A new topic on networks has been introduced in which students can learn about the algorithm underpinning Google searches. There will be a further and targeted consultation period for the calculus-based mathematics syllabus. This will allow teachers and academics to review the final drafts and NESA to ensure the academic rigour of these syllabuses. It is important that we take the time to get this right, and I thank NESA for taking this step. There has been an extensive and robust conversation over three years with teachers, educators, academics, the school sector, parents, businesses and the community.

The Government is committed to providing the highest-quality education for our students, culminating in the Higher School Certificate [HSC] examinations that 70,000 students sit each year. Students who complete these HSC courses will have the right foundation to succeed in their chosen field at university, in a trade or in a job. As a result of the HSC reforms that the New South Wales Government announced last year, we know that students who complete these HSC courses will have the literacy and numeracy skills to succeed in the workforce. They will be critical thinkers, with the analytical skills to solve problems and to adapt to the demands of a changing world.

New South Wales has a long history of high expectations and evidence-based reform to support our students to meet their potential. I am pleased to support the release of these syllabuses that prepare our students for further study, work and everyday life. I thank the many teachers in this State who have provided advice on the preparation of these materials, and also thank them for the work that they will be doing to ensure that these courses are embedded for students of year 11 who will sit exams for them from next year.

CBD AND SOUTH EAST LIGHT RAIL PROJECT

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (15:03): My question is directed to the Premier. Why has the Government spent billions of dollars on the CBD and South East Light Rail Project when the EMM report found that it will carry fewer passengers than the existing bus services while also reducing the number of lanes available to traffic?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (15:03): The shadow Minister for transport should read all the material we have on this project.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Strathfield will come to order. This is not an argument or a debate. The Premier is answering the question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The shadow Minister has indicated clearly her lack of knowledge on the issue. It is useful when public transport projects have a BCR1 because it means they are returning the

investment being made in them. Often toll roads have a high benefit-cost ratio [BCR] because the user charges push them up to a greater threshold.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Strathfield will cease interjecting. I call the member for Strathfield to order for the first time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The BCR on this project is 1.4, and that is independently assessed. That means the return to the community far exceeds what the Government has invested in the project. In case the member for Strathfield does not know what a BCR is, it means that for every dollar we put into this project the community gets back \$1.40. A lot of consideration is given to what goes into calculating that.

Mr Jamie Parker: They want a tunnel under George Street.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Yes, I know. That is right. The member for Balmain is a good man. He has reminded me of some of the whacky—

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The member for Balmain has reminded me of some of the crazy projects that those opposite had before the election. They were going to build a bus tunnel under the central business district, which is extremely dangerous. It was going to come out at Central and then it was going to connect to some kind of other system, out to the western metro and then back down to the south-east—blah, blah, blah.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The member for Balmain has reminded me of Labor's complete lack of ability in not only knowing what it requires to build transport infrastructure but also demonstrating complete incompetence for 16 long years.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It was telling last week when, firstly, four of Labor's most senior shadow Ministers plus the Leader of the Opposition were asleep at the wheel. Secondly, the Leader of the Opposition revealed in this Chamber that he is innumerate. He read out the cost of a contract that involved—

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Even though we have been very helpful in directing Opposition members to the material they should be reading, the Leader of the Opposition got construction costs and operational costs mixed up. I do not know whether it was intentional or otherwise. He waved around a document that was completely wrong. We say to the people of New South Wales that those opposite never have been and never will be trusted to deliver anything in this State. Not only do they not have the confidence to build infrastructure but they do not know how to raise the dollars. They have got no money, they have got no principles, and they have got no sense. I say to those opposite: Leave infrastructure to us on this side of the House.

ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) (15:08): It is my privilege to address the first question of the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight.

The SPEAKER: Order! I cannot hear the member for Upper Hunter. There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Government frontbenchers will come to order.

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN: How is the Government reducing the cost of living through its road infrastructure agenda?

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting. Everyone is an expert! The Minister has the call and will be heard in silence.

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley—Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight) (15:08): It is nice to be here, finally. I thank the member for Upper Hunter for his question. I travelled from Gloucester to Sydney with him yesterday and his advocacy for the people of the Upper Hunter was at the forefront of all our conversations. They are fortunate to have such a quality member.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members who continue to interject will be removed from the Chamber.

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY: The member for Upper Hunter is part of a team and Government that is determined to improve the lives of all our citizens through better infrastructure.

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

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY: We know that better infrastructure not only will ease congestion but also will unlock opportunities in the cities as well as the regions. We are working to ensure that people spend less time in their cars and more time with their families. It is not only large-scale projects such as NorthConnex, which is opening in 2019, and WestConnex that will be game changers in unlocking the potential of Western Sydney by connecting the north, south, east and west like never before; we also have a congestion-busting plan for the State. Under members opposite the only plan was no plan. Government members are on the side of mums and dads, small business owners, farmers and manufacturers. We want to get them home sooner and unlock the potential of an efficient freight network.

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

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY: It is not just about building motorways; it is also about addressing the choke points across the Sydney road network. That is why we have allocated almost \$1 billion for the Pinch Points Program. On Friday I was with the member for Miranda and the member for Heathcote, who know their roads have improved since 2011 through the \$300 million that we have spent on pinch points in southern Sydney, including on the Princes Highway, King Georges Road, Heathcote Road and Grand Parade. We inspected the work on Alford's Point Road, which will add another lane to that heavily used section. In the history of this State there has never been a higher level of investment in country New South Wales. The member for Keira will be interested in this. By how much do you expect we have increased the Roads budget since your last year in office? Is it 30, 40, 50 or 60 per cent?

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: I ask you to require the Minister to direct her comments through the Chair.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will direct her comments through the Chair.

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY: I was pointing out to the former deputy secretary of Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] that since we came to office we have increased the Roads budget by 105 per cent on the last Labor budget.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members who wish to have private conversations will do so outside the Chamber.

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY: The exciting news for those who represent regional New South Wales is that we have been able to ensure that 66 per cent of that funding is going to the bush. For decades bridges across country New South Wales were left in a state of disrepair. We are investing \$300 million as part of Bridges for the Bush. We are building new bridges in places such as Boorowa, Bundarra, Gundagai and Carrathool. In addition, we have invested \$500 million in the Fixing Country Roads initiative. It is exciting for those communities to see changes such as improvements to the freight network and the construction of safer and better roads.

I will highlight the work of the member for Terrigal, who I also visited recently to look at the great changes happening on the Central Coast. They included upgrades to the Pacific Highway precinct around the Gosford and Wyong areas that are currently used by approximately 27,000 vehicles a day. The projects that already have been completed include the Dog Trap Road intersection at Ourimbah, the Pacific Highway upgrade between Glen Road and Burns Road and at San Remo, and Anzac Road to Johnson Road, Tuggerah. The list goes on. In the Clarence, construction already has started on our biggest bridge project to upgrade the crossing over the Clarence River. Our investment in road infrastructure is making a real difference in the city and country. After years of neglect by members opposite, our infrastructure projects are getting this State moving again. Most importantly, they are allowing people to spend more time with their families.

MEDICINAL CANNABIS

Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (15:13): My question is directed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research. In 2013 a parliamentary committee unanimously recommended a change to the law to allow those suffering a terminal illness to access cannabis for medicinal purposes without any risk of prosecution. Why almost four years later has the Government still not acted on that unanimous recommendation? Why has it not changed the law?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research) (15:14): There are some things that should be beyond politics. Waking up this morning to hear the person who purports to be the alternative Premier taking advantage of people who are already vulnerable was extremely concerning.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members who continue to interject will be removed from the Chamber. Members will cease arguing across the Chamber. The Minister has the call.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: This Government has been driven by compassion, care and concern for a range of people, particularly those in the categories that have been the subject of clinical trials and reviews for more than two years. I remind the House that it was a bipartisan exercise. In fact, Labor members were invited to the briefing and only one of them attended. The Leader of the Opposition did not attend but the Hon. Adam Searle did. I extend the same offer to the Leader of the Opposition again so that he will be across what is required. In regard to some of the people who have suffered terribly, we have seen Mrs Haslam in the media and I am looking forward to meeting her tomorrow. She lost her son Daniel. There can be nothing worse. Of course she is driven by passion to make sure that others do not suffer that situation.

However, we have to ensure that we get the process right. We have taken advice from the Chief Scientist, Chief Medical Officer and a range of clinical experts. Currently approximately 40 youngsters in New South Wales are benefiting from the drug Epidiolex, which addresses the convulsions caused by a range of illnesses, particularly epilepsy. In regard to cancer patients, we also are conducting trials that include people in palliative care and others who are having chemotherapy and suffering vomiting and nausea, which are sad by-products of chemotherapy treatment. Some patients already respond to some of the available medications, but there is recognition across the world that there are opportunities for the use of cannabinoids.

For example, in addition to Epidiolex, which is used by children with epilepsy, we also are looking at gold-plated, controlled, randomised clinical studies. They are being conducted as I speak under the supervision of clinical experts to make sure that people who get a benefit from those medications will have them provided in a safe environment. What I heard this morning was effectively the Leader of the Opposition saying, "Bring on the black market. Go down the street and buy some grass. Buy whatever you want." That is what he was saying and he ought to wake up to that because it is dangerous. No clinical expert would endorse what he is saying. Nobody would endorse it. By working with the clinical experts through the gold-plated, customised, randomised clinical trials, we will make sure that the work is done.

Mr Chris Minns: Take your time, Brad.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The member for Kogarah is saying, "Take your time." If he is the alternative to the Leader of the Opposition, God help the Labor Party. That is the sort of dangerous, juvenile response that I would expect from somebody outside this place; not him. Tomorrow I will meet with Mrs Haslam and on the following day I will meet with the head of GW Pharmaceuticals, which is the United Kingdom medical company that has made Epidiolex available for the 40 young people on the randomised trial. Because I would like us to get this right and for the Leader of the Opposition to be on the same page, as he should be, I extend this offer: as somebody with an interest in this topic he is welcome to attend any of those meetings instead of playing politics.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT COSTS

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (15:19): My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. How is the Government easing the cost of living pressures for public transport commuters?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Infrastructure) (15:20): I thank the member for his question. I thank him also for his text before question time asking me to mention Narwee and Oatley, which I have now done. I congratulate him on his work. Of course, this is a very serious question. It is about the family budget. It is about the cost of living. We in the Gladys-Giovanni Government are committed to protecting the family budget. Every seat counts. That is why we as the Gladys-Giovanni Government believe in making sure we deliver small government, manage government services well and manage budgets well. Of course, what we know from those opposite is that the Labor way is to basically issue some bonds, raise some debt, and write cheques to households in order to meet the family budget. Who will ever forget Kevin Rudd's thousand dollar cheques to households?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Cessnock will stop inciting Government members.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: What we do know is that, when those cheques were issued, everybody rushed out that night and either bought a plasma television or got a tattoo. The reason I am interested in this is that I note the member for Prospect spent his family stimulus package on a tattoo because he issued a family Christmas card sporting a tattoo. I think he wears it as proudly as his medals. What I do note about this Christmas card is that it was to the Treasurer, whose name is Dom, and it says "Dear Warren". Who is Warren? The Treasurer wants to know. Not Greg Warren.

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

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: We have implemented the Opal system, as opposed to the magical Tcard that never appeared. Pleasingly last year we were able to change the system and offer families who commute across this great city a \$2 transfer discount. That is to assist those who change from one mode to another to get from point A to point B across the network. I am pleased to inform the House that since that started in September Opal customers have received 26.6 million transfer discounts. That is \$43 million back into household budget. That is contrary to the claims of those opposite who said it would not work. What we are seeing is customers loving it. Whilst we are talking about such numbers I note that the shadow Treasurer at the time—who is good at numbers—said customers would stop travelling on weekends. That is what he said. Wrong. Weekend travel has increased since we implemented the changes; 4.2 per cent on Saturday, 4.9 per cent on Sunday.

What we do know is that when those opposite were in government transport fares went up by 60 per cent, when the consumer price index [CPI] over that same period went up 37 per cent. They are the party against the family budget. We have seen this Government building infrastructure to reduce the cost of living by ensuring that people can get across town with ease. Again, we are out there building. It was great to be with the Premier last Friday when we announced the Parramatta Light Rail, which was pleasing. As usual, what do we get out of Labor? It is fake news; it is bad news for the people of Western Sydney. The only bit of fake news I can see from those opposite is this infrastructure plan. Labor's infrastructure plan did not even mention Parramatta light rail. If Labor wants to talk about fake news—

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

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has been relevant to the question.

Ms Jodi McKay: I would be really keen to hear about transport fares.

The SPEAKER: Order! What the member wants is irrelevant. The Minister remains relevant to the question. There is no point of order. The member for Strathfield will resume her seat.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: It is somewhat ironic that the Leader of the Opposition says the only way people can get light rail built in Western Sydney is to vote Labor. Well, we have seen and heard that before from members opposite. But I was particularly intrigued; they are going to build this stage two light rail which the Premier and I committed to, but the big question is which route they choose. Does it go to Luke's house or does it go to Jodi's house? *[Extension of time]*

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! I have ruled on the point of relevance. The Minister remains relevant to the question.

Ms Jodi McKay: It is about cost of living, not where his house and my house are.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister remains relevant to the question. The member for Strathfield will resume her seat.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: What we do know is Labor has to work out which house they are going to go to and they are going to play caucus twister to work it out. Now, there is a thought. The point I make is that we are building so we can assist families with their budgets, so they are able to get to work and their recreational pursuits across this great city. The member for Maroubra is very clever. He comes in here and says, "Build me light rail to La Perouse." I have a great quote, which I do not have time to read out. He would have to be the first member in the history of this place to be on the front page of a paper this morning begging for a \$2 billion dollar project to be removed from his electorate. What are you doing, mate? You are confused.

Mr Michael Daley: The way you are building it.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The member for Maroubra is saying that people are going to use it. Now he wants us to take the \$2 billion away. I am confused and I look forward to continuing that debate about light rail when he gets around to asking me a question about it.

Documents

INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSION

Reports

The SPEAKER: In accordance with section 39 of the Government Information (Information Commissioner) Act 2009, I announce the receipt of the report of the Information and Privacy Commission entitled "Report on the Operation of the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 2015-2016", dated February 2017 and received on 20 February 2017. I order that the document be printed.

OFFICE OF THE PRIVACY COMMISSIONER**Reports**

The SPEAKER: In accordance with section 61D of the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998, I table the report of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner entitled "NSW Informational Privacy Rights: Legislative Scope and Interpretation—Employer, Employee, and Agent Responsibilities", dated February 2017. I order that the document be printed.

*Committees***LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE****Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 31/56**

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN: As Chair: I table the report of the Legislation Review Committee entitled "Legislation Review Digest No. 31/56", dated 21 February 2017. I move:

That the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN: I also table the minutes of the committee meeting regarding Legislation Review Digest No. 30/56, dated 14 February 2017.

*Petitions***PETITIONS**

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

Powerhouse Museum Ultimo

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

Ferry Services

Petition requesting new inner-city ferries, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Elizabeth Bay Marina Ferry Service

Petition requesting the inclusion of a new ferry service as part of the Elizabeth Bay marina upgrade, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

CBD and South East Light Rail Route

Petition opposing the proposed CBD and South East Light Rail route, 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 opposing the sale of public housing in Millers Point, Dawes Point and The Rocks, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

*Motions Accorded Priority***COST OF LIVING AND ELECTRICITY PRICES****Consideration**

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (15:29): My motion should be accorded priority because the people of New South Wales are interested to hear this Parliament debate what is being done to ease cost-of-living pressures in general and electricity prices in particular. The people of New South Wales are interested, but there is one group that is not interested in a debate about cost-of-living pressures and how to deal with them, that is, those members who sit opposite. They know that a debate about cost-of-living pressures and electricity will expose their own mismanagement and failed scare campaigns on these issues. But, more

profoundly, it will show a clear political alternative: a government that has a record of easing cost-of-living pressures and an Opposition that does not.

This motion will make good what the Treasurer has repeatedly informed the House: that this Government is the workers' best friend. In the last five years of the Labor Government electricity prices rose by more than 60 per cent and water and wastewater prices rose by more than 50 per cent. Since 2011, utility prices—gas, water and electricity—have increased more slowly in Sydney than in any other mainland city, and at half the pace of that in the last five years of the Labor Government. While the average water bill in other capital cities has increased by 10 to 40 per cent over the past five years, residents of Sydney, the Blue Mountains and Wollongong have paid 4 per cent less than they did five years ago. Over the last five years of the Labor Government, electricity prices increased annually by 10.4 per cent. Since 2011 increases have slowed to 6.5 per cent annually—an almost 50 per cent reduction.

Because this Government has ended the gold plating of the poles and wires, the transmission price component of electricity bills has decreased by 7 per cent, with a further 2.5 per cent reduction recommended for the next regulator's determination. Over the 16 years of the Labor Government, public transport fares increased by almost 60 per cent—almost twice the consumer price index increase. Since 2011, Sydney's public transport fare increases have been the second slowest of any mainland city capital. Over the past five years, public transport fare increases were half the rate of those in Labor's last five years in government. Only the Coalition Government can be trusted to manage the economy and to manage electricity, water and transport costs so that they add the least possible to people's cost-of-living expenses. This is a clear point of difference: Labor thinks it has the right to put its hand in people's wallets, the Coalition Government does not.

RENEWABLE ENERGY TARGET

Consideration

Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (15:32): My motion deserves priority because on Sunday the Premier was asked on Sky News *Agenda* about her Government's renewable energy target. She said:

We have a 2050 target of 20 per cent and that's been in place for quite a while. So we've had that target in place for quite a while.

Paul Kelly could not believe it. He asked the Premier:

Can I just check that? You said a 2050 target of 20 per cent?

The Premier replied:

I think it was 20 per cent. I'll just check that target. But it's been the target for the last few years in New South Wales. So that's already been in place.

The Premier was out by just 30 years when she said it has been the target for the last few years in New South Wales. Since coming to office this Government has, first, adopted in its 2021 State Plan a clear target of "20 per cent renewable energy by 2020"—not 2050. Secondly, the Auditor-General in his 2014 Financial Audit reported that "the NSW Government has set a target of 20 per cent renewable energy consumption by 2020". Thirdly, this Government has, believe it or not, a Renewable Energy Action Plan, which says upfront, "This NSW Renewable Energy Action Plan supports the achievement of the national target of 20% renewable energy by 2020." So the Premier is none out of three, and this is a Premier who boasts about her attention to detail. She slapped down the Minister for WestConnex, deservedly, the other week when he could not answer the most basic questions about WestConnex.

Mr Anthony Roberts: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 109 (4). By agreement and by arrangement, the Leader of the Opposition has to tell the House why this motion should be accorded priority. He should not make personal attacks on other members. Where is the priority?

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

Mr LUKE FOLEY: We know the Government is in trouble when it tries to gag me when I only have three minutes to speak. The Premier said that her colleagues "appreciate my level of attention to detail" and that she had asked her colleagues for the same. She says her attention to detail is her strong suit. Picture the next Cabinet meeting when she says to her colleagues, "Be like me. Appreciate my level of detail. Do the same as me." They would be rolling in the aisles. When it comes to energy policy the truth is that this Government has one policy only: sell it all off and hang the consequences, whether it is electricity to the Tomago aluminium smelter, with potentially catastrophic consequences; whether it is the new energy Minister—her hand-picked stooge, the Don—telling workers in Western Sydney to turn their refrigerators up to 26 degrees— [Time expired.]

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the motion of the member for Ku-ring-gai be accorded priority.

The House divided.

Ayes47
 Noes38
 Majority.....9

AYES

Anderson, Mr K
 Barilaro, Mr J
 Brookes, Mr G
 Coure, Mr M
 Dominello, Mr V
 Evans, Mr L
 Grant, Mr T
 Hodgkinson, Ms K
 Lee, Dr G
 Notley-Smith, Mr B
 Pavey, Mrs M
 Piccoli, Mr A
 Rowell, Mr J
 Stokes, Mr R
 Tudehope, Mr D
 Williams, Mr R

Aplin, Mr G
 Berejiklian, Ms G
 Conolly, Mr K
 Crouch, Mr A
 Donato, Mr P
 Fraser, Mr A
 Gulaptis, Mr C
 Humphries, Mr K
 Maguire, Mr D
 O'Dea, Mr J
 Perrottet, Mr D
 Provest, Mr G
 Sidoti, Mr J
 Taylor, Mr M
 Upton, Ms G
 Williams, Mrs L

Ayres, Mr S
 Bromhead, Mr S (teller)
 Constance, Mr A
 Davies, Ms T
 Elliott, Mr D
 Goward, Ms P
 Henskens, Mr A
 Johnsen, Mr M
 Marshall, Mr A
 Patterson, Mr C (teller)
 Petinos, Ms E
 Roberts, Mr A
 Speakman, Mr M
 Toole, Mr P
 Ward, Mr G

NOES

Aitchison, Ms J
 Car, Ms P
 Cotsis, Ms S
 Dib, Mr J
 Foley, Mr L
 Harrison, Ms J
 Hornery, Ms S
 Leong, Ms J
 McKay, Ms J
 Minns, Mr C
 Piper, Mr G
 Smith, Ms T F
 Watson, Ms A (teller)

Atalla, Mr E
 Catley, Ms Y
 Crakanthorp, Mr T
 Doyle, Ms T
 Greenwich, Mr A
 Haylen, Ms J
 Kamper, Mr S
 Lynch, Mr P
 Mehan, Mr D
 Park, Mr R
 Robertson, Mr J
 Warren, Mr G
 Zangari, Mr G

Barr, Mr C
 Chanthivong, Mr A
 Daley, Mr M
 Finn, Ms J
 Harris, Mr D
 Hoenig, Mr R
 Lalich, Mr N (teller)
 McDermott, Dr H
 Mihailuk, Ms T
 Parker, Mr J
 Scully, Mr P
 Washington, Ms K

Motion agreed to.**COST OF LIVING AND ELECTRICITY PRICES****Priority**

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (15:43): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes electricity prices rose by more than 60 per cent over the last five years of the previous Government.
- (2) Acknowledges that under the current Government there has been a 7 per cent real reduction in electricity transmission prices.
- (3) Acknowledges that this side of the House is easing the cost-of-living pressure on New South Wales families.

There are three components to the electricity bill that families receive: first, the retail component, which encompasses the cost of billing and other customer interaction; secondly, the transmission and distribution cost, which is the rent charged for transporting electricity from power generators to people's homes; and, thirdly, the cost of generating electricity. The retail component of electricity prices has remained steady and is not responsible for changes in people's electricity bills. The transmission and distribution costs were the subject of a scare campaign at the last State election because the Government took to the electorate a policy of leasing the poles and wires. The transmission and distribution prices component of electricity bills has decreased. Under the last

regulator's determination network prices decreased by 7 per cent in real terms. We saw that today TransGrid's most recent application for the next billing period is to reduce—yes, reduce—the average transmission tariff by 2.5 per cent. That is in stark contrast to what happened when Labor oversaw and owned the network: we saw network prices increase by 22 per cent.

The network reforms this Government has been implementing are directly aimed at putting downward pressure on network costs. These costs make up around 50 per cent of customers' bills. Reforms implemented by this Government have ensured that the networks are maintained at a high standard without increasing network prices. They are also encouraging private sector innovation to adapt new technologies, such as batteries, for our electricity network to reduce costs. By contrast, in 2009 Labor's gold-plated capital expenditure budget for Ausgrid alone was \$9 billion over five years. Under this Government, that same five-year budget was just \$3.3 billion. That is a reduction of 63 per cent.

The main volatility in electricity prices has been caused by generation costs, that is, the wholesale market. Since the late 1990s there has been a national electricity generation market, excluding Western Australia and the Northern Territory. Recently, the wholesale electricity market has undergone significant change, with wholesale costs increasing from historically low levels to prices more representative of the longer term and the retirement and/or maintenance of existing electricity generators. Unfortunately, Labor States like South Australia have allowed generators to be destroyed and have relied upon less reliable generation. This Government does not leave customers to the mercy of energy retailers; it maintains strict oversight of the electricity market.

According to the Australian Energy Market Commission, New South Wales has some of the lowest annual electricity bills on average for those on market contracts in comparison to other jurisdictions. On average, typical residential customers can save between \$250 and \$445 a year by switching to the best market offer. This Government is also doing more to support New South Wales electricity customers. It has boosted energy bill assistance for New South Wales households to more than \$1 billion over the next four years. Around 900,000 low-income households will receive a total of \$250 million in assistance this financial year and the next. This is a budget increase of almost 50 per cent from the 2010-11 year.

This Government introduced the \$90 gas rebate from 1 July 2015, and in 2016 it was extended to include LPG customers. We support the need for lower prices and we will continue to deliver them. I will repeat the Government's achievements in reducing cost-of-living expenses in other areas. The evidence is that in the last five years of the Labor Government electricity prices rose by more than 60 per cent and water and wastewater prices rose by more than 50 per cent. Since 2011 utility prices have increased more slowly in Sydney than in any other mainland city, and have increased by 50 per cent less than they did during the last five years of the Labor Government. This Coalition Government is getting runs on the board to reduce cost-of-living expenses. [*Time expired.*]

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (15:46): I will amend this ridiculous motion to make it easier for everyone to support it. I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out all words after "That" with a view to inserting instead:

"this House condemns the Government for failing to address massive increases in the cost of living for residents and families across New South Wales."

Mr Kevin Conolly: Point of order: That is not an amendment. It is directly contrary to the intent of the motion.

Mr RYAN PARK: We on this side of the House prepare and I have obtained the Clerk's advice on this amendment.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I have received advice from the Clerk that the amendment is in order. The member for Keira may continue.

Mr RYAN PARK: It is amazing that the Government has moved a motion in this place about the cost of living. I was brought up on killer facts. With respect to the cost of living, housing is a basic necessity. It goes over one's head. It comprises a couple windows, a couple of doors and a couple of walls. It now costs 12 times the average income to purchase a property—nine times more than when Labor was in government. On the subject of electricity, the Government is spending taxpayers' money in court so that mums and dads—like those great people from the great region of the Illawarra who are in the gallery today—cannot have the savings they need on their electricity bill.

This is a government that is not only stopping downward pressure on electricity prices but also using the community's money to do battle in court. The Government is in trouble when it sends the member for Ku-ring-gai to move a motion. It has asked, "Who do we have?" It has then gone down the list and said, "He will do something stupid today; let's roll him out." The shadow Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight and the member for

Londonderry are present in the Chamber and will talk about tolls. The Government loves tolls. Every time I am in Western Sydney people approach me and say, "I cannot believe how good the cost of living is now. It is so much lower than what it was years ago. How is it so cheap to drive on our roads? What is that great Coalition Government doing?" It is amazing how often I hear that when I visit Western Sydney!

It costs an extra \$2,000 or more per year just for the privilege of driving on Western Sydney roads. The member for Blacktown knows it, the member for Mount Druitt knows it, and the member for Londonderry knows it. Every Western Sydney member knows it. However, the member for Ku-ring-gai does not know it. He would be very familiar with Western Sydney roads! This Government is hell-bent on making it harder for people to go about their daily lives, to travel on the roads, to purchase a property, and to pay water and electricity bills. Wages growth is the lowest it has been in this State's contemporary history. This Government should be ashamed of its record when it comes to the cost of living. Labor will debate this issue and every issue important to hardworking families. There is only one party interested in reducing the cost of living, and that is the Australian Labor Party.

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (Epping) (15:52): The gallery has witnessed a working example of why the electorate of Keira needs a new member. Every time the member speaks in the Chamber he uses the same shallow speech. Today there have been living examples of why the Coalition Government is the only government that cares about the families of New South Wales. Earlier today the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight informed members that every family member will have an opportunity to return home earlier because this Government has delivered the infrastructure to make it possible. Those opposite spoke of it but did not deliver.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Prospect will resume his seat.

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: The Minister for Transport and Infrastructure spoke about the delivery of infrastructure to benefit families. The Opal card is an example of this Government delivering infrastructure for the community. Those opposite have not delivered in relation to infrastructure. The member for Ku-ring-gai's motion should be supported. Electricity prices under the Coalition Government have reduced due to a competitive electricity market. Those opposite presided over the quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations run by their mates that caused electricity prices to increase. Those people are now out of work because they did not deliver for the people of New South Wales. It is only through the competitive practices adopted by the Coalition Government that there has been a serious reduction in electricity prices.

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

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: In addition, technology such as smart meters has been used— [*Time expired.*]

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (15:55): Listen to the North Shore Tories—they could not find the Illawarra on a map. The Government has wheeled out the member for Ku-ring-gai, who is respected as Her Majesty's counsel. They have given the member a script containing nonsense to read to the Chamber. I suggest the member put a white ribbon around the brief and send it back, because it is no good. The Tories cannot brag about the management of electricity in this State. Only a few weeks ago there was almost a catastrophe at Tomago when the Australian Energy Regulator had to order a reduction in the supply of electricity. Why is that? The Tories sold the base load power stations and when the grid needed power in a time of crisis there was none.

It is not only the 1,000 employees who are at risk, it is also Australia's entire export supply. It impacts everybody. Last year the Government's management of the transmission and distribution networks resulted in the Australian Energy Regulator refusing to allow cost increases. It cited inefficient network management in this State compared to other States. The Government appealed to the Federal Court seeking an electricity price increase in order to fatten the pig for market day, and did so on the back of New South Wales electricity consumers. The Government stopped the reduction of the average household power bill by \$190 to \$338 per year. Small businesses could have expected average savings of \$569 per year. The Government has the temerity to say that it has decreased power prices when it sold the fattened-up, inefficient transmission network and as a result there has been a reduction in the level of increases. It is about time Government members stopped looking to the past and to Labor for excuses; it should look at the current management. They should look in the mirror and accept that their Government is incompetent.

Debate interrupted.

Members

INAUGURAL SPEECH

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong) (15:59): I am humbled to address the oldest Parliament in Australia for the first time. Today I commit to working every day to retain and strengthen the trust and confidence the people of Wollongong have placed in me. We commence sittings this year with both a new member for Wollongong and

a new Premier. It is a fresh start. This is an opportunity for the Premier to deliver the fair share she has promised the Illawarra. Wollongong is a city forged in steel, mining and heavy industry. From the Dalfram dispute to the campaign to improve Port Kembla's air quality, its industrial history and history of activism mean that Wollongong holds a special place in the labour movement and the Labor Party.

To advance our interests, the political and industrial arms of the labour movement united to advocate for Labor's plan for Wollongong during the by-election. We showed that we are at our best when we work together. The number of people who volunteered their time was phenomenal. I pay particular thanks to members of every Labor Party branch in the Illawarra. I thank New South Wales and Illawarra Young Labor—a committed group of future leaders coordinated by Jen Light and Alex Costello, many of whom gave up every weekend for weeks. I thank the trade union movement. In particular I thank Graeme Kelly, Gary Vann and the United Services Union; Gerard Hayes, Renee Cross and the Health Services Union; Tony Sheldon, Rob Pirc and the Transport Workers Union; Lee Webb, Bob Timbs and the United Mineworkers of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union [CFMEU]; Gary Keane, Mick Cross and the Maritime Union of Australia; Daniel White and the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union; Wayne Phillips and the Australian Workers' Union; and Tara Moriarty and United Voice.

I thank long-time friends and supporters, including David Voltz, Jane Shelton, Owen Torpy, Laura Ryan, Gail Morgan, Kathryn Conroy, Simon Tatz, Amanda Bresnan, Chris Parkin, Donna Tetley and Aaron Rule. A few of them are in the gallery today. My wife, Alison, my strongest supporter and toughest critic, is right more times than she is not. She is simply amazing. Her advice can be blunt, but it is always effective. Her final words on the way to my first media event are firmly etched in my memory. The reality is that no-one has shown more confidence in me, been willing to take up causes with me or encouraged me in the way that she has. We are in this together. I am grateful for her love and support, her intelligence, her ideas, her instincts and her hard work which have allowed me to be here today, fulfilling my dream to represent the community that we were both born into.

Wollongong is in my blood. I am the third generation of my family to call it home. To paraphrase our marketing slogan: "I love the Gong". I am a proud product of its public education system—the first in my family to complete high school and university. During my time in this place, I will work to advance public education, particularly as we look to improve the way we support children living with autism. To the best of my knowledge, I am also the first representative in this place to come from the small mining village of Mount Kembla, on the outskirts of Wollongong. Mount Kembla is infamous for a mine explosion in 1902 that killed 96 men and boys. That event is commemorated every year as an important reminder of the need to be vigilant about workplace standards and safety.

I have always been lucky to have the love, support and encouragement of my parents, Inta and Ian, and my brother, Glen, and sister, Jane. I thank them for everything. Their support and encouragement has expanded to include my mother-in-law, Pem; my brothers-in-law, Boyd and Colin; my sisters-in-law, Rosie and Karen; my nieces, Kimberley and Annabelle; my nephew, Caelen; and my Aunt Edith. I thank them for their help and the confidence they have shown in me. I also acknowledge my grandparents, Gunda and Villis Klavins, and Bill and Edna Scully, and my father-in-law, Ron Byrnes, who have all passed away but who would have loved to be here today.

Wollongong has grown through waves of migration. In making this point, I acknowledge that European settlement is only a small part of its history. The Wodi Wodi people have lived in the Illawarra for tens of thousands of years and have an important role to play in our future. I pay my respects to their elders past and present. My own family reflects our migrant history. Mum migrated from post-Second World War Germany, while Dad's family originates in Ireland. Migration created a community accepting of all. Ethnic and religious backgrounds took a back seat. People moved to Wollongong for a better life and, largely, they achieved it. Residents new to Wollongong might not have shared a common language but they shared common goals and values. In representing my community, I look to harness the strength of the tapestry of people and backgrounds that comprise it, embracing our shared values of fairness, decency and equality of opportunity.

These shared values are Labor values, and they are my values. My values and passion for our region prompted people like Carolyn Brown, Steve Tyerman, Vivien Twyford, Nick and Judy Whitlam, Colin and Melissa Markham, Bevan Fermor, Fay Campbell, Wendy Richardson, Jenny Osmond and cricketing legend Adam Gilchrist to back me publicly. I thank each of them for putting their trust and confidence in me. I bring to the role knowledge and experience gained in a mix of volunteer, adviser and chief of staff roles for Stephen Martin, David Campbell, Sharon Bird, Chris Hayes, Craig Emerson and Justine Elliot—all of whom have served or continue to serve their communities with distinction. I thank them for teaching and mentoring me. I have learned a lot from each of them, especially Sharon and Chris.

People often assume that Wollongong has always been represented by Labor. However, under various electorate names it has been represented by the Liberals, an Independent, nationalists, protectionists, free traders

and the Australian Labor Party. Some also make the false assertion that Labor does not support our region. But we see Labor's investments everywhere we go. One can get on a free bus, delivered by Labor, and take a journey around Wollongong that highlights Labor investments such as the Wollongong Entertainment Centre and upgraded WIN Stadium; a steelworks that continues to operate as a result of action by Labor governments, the expanded port of Port Kembla, now the largest vehicle importation hub in the country; a redeveloped Wollongong Hospital that was an eight-metre hole in the ground just 20 years ago; a world-class university and Innovation Campus that is home to world-leading academics and researchers; and first-class TAFE facilities at Wollongong and West Wollongong, to name a few.

People criticise politicians, but these achievements are just part of the legacy of my predecessors. On behalf of our community, I thank them for building a strong foundation for the future. But we can make our community even better. Wollongong deserves its fair share. The elderly, disabled and many others find it almost impossible to access trains at Unanderra station. It is a 72-step struggle to the platform. The station needs lifts, and I am determined to see them built. Labor has committed to them, and we look to the Government to match that commitment. Today I pose the same question to the Premier that she posed in her inaugural speech: "How long must we wait for this basic service?" If you cannot access a service, it might as well not exist. A State that trumpets being number one should never settle for second best for its most disadvantaged citizens.

Wollongong's unemployment rate remains stubbornly above the New South Wales average, and about 20,000 people a day leave the region for work. I know what it is like, having commuted for nearly 15 years. Over the next 20 years Sydney's south-west will be home to more than a million people and an estimated 100,000 more jobs. I was pleased to work with the University of Wollongong when it decided to engage directly with the region through a campus at Liverpool. In a similar way, we need to invest in infrastructure connecting Wollongong to that growing region. Improving infrastructure connections will also increase tourists and recreational visitors to the Illawarra, thereby helping to create more local jobs. At the same time, we must also invest to support our own population growth. Despite the best efforts of great staff, Wollongong Hospital has some of the longest waiting times in the State. The future of services at Port Kembla Hospital is uncertain. We have multimillion-dollar school and housing maintenance backlogs. The promise of a thoracic surgeon at Wollongong Hospital is unfulfilled.

We deserve to get back our seat at the Cabinet table through the reinstatement of a Minister for the Illawarra. I am committed to strengthening our local economy, society and environment by pursuing the initiatives in Labor's Illawarra Jobs Action Plan, a plan developed with Labor leader Luke Foley, the shadow ministry and caucus, who engaged with Wollongong residents and organisations to better understand our needs. I thank them for their support. They listened to local problems, developed local solutions informed by local knowledge, and committed to real plans and real solutions. The Leader of the Opposition was clear: Wollongong matters to Labor and it will always be taken seriously. And he meant it. You can hardly keep the guy away from the place! He has shown that by focusing on the issues that matter to people and transforming this into a clear direction for Labor the old adage rings true: good policy makes good politics.

We communicated our plan through a comprehensive campaign coordinated by the formidable team of Kaila Murnain, Pat Garcia and David Dobson, supported by the offices of the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow ministry, and the smart and energetic team in Wollongong of Liam Rankine, Gino Mandarino, Jess Malnersic, Caitlin Roodenrys, Jessica Malcolm-Roberts, B. J. Roberts, Chris Lacey, Janai Tabbernor, Chris Snewin, Blake Osmond, Elyse Delphino, and Jenelle and Rod Rimmer—to name a few. We were cheered on from afar by Mitch, Monika and Marta O'Dwyer on an overseas posting, by Jessica Sparks, who was recovering from her second double lung transplant, and by Mike Meurer and Kristen Wall in Queensland. I thank my council colleagues Ann Martin, Chris Connor, David Brown, Janice Kershaw and Marianne Saliba, along with the staff in the offices of the members for Cunningham, for Whitlam, for Keira and for Shellharbour for their help. Time prevents me from naming all of the literally hundreds of people who helped me, but I thank each of them.

However, I would like to thank some individually, especially Dot and John Park—also known as the parents of the member for Keira—Tom Ward, Bob Turner, Norma and Michael Wilson, Neil Barnett, Tania Brown, Brian Dellit, Fay Elbourne, Jihad and Hussein Salem, Peter Bubev, George Bartolo, Craig Kershaw, Ann and Bob Bower, Vicky King, Charlie Habazin, Simon, Aldo and Annette Zulian, Lou Stefanovski, Allan and Pat Cobbin, Bev and Kev Reed, Rusty Abbott, Kiley Martin, Linda Campbell, Michael Knight, Dom Ofner, David Latham and Dermot Ryan and the Irish Friends of Labor, John and Liz Hobbs, Anne Wilcox and Stella Chapman, along with some great young campaigners, including Peter Munford, Alex Saliba, David Atkins, Josh Mills, Kyle Waples, Blake Horcicka, Patrick Bell, Hugh McClure, and Rita Andraos. I thank my friends from Bellambi Surf Club and former colleagues from the University of Wollongong. I also thank the Federal member for Whitlam, Stephen Jones, and sincerely thank my great mates from the Illawarra Labor team in this place, the member for Keira and the member for Shellharbour. Your advice, counsel and assistance was simply superb. I thank you so much.

For the past five years I have worked at the University of Wollongong's Innovation Campus alongside dedicated researchers who are shaping our industrial, employment and social futures. I was the only economist in the building and my colleagues were never convinced that a background in the dismal science was good enough for me to take on science in the labs. It was probably just as well: with thousands of chemicals in the building, if it all went wrong the explosion would have rivalled Sydney's New Year's Eve fireworks. Research in nanotechnology, 3D printing, autonomous vehicles and sustainable buildings are just some of the areas being advanced at the University of Wollongong. At the Australian Institute for Innovative Materials, where I was the chief operating officer, the task was to innovate, scale up and help to develop devices integrating research breakthroughs. It was a complete process to turn research into reality.

Whether it is more efficient energy generation and storage or personalised medical devices, today's innovations will be part of our future. Hopefully, future breakthroughs will help others diagnosed with cancer at a young age, like my friends Louise Biggs, Campbell Giles and Toni Newman—three strong women taken from us in their prime. Wollongong will continue to make a great contribution to Australia's future, just as we have always done. Over the past couple of decades Wollongong has transformed from a steel, mining and heavy industrial town to a more service-based economy. We are the City of Innovation for a reason.

Comparing the Wollongong of my childhood, which had around 20,000 people employed at the steelworks and a few thousand students at the university, with the Wollongong of today, with a few thousand employed by the steelworks and more than 30,000 students enrolled globally at its university, is a clear demonstration of the change. But this does not mean that our steel and traditional industries are not part of the Illawarra's future; they most certainly are. That is why we have developed our steel plan that helps provide a sustainable future for steel and metal manufacturing. But our city and its employment mix has changed.

While I welcome the potential of emerging technologies, I realise that this feeling is not universal. As the son of a retired truck driver and from a family who owned an airport shuttle small business, I am conscious of the impact of automation on the future of work. It is claimed that nearly two-thirds of children who started school a few weeks ago will work in jobs not yet thought of. And more than a quarter of existing jobs will be obsolete in a generation. Parliamentary Library research suggests that more than half of the jobs in the Wollongong electorate are at risk from computerisation and automation—that is nearly 17,000 jobs. I do not believe all of these jobs will disappear without replacement, but naturally people become concerned about the future when they do not immediately see their place in it. After all, very few middle-aged steelworkers go on to create high-tech start-ups.

But innovation is about more than just IT and fintech. Innovation and disruptive technologies have given rise to the "gig economy"—our next industrial revolution—the new or the "now" economy. This is changing competition and employment relationships. This is not new. Technological change has changed work and society in the past. But innovations and technology need to work for us. They should help improve the common good, not erode it. They should help bind people, not divide them. They should help create jobs, not destroy them. They should drive new industries, new jobs and new possibilities. The "gig economy" is here to stay. Trying to regulate disruptive technologies out of existence is nothing more than wishful thinking. But that does not mean we have to accept workers being put into positions where employment flexibility becomes nothing more than employment insecurity. And a global labour market should not mean job chasing, involving a wages race to the bottom.

Workers deserve a level playing field. Underemployment and under-utilisation, which are growing, should not be allowed to become the norm. Instead, governments should set effective market rules and compliance regimes and intervene only when necessary. Governments can and should make legal redress more understandable and accessible. Governments can and should make our school education, TAFEs and apprenticeships more responsive to the impacts of technological changes. Governments can and should provide more comprehensive science, technology, engineering and mathematics education and access to the digital devices that students need.

To complement technological advances, State governments must drive the next round of microeconomic reforms to help boost productivity and assist in jobs creation. To support new and existing businesses embrace new technologies, I have advocated for the creation of environments like the imake maker space, which allows people to test new technologies and techniques before committing to large capital outlays. After all, many innovations will continue to come from the shop floor. Government procurement can and should support new industries and new jobs. The barriers to entry for government procurement by new companies are often high. Risk aversion can force purchases of overseas equipment while local companies selling a cheaper but superior product are locked out. Reserving a proportion of the Government's procurement spend for innovative, new products would support risk-taking and entrepreneurship and help speed up the time to bring new products to market.

As a Parliament, we must be across research and innovation and be ready for the associated ethical and social debates. People expect us to lead debates, not follow them. Innovators are imagining the future of hospitals, schools and communities, and we must do the same. People also expect more rapid implementation of government decisions. They do not understand why after decisions have been made on issues like medicinal cannabis, for

example, people can be left waiting and suffering because implementation is time consuming. Instead, it has been left to the Labor Opposition to take the lead on this issue. Together, this is using government policy, procurement and implementation as an exemplar. Governments can and should lead by example and help spread the benefits of new ideas to as many people as possible. This is how we can help to make sure that New South Wales is always at the forefront of new innovations, new industries and new jobs.

The future of new jobs and new industries should not be the exclusive domain of the Sydney central business district [CBD]. Wollongong has a big role to play in our State's future. Wollongong can help to take pressure off Sydney. The combination of technology and a supportive environment nurtured by governments can advance communities like Wollongong. To do this we do not need to embrace policies of economic isolationism or hand out massive regional relocation subsidies. Rather, rational policies aimed at growing jobs and the economy, at increasing income and improving its distribution can be employed. These are policies built on our shared values of fairness, decency and equality of opportunity. Governments can and should lead by example with a serious effort at decentralisation.

The multiplier effect of shifting businesses and government operations to regional centres is considerable while the impact on the Sydney CBD is largely negligible. It helps improve lifestyles by taking pressure off transport networks, reducing commuting and congestion. It grows regional opportunities. When I worked with the team from Advantage Wollongong we sold the benefits of Wollongong to businesses looking to relocate. It was not a hard sell when we outlined our relatively lower costs, positive business environment and the lifestyle benefits for staff in Wollongong. It was a win-win, yet this Government—unlike previous Labor governments—seems unable to recognise it. In six years it has relocated only 38 public sector jobs to the Illawarra.

Decentralisation will require some supporting infrastructure but it first needs a real and genuine commitment from government. Many of the challenges we face are not new. Fundamentally, it remains a question of who gets what and why, how and at what cost? At times we need to unpack problems and begin from first principles rather than scramble for gesture politics and quick fixes that can entrench problems. Addressing housing and housing affordability warrants such an approach. We need to be willing to start with the question of "why not"? As George Bernard Shaw wrote:

You see things; and you say, "Why?" But I dream things that never were; and I say "Why not?"

We need to be as creative and innovative in our roles as legislators and policymakers as our world-leading researchers are in creating new possibilities. Governments cannot solve every problem, but a shared responsibility between government, the people it serves and the organisations that help to deliver solutions can make a real difference. To help restore respect, integrity and faith in public life we parliamentarians must also be willing to be more up-front with our constituents. Paul Keating said:

We Australians have a remarkable future within our grasp, a future which other countries can only dream of. We have this great goal and Labor has a great passion to reach it.

This is very much the case in Wollongong. We are ready for the future. The key elements already exist: a skilled, multilingual workforce; a research-driven university; and connection with an international airport and a working port. This will allow us to seize new opportunities such as the production of medical devices, green-collar jobs, and energy storage, or developing new ways of tackling dementia or caring for our aged, disabled and mentally ill. These new opportunities can also increase demand in our existing industries.

If we are to address the politics of division and feelings of alienation, we must share the benefits of economic growth beyond the Sydney CBD. We must do everything possible to support those who were not blessed with opportunity and address the pockets of poverty, inequality and disadvantage that exist in the suburbs of Wollongong, the outer suburbs of Sydney and other parts of the State. Improving access to housing, to education, to job opportunities and to quality health care can be supported by spreading the corridors of growth. That is fair, that is decent and that helps provide equality of opportunity. In pursuing this, I commit to working every day for everyone in Wollongong. I believe in a future where everyone gets a shot at a good education, a decent job near where they live and a bright future. Together, we can achieve this. I thank the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I welcome to the gallery David Campbell, former member for Keira and a former Minister, and Col Markham, former member for Wollongong. I also welcome Federal member for Fowler Chris Hayes, member for Werriwa Anne Stanley, member for Cunningham Sharon Bird, former member Laurie Ferguson, member for Richmond Justine Elliott, Mayor of Penrith John Thain, and Councillor Reece Byrnes from Tweed Shire Council.

*Motions Accorded Priority***COST OF LIVING AND ELECTRICITY PRICES****Priority**

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (16:27): In reply: Last week in debate on the Steel Industry Protection Bill 2016 the member for Keira said:

Anyone who sits in the oldest Parliament in this country and fails to take the lessons of Brexit or Trump is missing some fundamental points. I do not believe for one second that all of the people who voted for Trump are racist bigots.

It would seem that the member's admiration for Donald Trump extends to the concept of alternative facts. When I gave a number of examples of improvements in the cost of living and utilities, including electricity, water and gas and public transport compared to when Labor was in power, all he could do was point to toll costs. The member for Heffron similarly sought to parry rather than address the facts. The record of the Labor Party on tolls is not a good one. Labor set the tolls on the Eastern Distributor with the longest concession length in New South Wales from the day of opening. It set a concession length of 49 years.

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

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: The Labor Government set tolls by leaving it up to the investment banks to pitch what the tolls should be for each road.

Mr Ron Hoenig: Tell us what Sir Henry Parkes did too, will you ?

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: I do not think they built toll roads when Henry Parkes was in this House. The member for Heffron presented no facts to counter those which I put. Instead, he raised the sale of base load power stations and recent generation constraints, but that is an extraordinary contention. The 15-year-old Labor Government in South Australia recently blew up a base load power station and is drawing much more from the national grid than it is producing. The Victorian Labor Government is allowing the closure of the Hazelwood Power Station, which supplies 20 per cent of the Victorian electricity capacity.

The facts overwhelmingly support the assertion that this Government has been easing cost-of-living pressures in New South Wales. Labor's history in government in this State and elsewhere in Australia is not good. The reference by the member for Heffron to the Australian Energy Regulator's determination and litigation now before the Federal Court brought by the AER, which was to address the fact that 2,750 jobs will be lost over the three New South Wales distribution businesses. It is a sign of how far Labor has come from its origins that it would criticise in this Parliament actions to save 2,750 jobs.

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

The House divided.

Ayes47
Noes38
Majority.....9

AYES

Anderson, Mr K
Barilaro, Mr J
Conolly, Mr K
Crouch, Mr A
Donato, Mr P
Fraser, Mr A
Gulaptis, Mr C
Hodgkinson, Ms K
Lee, Dr G
Notley-Smith, Mr B
Pavey, Mrs M
Piccoli, Mr A
Rowell, Mr J
Stokes, Mr R
Tudehope, Mr D
Williams, Mr R

Aplin, Mr G
Berejiklian, Ms G
Constance, Mr A
Davies, Ms T
Elliott, Mr D
Goward, Ms P
Hazzard, Mr B
Humphries, Mr K
Maguire, Mr D
O'Dea, Mr J
Perrottet, Mr D
Provest, Mr G
Sidoti, Mr J
Taylor, Mr M
Upton, Ms G
Williams, Mrs L

Ayres, Mr S
Bromhead, Mr S (teller)
Coure, Mr M
Dominello, Mr V
Evans, Mr L
Grant, Mr T
Henskens, Mr A
Johnsen, Mr M
Marshall, Mr A
Patterson, Mr C (teller)
Petinos, Ms E
Roberts, Mr A
Speakman, Mr M
Toole, Mr P
Ward, Mr G

NOES

Aitchison, Ms J
 Car, Ms P
 Cotsis, Ms S
 Dib, Mr J
 Foley, Mr L
 Harrison, Ms J
 Hornery, Ms S
 Leong, Ms J
 McKay, Ms J
 Minns, Mr C
 Piper, Mr G
 Smith, Ms T F
 Watson, Ms A (teller)

Atalla, Mr E
 Catley, Ms Y
 Crakanthorp, Mr T
 Doyle, Ms T
 Greenwich, Mr A
 Haylen, Ms J
 Kamper, Mr S
 Lynch, Mr P
 Mehan, Mr D
 Park, Mr R
 Robertson, Mr J
 Warren, Mr G
 Zangari, Mr G

Barr, Mr C
 Chanthivong, Mr A
 Daley, Mr M
 Finn, Ms J
 Harris, Mr D
 Hoenig, Mr R
 Lalich, Mr N (teller)
 McDermott, Dr H
 Mihailuk, Ms T
 Parker, Mr J
 Scully, Mr P
 Washington, Ms K

Amendment negatived.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the motion as moved by the member for Ku-ring-gai be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes47
 Noes38
 Majority.....9

AYES

Anderson, Mr K
 Barilaro, Mr J
 Conolly, Mr K
 Crouch, Mr A
 Donato, Mr P
 Fraser, Mr A
 Gulaptis, Mr C
 Hodgkinson, Ms K
 Lee, Dr G
 Notley-Smith, Mr B
 Pavey, Mrs M
 Piccoli, Mr A
 Rowell, Mr J
 Stokes, Mr R
 Tudehope, Mr D
 Williams, Mr R

Aplin, Mr G
 Berejiklian, Ms G
 Constance, Mr A
 Davies, Ms T
 Elliott, Mr D
 Goward, Ms P
 Hazzard, Mr B
 Humphries, Mr K
 Maguire, Mr D
 O'Dea, Mr J
 Perrottet, Mr D
 Provest, Mr G
 Sidoti, Mr J
 Taylor, Mr M
 Upton, Ms G
 Williams, Mrs L

Ayres, Mr S
 Bromhead, Mr S (teller)
 Coure, Mr M
 Dominello, Mr V
 Evans, Mr L
 Grant, Mr T
 Henskens, Mr A
 Johnsen, Mr M
 Marshall, Mr A
 Patterson, Mr C (teller)
 Petinos, Ms E
 Roberts, Mr A
 Speakman, Mr M
 Toole, Mr P
 Ward, Mr G

NOES

Aitchison, Ms J
 Car, Ms P
 Cotsis, Ms S
 Dib, Mr J
 Foley, Mr L
 Harrison, Ms J
 Hornery, Ms S
 Leong, Ms J
 McKay, Ms J
 Minns, Mr C
 Piper, Mr G
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 Daley, Mr M
 Finn, Ms J
 Harris, Mr D
 Hoenig, Mr R
 Lalich, Mr N (teller)
 McDermott, Dr H
 Mihailuk, Ms T
 Parker, Mr J
 Scully, Mr P
 Washington, Ms K

Motion agreed to.

Bills

MOTOR RACING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (NEWCASTLE 500) BILL 2017

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 14 February 2017.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (16:38): I speak on behalf of the Labor Opposition in support of the Motor Racing Legislation Amendment (Newcastle 500) Bill 2017, and I note from the outset that Labor will move amendments to the bill in the other place in due course. We note that the object of the bill is to facilitate the relocation of the annual Supercars motor sport race from Homebush to Newcastle, with the intention of operating the event in Newcastle for at least the next five years. The option to then hold the race in Homebush for future dates will be retained.

Schedule 1, items [6], [7] and [8] set out that the Minister may approve a person to apply to Destination NSW for authorisation to conduct a motor race event. Destination NSW will ultimately have the final say as to whether or not authorisation is granted. The first Newcastle 500 will be held in Newcastle between 24 and 26 November 2017, with a wide range of works required before the race can take place. This legislation will extend the existing legislative provisions for motor racing at Homebush to motor racing in Newcastle. Destination NSW is the approval body, with the local council being on board as a partner. This legislation will ensure that the race promoter will have an obligation to consult with any other public or local authorities prescribed by the regulation to address any specific issues in the region.

This bill will facilitate infrastructure and civil works being undertaken in order to meet motorsport track standards, while the Minister has promised works and improvements to the roads and service infrastructure in the area. This will require a significant amount of one-off construction to be undertaken prior to the November 2017 race. Following the first event, subsequent event works will require only temporary facilities to be erected over a six-week period, followed by a further three weeks for their removal. I also note that the Minister, who is in the Chamber, mentioned in his second reading speech that the event will contribute approximately \$57 million to the Hunter region's economy and will provide an additional 215 ongoing car parking spaces in Newcastle.

In 2014 the current motor racing legislation was amended to remove the Homebush Motor Racing Authority, which was an advisory body with the responsibility for the preparation and management of the motor race and for liaising with government agencies, the promoter and other identified parties such as affected local residents and businesses. This was an amendment that Labor opposed, yet the Government pushed it through anyway. Very much the same thing is missing from this legislation. This bill fails to install an independent broker to act as a coordinator between council, Supercars, the community and other government agencies.

Both the mayor of Newcastle and my colleague in this House the member for Newcastle have called for a Newcastle-based government coordination office to be established as part of the preparations for this event. Prior to today, a number of Newcastle residents have voiced their concerns regarding the hosting of the Newcastle 500 in their backyard. I am sure all our offices have received correspondence from concerned Newcastle residents on this matter. There is a big concern about the impacts this race may have on environmental and heritage locations in and around Newcastle.

An unspecified number of trees are to be removed and an unspecified heritage plan is to be implemented. Presently, the proposed circuit passes through the heritage precinct of Newcastle east. Although a tree planting program and a heritage impact statement have been promised, no clear plan has been laid out for all to see. It is no wonder the community is concerned and is reaching out for answers. The member for Newcastle has been broadly supportive of bringing the race to Newcastle, acknowledging the great economic benefit it will bring to the region. However, the member has been just as fervent in ensuring his communities' concerns have been heard. As a member from Western Sydney and an avid fan of the V8 Supercars races, having attended races at Homebush on a number of occasions, it is upsetting to know we are losing such a great event from Western Sydney. However, in saying that with a bleeding heart, it is reassuring to know that the V8 Supercars races are staying in New South Wales—

Mr Jihad Dib: We'll do a road trip.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: —and, in the grand scheme of things, as the member for Lakemba has pointed out, a road trip could be possible for those of us who enjoy our V8 Supercars. Newcastle is not that far away from those of us who live in Western Sydney; we will just need to remember to book our accommodation in advance

for the event. Although we support the bill, as I noted at the beginning of my contribution, we reserve the right to put forward amendments in the other House that will address some of the shortcomings in the legislation before us today. At this stage, the Hon. Penny Sharpe will be moving those amendments in the other place. As I say, we support the bill but we do have some concerns. I am sure that the Minister will take those issues on board and we look towards working through those, together with the community and the stakeholders. It is a great event. However, there needs to be further coordination to ensure that all stakeholders are happy that the environmental and heritage considerations are addressed and that the V8 Supercars event in Newcastle is the success that we want it to be.

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) (16:46): I support the Motor Racing Legislation Amendment (Newcastle 500) Bill 2017. What an exciting year this will be for the Hunter region. With Newcastle playing host to a wide array of world-class sports events this year, including the Newcastle 500, the 2017 events calendar for Newcastle promises to be the city's biggest and best year yet and it cements the city's status as a premier major events location in the Hunter region. I must acknowledge, however, that there has been a bit of angst surrounding the event recently that has been the result of some local residents not feeling as though they are being completely involved in the process.

In response to this issue, and the member for Fairfield will be pleased to hear this, I am advised that three community engagement sessions have been held so far, in November and December of last year, with approximately 280 people in attendance across all sessions. Given the importance of these sessions, another session is scheduled for March. Plans are also being developed for a more permanent means of engagement. One plan is to establish a location in Newcastle where residents and other locals can make appointments to discuss their issues or concerns with staff. Another plan currently being progressed is the creation of two resident advisory groups containing local community and business members, who will be consulted and kept fully informed by Destination NSW, Supercars Australia and Newcastle council on all aspects as the event progresses. In addition, the bill will require the race promoter to consult with all affected landowners, occupiers, the local council and prescribed public authorities prior to a works authorisation being issued by Destination NSW.

These measures demonstrate the Government's commitment to ensuring that the community continues to be informed as to the progress of the event and is able to provide feedback in a number of different ways. On that note, I also mention that there is a Newcastle City Council website dedicated to the event, which is being updated regularly with the latest information. It is an extremely comprehensive website and I strongly encourage everyone affected by the event, particularly residents, to have a look at it. For example, there is information on the website confirming that all affected residents and businesses will have 24/7 access during the civil works phase and will be accredited during the event to ensure access. Parking for residents will be provided free of charge outside the event precinct.

Shuttle and concierge services will be made available for those residents requiring medical and other assistance—again free of charge—and services for the elderly and vulnerable, such as Meals on Wheels, home care and nursing home services, and locum doctors, will be assisted with accessing the precinct during the event. It is well known that events of this scale bring significant community and economic benefits to the entire region. Destination NSW has calculated that the event will attract 81,000 domestic and international visitors and inject more than \$57 million into the Hunter region in direct visitor expenditure over the next five years. By attracting national and international fans of motorsports to the event, the community can expect increased exposure, tourism, jobs and businesses. This increased exposure can be leveraged onto further opportunities for local businesses right across the Hunter region.

To assist with this, Supercars Australia has offered to partner with local restaurants, artisans, and accommodation and service providers to identify business and promotional activities. There will also be other, more direct benefits for Newcastle residents and businesses. The investment in civil works upgrades for the event will mean better roads and more parking. Other utility infrastructure upgrades are being brought forward and scheduled to occur simultaneously to minimise future disruption. Some of these upgrades are long overdue. In the months to come, as the civil works program is settled, more details regarding these matters will be made public.

This is all great news for the city of Newcastle but also for the broader Hunter region. As the member for Upper Hunter, I find this is a very exciting time. Supercars fans visiting Newcastle for the race will hopefully take some time to experience everything our fantastic region has to offer, whether it be wineries, horse stud tours or checking out mining activities. There are many things people can do, from the Central Coast through to the Upper Hunter. The area is a wonderful place to visit. The hotels, restaurants and attractions will be filled with visiting spectators and we look forward to that. It is important that we capitalise on this opportunity and do everything we can to support tourism in the Hunter region, including supporting this bill.

As the member for Upper Hunter, I am proud to support this bill and bring this world-class event to the door of Upper Hunter residents and the Hunter region. My only disappointment is that the first day of the event,

a Friday, is not a public holiday which would enable Supercars fans and their entire families from across the Hunter region and New South Wales to attend. However, this will be a fantastic event; it will be wonderful for the region and for business. Indeed, it is exciting for the entire Hunter region. We look forward to seeing this event play out in a professional manner on an international scale. I commend the Minister and Destination NSW for bringing this bill to the Parliament. I look forward to the event and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (16:52): I support the Motor Racing Legislation Amendment (Newcastle 500) Bill 2017. It is an exciting prospect to have this motor race in Newcastle, which will be a boon not only for Newcastle but also for the wider Hunter region. The member for Upper Hunter, a great member, spoke about the benefits for the Upper Hunter. There will be benefits also for the electorate of Myall Lakes. People not only will attend the race but also will visit the wineries and other destinations on offer in the Hunter Valley.

I encourage them to visit Myall Lakes which, as we all know, is internationally renowned as Australia's water playground. It has a myriad of lakes, including Bombah Broadwater, Myall Lakes, Wallis Lake, Smiths Lake, and all the islands and tributaries that feed into that lake system. We have also the mighty Manning River, 156 kilometres of navigable waterways and the only dual entrance river in the Southern Hemisphere. My electorate is also home to Ellenborough Falls, the longest single-drop waterfall in the Southern Hemisphere, and the grandest, tallest tree in New South Wales at Wootton just up the road from Newcastle. The area has a lot for the visitors to see and I encourage them to come to Myall Lakes and experience this fantastic area. Wallis Lake supplies one-third of the Australian Sydney rock oyster market and 80 per cent of the blue swimmer crabs for the Sydney Fish Markets.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member that we are dealing with the Motor Racing Legislation Amendment (Newcastle 500) Bill 2017.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: Yes, and those people going to see motor racing want more than just the motor racing experience; they want to come up and try those oysters. They then want to go to the mighty Manning because a third of the fresh milk market in New South Wales is supplied by the dairy farmers of the Manning Valley—it is renowned for having the best milk in all of Australia. I raise this because this event is such a coup for Newcastle, the Hunter and the lower mid North Coast. The Minister should be very proud of bringing this event to the Hunter, and I know that many people will want to be a part of it. I know that people from the Myall Lakes electorate will want to attend because we have a tremendous history of motorsports.

The electorate of Myall Lakes has the Lower North Coast Car Club with its track at Minimbah near Nabiac. Every year we hold the Troy Bayliss Classic, attended by 6,500 to 7,000 people who love their bikes, cars and motorsports. I note that the Assistant Speaker, the member for Coffs Harbour, is in the chair. His electorate hosts the World Rally Championship. I know that many Coffs Harbour people have concerns about that, but it would fit hand in glove down at Myall Lakes, which would be a great place to hold that event. The Supercars championship will be televised around Australia and around the world. It will receive international coverage, once again promoting Newcastle and the Hunter, and I will make sure that the Minister does not forget Myall Lakes. Someone asked me: How important is the Troy Bayliss Classic? Not only do 6,500 to 7,000 people attend the event for three days, increasing visitation nights and spending money in the electorate, but also the event is live streamed around the world. International champions come from America, Japan, Asia, Europe and Great Britain to race.

Mr Geoff Provest: Name them.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: It puts the Old Bar track and the Myall Lakes electorate on the map. I hear the interjection from the member for the Tweed; he is 100 per cent for the Tweed. He, of course, is extremely jealous because he would love to have the Supercars championship up there in Tweed Heads. But the Minister was smart enough to put it in Newcastle where the benefits for Upper Hunter, Myall Lakes and other places will be realised. I cannot speak highly enough of this legislation nor stress enough how important it is for the people of Newcastle. It will create jobs, provide international coverage of the area and have spin-off effects for those in close proximity. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle) (16:57): I speak on the Motor Racing Legislation Amendment (Newcastle 500) Bill 2017 introduced last week by the Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Adam Marshall. I indicate that the Labor Opposition will certainly be moving amendments when this legislation goes to the other House. Today I speak for Newcastle, the city that has been tasked with taking on the former Sydney 500 Supercars championship race formerly held at Homebush, a city that is concerned about the lack of information and communication regarding the race. I have been talking about this issue since November last year when my office was inundated by concerned residents who had found out that the Government had removed itself from the consultation process, conveniently outsourcing the responsibility to Supercars.

The member for Upper Hunter did say that there had been quite a lot of angst from local residents. He is absolutely spot on, and it was at that point that I discovered the missing piece in the Supercars race puzzle. Newcastle was actually missing a dedicated unit to coordinate the race, a team that would take care of all the issues my constituents were facing. When the Sydney 500 event was established so was the Homebush Motor Racing Authority [HMRA]. The HMRA was tasked with the implementation and general coordination of government services required to support the race in Sydney. Newcastle wants and needs a similar coordination unit. In November last year I proposed a government coordination unit to provide a streamlined approvals process to ensure that all environmental and safety matters were addressed and that the needs and concerns of local residents and stakeholders are managed independently. Lord Mayor Nuatali Nemes has called for this unit to be established.

This unit would work closely with the Supercars team and consult widely with the relevant government agencies and other key stakeholders, including Newcastle City Council, residents and businesses. The unit would ensure that the vision for a safe and successful event was fulfilled and would operate as an independent entity from the event. The question was asked, "Why has Newcastle not been given a similar team to that which paved the way for Homebush?" Last week when this bill was introduced, I hoped to see allocated to Newcastle a unit resembling the set up for Homebush. Newcastle has been tasked one staff member to act as a community liaison officer and the occasional visit from Destination NSW. This is very disappointing.

Yesterday the Hon. Penny Sharpe, shadow Minister for Trade, Tourism and Major Events visited the proposed Newcastle site. Labor calls on the Berejiklian Government to establish a Supercars 500 event government coordination unit located in Newcastle to act as the independent liaison and consultation body for local businesses and residents engaging with the government agencies, Newcastle council and the event promoter. Last November when I called for that unit to be established I received a flat "no" from the previous Minister. The reality is that this is a new event that will have V8 supercars racing around the city of Newcastle and in particular through residential and heritage-listed zones. There should be a team of people working with residents, agencies and the government, not just one person. At the moment my office is inundated with calls, emails and letters from residents who cannot get answers to their questions. This is not good enough. The Government has signed a deal, handed over Newcastle and not given the city the appropriate tools needed for such an event.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting. The member for Newcastle will be heard in silence.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP: Minister Adam Marshall issued a press release saying that from next month the Government will establish the Newcastle 500 coordination office to oversee all aspects of the implementation. The Minister commented that it was unfortunate that the Hon. Penny Sharpe and I felt the need to call for something that the Government is going to deliver. There is only one issue with this announcement: one full-time government community liaison officer and a couple of visits from Destination NSW do not constitute an office. That is not what was requested. There is no mention of a liaison officer in the bill. Newcastle deserves no less than what Homebush has received in terms of coordination and facilitation. I urge the Minister to reconsider and fully implement Labor's calls for a government coordination unit located in Newcastle to act as an independent body.

The Minister is inching closer towards what was called for in November last year. It is good that the Government has realised that Newcastle needs and deserves a community contact point for V8 supercars. Labor has asked for an independent coordination unit, not just a liaison officer together with the odd visit from Destination NSW and other staff that will "visit as required". What does that mean? Does that mean once a month or once a week? There needs to be a unit on the ground bringing all the stakeholders together—a united contact point. I urge the Minister to consider Labor's calls for this unit to provide independent liaison and consultation. It is completely unacceptable that the Government is refusing to provide this unit. Now is the time for planning and preparation for the event and residents and businesses must be included in that planning. My office has been inundated because people cannot find a coordinated contact point. There is a clear need for enhanced communication.

This race will run through a heritage area of Newcastle that is similar to The Rocks in Sydney. It is vital that it is done correctly. The local community must play a part from the start. I have been inundated with questions. Local resident Mark sent a letter to the Minister and, to his surprise, received a response from Supercars Australia. The Minister had sent his letter on to a private entity to respond to an inquiry made to a government Minister. Mark was deeply concerned that his correspondence and personal details were conveyed to a private corporation. He considered it a breach of his privacy and it has caused him a high level of concern. That is the problem with having a private entity rather than an independent unit. It is gravely concerning that the Minister's own staff cannot respond to representations from local people. Mark states, "Dear sir, I wrote to you in your role as Minister."

This race passes within three metres of nine historic apartment complexes, 26 non-historic apartment complexes, 68 historic residential terraces, three non-historic residential houses and local and State heritage-listed buildings or monuments. It encloses three public housing complexes for aged residents. Labor will seek amendments that address the historical aspect of the bill in addition to the independent unit. Labor will ensure that this Government complies with the State heritage laws and other local government and heritage requirements. There are issues within the Minister's second reading speech that require clarification. The Minister states that Destination NSW will have oversight with a streamlined authorisation approval process for the conduct of the race, which will provide certainty for the race promoter and the community. Exactly what will this look like? It states:

Pre-race works cannot commence until Destination NSW is satisfied that the race promoter has complied with statutory requirements to consult with stakeholders...including local residents and the local council.

What does that mean? Further:

The race promoter will be obliged to clean up and reinstate the race area after the race period. If the promoter fails to do so within a reasonable period, Destination NSW may arrange for this work to be carried out...

What is the time frame for that? There must be a tighter framework for these issues. I ask the Minister to address these questions in his reply. The Minister met with Destination NSW and has been assured that the consultation to inform residents, businesses and home owners will be a priority. [*Extension of time*]

Why does it take the shadow Minister, the lord mayor and me to publicly question the Government before there is a commitment to consultation? The Minister states, "Any suggestion that the public will be prevented from using Newcastle's finest beaches and public areas is not correct and could not be further from the truth." How will residents access Nobbys and Newcastle beaches and baths? How will they get in and out of the purple zone with ease? The circuit provides 215 accessible car spaces to Newcastle East residents. Where will they be? Where is the detail? There are trees that will be knocked over and residents wish to know which trees.

The Minister says all relevant government agencies and key stakeholders have been engaged in discussions regarding the event for several months. I question the validity of that statement. It required Labor to make a public inquiry before there was any commitment from the Government. The previous Minister said there was no commitment to any independent unit. While ultimately we support the race, we will be moving amendments in the other place to implement a coordination unit and to protect the historic precinct of Newcastle East. We need proper safeguards. Newcastle and the Hunter region support this race, but the residents of Newcastle East in particular require adequate safeguards, adequate protection for their historic buildings. There also needs to be good coordination and communication, which we presently do not have.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Lands and Forestry, and Minister for Racing) (17:10):

I am pleased to speak in support of the Motor Racing Legislation Amendment (Newcastle 500) Bill 2017. I thank the Minister for Tourism and Major Events for bringing this bill before the House because he understands that an event such as this is important in regional New South Wales. This event will bring jobs and will provide a huge economic boost to the area. The Government will continue to support such events in regional centres across the State. I cannot believe the audacity and hypocrisy of the member for Newcastle in speaking about motorsport. He has a complete lack of understanding of motorsport in New South Wales and Australia.

The member for Newcastle foreshadowed amendments to the legislation. He wants to attack one of the greatest shows on the motorsport racing calendar. He is basically saying that he is opposed to jobs; he does not want to see jobs created in Newcastle. He has talked about wanting to create jobs in regional New South Wales, but now he wants to put barriers in the way of this event. What about the millions of dollars that will be invested in the community, in not only Newcastle but also the entire Hunter region? The member for Newcastle does not want to think about that. He wants to amend the bill to establish a coordination team. He should be talking about the benefits of an event like this for his community. This event will provide a huge economic boost for the whole region.

The member for Newcastle attacked V8 Supercars events. I can inform the member that V8 Supercars events provide a huge benefit to the community. These events engage councils and communities. Drivers and teams come to the area to put on a great show for everybody to enjoy. I bet that when the event is on in Newcastle later in the year the member for Newcastle will not want to be in any photos with any of the V8 Supercars drivers. I bet he will not want to go to any of the hospitality events hosted by V8 Supercars. The member should make sure he stays away from the grid walk as well. They are all important aspects of a V8 Supercars event. How do I know about V8 Supercars? I come from Bathurst. I represent an area that is synonymous with car racing in this State. I fully understand the benefits that a major motorsport event can bring to a region. My area is the home of motor racing. Mount Panorama is arguably one of the best racing circuits in the world. It is home to the famous Supercheap Auto Bathurst 1000. That internationally famous event has been running every year since 1963.

Ms Jodie Harrison: It does not go through heritage precincts.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: The member for Charlestown interjects. It is a public road. We have to deal with residents as well. We have the same situation, but we work with the community, with the council and with V8 Supercars to ensure that a super event is put on every year. Each year, families, fans and enthusiasts from all over Australia and the world come to Bathurst for a week of motorsport. The event provides an enormous boost to the economy of the Bathurst region. The hotels, motels and caravan parks are booked out. There is not one free space in town. Down the road in Orange, Dubbo and Lithgow, hotels, motels and caravan parks are booked out too, so this event is good not only for Bathurst. The Newcastle 500 will be an event that is good not only for Newcastle but also for the entire surrounding region. The Bathurst airport is at capacity. Cafes and restaurants are booked out as they provide hospitality to the teams and visitors who come to the town to enjoy the event. Stores go into overdrive to meet the demand.

The population of Bathurst is about 40,000 but it doubles when this event is on. Around 30,000 people camp on Mount Panorama alone. Other spaces such as parks and gardens are also set up as campsites. The event puts Bathurst on the map for all the right reasons. The member for Newcastle should support the event, which will put Newcastle on the map for all the right reasons. The Bathurst 1000 is one of the greatest events in regional New South Wales. There is a party atmosphere in Bathurst when it takes place. Businesses support the event; they decorate their shop windows, promote their wares and support their teams. It is one of the highlights of the year. The event begins with the Pantech Parade through Bathurst. The big trucks drive down the main street and crowds flock to see them. The trucks then go to Mount Panorama, where they unload their vehicles. That signals the start of race week in Bathurst every year. Drivers sign autographs and everybody in the community gets behind the event.

Over the four days, more than 200,000 people walk through the gates to enjoy the event. Why would the member for Newcastle not welcome that many people coming to visit Newcastle? It is believed the Newcastle event will attract 81,000 people. I would welcome those people coming to visit, providing support and injecting funds into the community. Studies show that the Bathurst 1000 provides about \$25 million to the Bathurst economy alone each year. It also creates about 100 industry-related jobs. I was pleased that in 2014 former Premier Mike Baird came to Bathurst to be part of the great race. When I was Mayor of Bathurst in 2011 we secured a 20-year deal with Supercheap Auto to ensure that the company had a strong presence on Mount Panorama, in support of V8 Supercars racing for many years to come.

We know what is in store for Newcastle. It is a great opportunity for the community to enjoy motorsport. The popularity of motor racing will continue to climb. We know that the Hunter region has its fair share of motor racing fans. The teams and drivers participating include: Jamie Whincup, Craig Lowndes, Shane van Gisbergen, James Courtney, Todd Kelly and Michael Caruso. They will all be there and they will all be racing. There will be Fords, Holdens and Nissans, as well as all the sponsors and the teams. What a great opportunity. The event could be a huge economic boost to the region, and it needs to be well and truly supported. I cannot believe that the member for Newcastle questions it and wants to move amendments to the legislation. This event has the potential to bring domestic and international visitors to the area. There is a projected injection of around \$57 million in indirect visitor expenditure.

Like the Bathurst 1000, the race in Newcastle will become a key date on the local calendar as its international reputation grows. Visitors from interstate and overseas will, no doubt, make the most of their visit to the Hunter region, Sydney and other parts of the State. I wish Newcastle every success in this event. I know that the member for Newcastle was quite happy on 27 December 2016 to promote the event and said that it was official that Newcastle would host the V8 Supercars, but he does not support it in this Chamber. I cannot believe his audacity and hypocrisy. The lefties will get their photos with the drivers when they go to Newcastle in the future. For those reasons, I believe this legislation is worthy of support, and I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (17:20): Together with my colleagues on this side of the House, I support the Motor Racing Legislation Amendment (Newcastle 500) Bill 2017 with amendments, contrary to what has been suggested by members opposite. This year, for the first time, the annual Supercars motorsport race will be moved from Homebush to Newcastle. The Newcastle 500 will be held on a picturesque course that will showcase some of Newcastle's best-known landmarks, including Fort Scratchley, Central Promenade, Foreshore Park, Nobby's Beach Reserve, Pacific Park and Queens Wharf.

This event will take place in Newcastle's heritage precinct, which needs protection. Local residents and people from the wider Hunter have been vocal and are rightly concerned about the potential impact of the race on heritage buildings and parklands, the impact of works and road closures, and the effect of race noise levels on the amenity and, potentially, the hearing of local residents. The Minister for Tourism and Major Events stated, "It is important to remember that the event is of a limited duration and will only be held once a year." The Government clearly does not recognise that local business owners and residents will not be affected only during the three-day

event but also during the extensive preparatory work for the event. To date, the Government has failed to keep businesses and residents informed. There are currently an unspecified number of trees to be removed and an unspecified heritage plan to be implemented.

At present, the bill provides that coordination of the event will be undertaken by Destination NSW in Sydney and managed via myriad committees. All consultation is left up to V8 Supercars, which is also in charge of promoting the event. Having one group to both promote and to consult on the event is inadequate and leaves the real possibility of a conflict of interest, confusion and buck-passing. The concerns of the people of the Hunter deserve to be heard by the Government. That is exactly what this legislation is missing—a government coordinator who is an independent broker between the council, V8 Supercars, government agencies and the community. For this event to be successful it is crucial that local residents and businesses are able to ask questions or to raise concerns with the Government. People need to have confidence that they are being listened to and that their issues will be resolved, and not by those with a vested interest in the event but by the Government in the public interest.

The mayor of Newcastle and my colleague the member of Newcastle have already called for a Newcastle-based government coordination office to be established as part of the preparations for this event. The coordination office that the Minister for Tourism and Major Events has said he will establish misses the mark. One person and an occasional visit from Sydney is a far cry from what is required for this event. It is a massive event that will affect Newcastle and the Hunter in a huge but good way, but it will have an impact. It is important that everybody is brought along. That is why the Labor Party will move amendments in the Legislative Council to establish an independent government coordination unit located in Newcastle to support the smooth running of the event and to provide proper independent community consultation and accountability.

When Sydney 500 Supercars event was established in Homebush, it importantly included the establishment of the Homebush Motor Racing Authority [HMRA], an independent coordination unit. Nothing has changed now that the event is being held in Newcastle. The HMRA was dissolved by the Liberal Government in 2014, which Labor opposed at the time. If the moving of the V8 Supercar race from Homebush to Newcastle is to be successful, it needs to be coordinated properly. It is only through Labor's amendments that will establish an independent government coordination unit in Newcastle that a transparent and accountable event will be achieved. Community consultation to date has not been independent nor adequate. This needs to be rectified immediately through amendments to this bill. The residents and businesses of Newcastle East and the people of the Hunter deserve nothing less. I call on the Government to support Labor's amendments when moved in the Legislative Council.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (17:25): I support the Motor Racing Legislation Amendment (Newcastle 500) Bill 2017. I congratulate the fantastic Minister for Tourism and Major Events, who is doing a great job and who has hit the ground running. I have seen many things in my 20-odd years in politics, whether it be on council or in State Parliament with people opposed to rubbish tips in their backyard or jails or airports in their communities, but not once in that time have I ever seen a local member opposed to a tourism opportunity in his electorate that will provide tens of millions of dollars, more than 270 jobs and have economic capture in their region. Once upon a time Labor members had the catchcry that they were there for the workers and for the community—but no longer.

The member for Newcastle does not want to revitalise anything in Newcastle. He is opposed to the V8 Supercars and the Newcastle Light Rail. He is opposed to all fantastic projects that create jobs. I look forward to the Newcastle 500 race. My simple message to the Minister is: If the member for Newcastle does not want the V8 Supercars race in Newcastle, Wollondilly will have it. The member for Newcastle on 27 September 2016 said he supported the race in Newcastle, but in this Chamber he opposes it. The Opposition sent the member for Charlestown to say it does not support the legislation but that it will move some amendments. I have never seen a local member oppose to a tourism project that creates jobs.

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

Mr JAI ROWELL: Let him interject because it demonstrates to his community why he will be here only for the next two years. The member for Newcastle and the member for Charlestown have talked down their own Labor-dominated council, but they did not say that the council is being contracted to undertake some of that public consultation. They say they stand with the local council, but the council has already entered into legally binding agreements that will ensure that it is part of the consultative process with its communities. Like our fantastic tourism Minister, I have a background in local government, and we know that local government can undertake consultation.

Mr Tim Crakanthorp: Point of order: We actually support the race.

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

Mr JAI ROWELL: I am glad to hear that from the member for Newcastle. It has finally taken this Government to make the member for Newcastle say something supportive of his own community. His earlier speech demonstrated that he would not support it. The V8 Supercars bring a fantastic opportunity to Newcastle. The Minister for Lands and Forestry, the member for Bathurst, told us about the fantastic jobs that it brought to his community, and the tens of millions of dollars generated for local businesses, which in turn had an economic capture that was spent in the local community. We already know that some of the hotels in Newcastle are booked out for the event. We have heard Labor members whinging, moaning and groaning about the coordination office, but the Minister has already announced it.

I do not know why Labor members do not understand that it has already been organised. I looked at www.supercars.com a few moments ago. Guess what? The event is already advertised on that website, so there must be some coordination going on. I must thank the drivers, because there is no doubt that they are the people who make the sport and who we all love to watch in Bathurst and on the Gold Coast, which the member for Tweed is very excited about. No doubt we will all be tuning in to watch the V8s in Newcastle. Those drivers will be listening to the member for Newcastle and wondering why he does not support them.

I acknowledge Scott Pye, the famous Mark Winterbottom, Cameron Waters, Todd Kelly, Nick Percat, David Reynolds and Fabian Coulthard—what a racing family that is. I acknowledge Tim Slade, Rick Kelly, Scott McLaughlin, Lee Holdsworth, Will Davison, Tim Blanchard, James Courtney, Michael Caruso, Garth Tander, and James Moffat. Who is against James Moffat? I also acknowledge Chaz Mostert. What an interesting history Chaz has and what a comeback kid he is. I acknowledge Jason Bright, Alex Rullo, Simona de Silvestro and Jamie Whincup. I invite members to name another Australian who is against Jamie Whincup like the member for Newcastle. Finally, I acknowledge Shane van Gisbergen, Dale Wood and Craig Lowndes. We all love Lowndes, except the member for Newcastle. I put on the record that the member for Newcastle hates Craig Lowndes.

We know about the opportunities that will come to Newcastle and the Hunter through growing the visitor economy and boosting local businesses. That is why we are investing in this event. The Newcastle 500 will create at least 270 jobs, which the member for Newcastle wants to oppose. One out of every 14 jobs in New South Wales has been created in the tourism sector, 53 per cent of which are based in rural and regional areas. The member for Newcastle comes from an area in which jobs are very important following downturns in the steel industry and other sectors over many years. When an opportunity arises to create 270 vital jobs he comes to this place and says, "No, no, no." I do not think the member will be here very long. I am pretty sure there will be another job created in Newcastle in two years.

Mr Mark Coure: We're going to let his voters know.

Mr JAI ROWELL: We are going to let them know. We are not only going to let the drivers know; we are also going to let everyone in Newcastle know. With the Minister and the entire Coalition I look forward to watching this sporting event later this year. The people of Newcastle know who supports them and who does not. I will put some statistics on the record. In the 12 months to September 2016, regional New South Wales welcomed a record 21.4 million international and domestic overnight visitors, who stayed 83.1 million nights and injected more than \$10.7 billion into the regional New South Wales economy. That represents an increase of 6.8 per cent in the number of international and domestic overnight visitors compared with last year. We know that regional tourism is an important economic driver which contributes \$14.5 billion to our economy and directly employs 85,000 people. Who in this House would not want a part of that? Members on this side of the House and I do. I am sure the member for Sydney would love it too. The member for Newcastle does not want to share in any of this great news.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! The member for Newcastle will come to order. He will cease interjecting or he will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr JAI ROWELL: If he were as passionate about his community as he is about interjecting imagine what else he could get for them. Newcastle might be represented by an Opposition member, but it is this Government that is helping the people of Newcastle and ensuring that there are jobs for young and old. It is this Government that will ensure that the community has an injection of funds and infrastructure and will work with the council to get the job done. I am baffled by the member for Newcastle, who is "Crackers" by name and crackers by nature. I am so disappointed that a member of this place would talk against an economic boost for their community. I support the event and thank the Minister and his team for their fantastic work. As I said, the Minister has hit the ground running.

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

Mr JAI ROWELL: Members on this side of the House look forward to watching the Newcastle 500. I suspect some Opposition members are also looking forward to it. They are not here to support the member for

Newcastle because they are embarrassed. Members would love to have an event such as this in their own electorates. I commend the bill to the House. Let us hope that the member for Newcastle has a change of heart.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! Members will be respectful of all speakers, who are entitled to be heard in silence. If members wish to take genuine points of order they may use the standing orders to do so.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (17:35): The Motor Racing Legislation Amendment (Newcastle 500) Bill 2017 will facilitate the V8 Supercar race in Newcastle. A number of Newcastle East residents who will be directly impacted by the race have contacted me and asked me to oppose the bill. While they are not my constituents, I sympathise and am concerned about the broader principle that such a commercial and intense activity can be imposed inappropriately on a sensitive location without the normal environmental checks and balances. The proposed race would run through a densely populated area and homes and businesses will be as close as three metres to the track. Residential amenity will significantly suffer from car noise, poisonous exhaust, vibrations, massive crowds and litter. Impacts will start when construction begins. I understand that will commence six weeks before the race, with dismantling of the track to continue for three weeks after.

An entire suburb will be enclosed by the race. It will be extremely difficult for anyone to travel in and out of the area during racing, with ongoing challenges during bump-in and bump-out periods. I understand there are three public housing aged-care complexes enclosed by the tracks and these residents will have very few options to escape the impact. Enjoyment of the beautiful adjacent beaches will be impossible because of the associated noise, fumes and crowds. The track will run through two local heritage conservation areas and the State heritage listed Coal River Precinct. The race will run through narrow streets of sandstone kerbs, gutters and cobblestones. Heritage values will be impacted by commercialisation of the space and the more than 100-year old houses will be put at risk of damage from major vibrations.

The area is home to established trees. I understand some of them will have to be removed for the track, with which ones identified after the detailed planning of the exact route is complete. That will not happen until after the bill is passed. The bill applies provisions in the Homebush Motor Racing Act to the Newcastle East region, which means that environmental planning laws that protect the environment, local heritage and neighbourhood amenity will be turned off, and there will be limited opportunities for review of the Minister's decisions. Unlike decisions for the V8 Supercar race at Homebush, there will not be an independent body overseeing decisions and impacts. I am told that there is a more appropriate alternative site for a car race in the Hunter region at Raymond Terrace that would result in fewer impacts. This should be investigated. Residential amenity, opportunities for public recreation, heritage, the environment and proper planning processes should not be sacrificed for a private ticketed race.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (17:38): I support the Motor Racing Legislation Amendment (Newcastle 500) Bill 2017. I am a bit perplexed after listening to some of the previous speakers, particularly some Opposition members. This is a very large event. Mr Assistant Speaker, as the successful host of the World Rally over the past five or six years, you know the tremendous gain it has brought to the good people of Coffs Harbour. I know it has always had your full support. You should be congratulated on your fine involvement with that event.

I listened to the arguments of the member for Sydney and the member for Newcastle. Events such as this bring a lot of economic benefit. For many years the Gold Coast 500 has been held adjacent to my electorate. It was initially the Indy and now it is the V8 race. Even though we are 20 kilometres away, the event creates employment in my electorate through the provision of tourism attractions, accommodation and transport services. It also provides an avenue for avid fans of motor racing. V8 enthusiasts—young and old—are passionate followers who bring a lot of good to the town. Newcastle needs a great event such as this. It is recognised worldwide and the coverage will be beamed around the world.

The bill amends the Homebush Motor Racing (Sydney 400) Act to facilitate the holding of the event in Newcastle. It will stage the Virgin Australia Supercars Championships for the next five years, which offers the city considerable certainty. The bill provides a legislative framework for the construction of infrastructure necessary for the race, ensuring everything is ready to go by November when the race will be held. It provides legacy benefits to the Newcastle community through significant improvements to road, services and infrastructure. Without the measures being put in place by this bill, it would be impossible to meet the time frame required.

I praise the relatively new Minister and his staff. Unfortunately, I was witness to the issues surrounding the World Rally Championship many years ago when it was announced it would be held in the Tweed. Certain minority groups raised legal challenge after legal challenge. There were challenges in the Land and Environment Court. When those groups did not get their way they put spikes and rocks on roads, which caused a great deal of division and cost. The measures that the Minister has put in place are warranted and positive. The bill's provisions establish Destination NSW oversight, streamlined authorisation and the approval process. Safeguards relating to consultation, public safety and environmental protection will be maintained. I refer again to the member for

Sydney, who spoke about environmental protection. I am assured that the environmental protection in the Act will remain.

For example, Destination NSW will be able to impose any condition it considers reasonable on the race promoter, including protection of the environment and most of all protection of public safety. If the promoter breaches one of those conditions, it can be prosecuted and, in the case of serious and continuing breaches, its authorisation will be revoked. Pre-race work cannot commence until Destination NSW is satisfied that the race promoter has complied with statutory requirements to consult with all stakeholders affected by its works proposal. We have heard a lot of huffing and puffing in this Chamber in the past hour, but the fact is that the consultation process will include residents and the local council. Item [10] of schedule 1 to the bill strengthens the current requirements by adding an obligation on the race promoter to consult with any other public or local authority prescribed by regulation to ensure that specific issues are addressed. The race promoter must also demonstrate to the satisfaction of Destination NSW that adequate steps will be taken to prevent or minimise any harm to the environment.

Prior to issuing the authorisation for works, Destination NSW is required under the Act to consult with the Sydney Olympic Park Authority. Item [9] amends this requirement to ensure that consultation occurs with Newcastle City Council for motor races held in Newcastle and expands who Destination NSW must consult with to include any other public and local authority prescribed by the regulations. The race promoter will be obliged to clean up and to reinstate the race area after the race. I have seen over 10 or 15 years how good racing operators are. Within hours of the race finishing on the Gold Coast most of the roads are reopened. Within a few days you would not believe the race had been held. The sensitive saltwater canal environment is protected. The race promoters do an excellent job and the whole city loves them. The promoter will be obliged to clean up after the race. If the promoter fails to do this within a reasonable period, Destination NSW may arrange for this work to be carried out and recover any costs from the race promoter.

The race promoter will also be required to comply with any direction given by Destination NSW in relation to any public safety environmental protection matters. All these provisions demonstrate how serious the New South Wales Government and the Minister take the protection of the public and the environment in the context of a motor racing event. To the best of my knowledge, there has been no major issue with the great event held in the Assistant Speaker's electorate, the World Rally Championship. It is welcomed by the town. It brings money, jobs and a great deal of enjoyment to motor racing enthusiasts. Relevant government agencies and key stakeholders have been engaged in discussions regarding the event for several months now through a series of established working groups. A number of information sessions have already been held with local residents and businesses and, as the Minister for Tourism and Major Events announced recently, from next month the Government will establish the Newcastle 500 Coordination Office to oversee all aspects of the implementation of this inaugural event ahead of its first running in November 2017.

There is no doubt that this event will be a great success and provide a significant boost to the State's economy and that of Newcastle, providing much-needed jobs. The event will showcase Newcastle to a large national and international audience, attracting about 81,000 domestic and international visitors and injecting more than \$47 million into the Hunter region in direct visitor expenditure over the next five years. That is an enormous sum going into a local region and it will deliver great benefits. The flow-on economic benefits to the broader region are expected to be even greater. Combined with a wide array of world-class sporting events that will be held in Newcastle this year and the New South Wales Government's broader plans for the revitalisation of the city, it is an exciting time for Newcastle and the wider Hunter region.

Members opposite, and particularly the member for Newcastle, should get on board and be part of this great event. It is going to be a great plus. A number of Government speakers have said that if Newcastle does not want the event they will take it to their local area. I have had some experience with Destination NSW and I am sure that it will carry out all its tasks properly, professionally and efficiently, under the watchful eye of one of our newest Ministers, the Hon. Adam Marshall. I look forward to Newcastle hosting this event. It will be a great plus for Newcastle and an even greater plus for the great State of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (17:47): I contribute to debate on the Motor Racing Legislation Amendment (Newcastle 500) Bill 2017. As a member from the northern part of the Central Coast, I know that we have a lot in common with our friends in the Hunter, particularly Newcastle. Many people from the Central Coast, including from my electorate of Wyong and the neighbouring electorate of Swansea, travel to the Newcastle foreshore and participate in the activities organised there, as do I. A lot of our constituents travel to Newcastle for work and for shopping. We certainly welcome the race being held in Newcastle. Despite Government members' slandering members on this side of the House, particularly the member for Newcastle, Labor supports the race being held in Newcastle. The member for Newcastle simply seeks to make sure that there are proper protections

for his constituents, as any good local member would do. The Government rhetoric about his not supporting the race is absolute rubbish.

I remember sitting in this Chamber in 2008 when it was suggested that the race be held at Homebush and the biggest whingers and naysayers were members of the then Opposition, led by Barry O'Farrell and Adrian Piccoli, who attacked the then Labor Government. However, it seems those opposite have seen the light now that the race is to be held in Newcastle—it is the best thing since sliced bread. Government members should read the criticisms of holding the event at Homebush, some of which would sound very similar to those raised by the member for Newcastle and by other Labor members, who simply wish to deliver the best event not only for visitors to the region who spend their money there but also for residents, who will continue to live there after the race. They cannot pack up and move away.

It is important that the Government examine what the member for Newcastle has said and consider carefully any amendments moved in the other place to ensure that we get a world-class event not only for race spectators and participants but also for residents of the area during the years the race will take place. I believe the changes to the bill that the member for Newcastle has mentioned will strengthen the legislation, not weaken it; the changes will not weaken the event, they will strengthen it. I ask the Minister, who is a very sensible person, to listen carefully and to take on board the Opposition's views.

We have many motor racing enthusiasts on the Central Coast. A group in the northern part of my electorate has put forward a project for CASAR Park, which is a motor racing circuit. I invite the Minister to meet with the people who run CASAR Park to see how we can assist them in establishing a full-time motor racing circuit that would also teach driving skills and other such things. The region is a strong supporter of motor racing. In his second reading speech the Minister noted the high number of motor racing enthusiasts who live in the Hunter. The Central Coast should be included in that statement. It is one of the most beautiful areas of the State with particular heritage features that must be respected. While these events are much needed as they inject vital money into the economy—no-one can sniff at \$57 million; that is certainly welcome and we on this side of the House very much support any initiative that creates jobs and investment in our regions—it is important that the special features of the region are not destroyed in the process.

I certainly support this race and I support the legislation, but I would support it even more if the suggestions made by the member for Newcastle were taken on board and some sort of coordinating group were established to ensure that there is proper consultation across all groups. Consultation should not be left to the organisers because that could create problems when issues are sorted out down the track. I believe the legislation is sensible. Labor members want the race. Sometimes political rhetoric flies thick and fast on both sides of the House; I was listening to the debate in my office and was encouraged to make a contribution. The negative comments about the member for Newcastle are not warranted. If one reads his entire speech it is obvious that he is a supporter of the race. He wants the best for his constituents, which is the duty of every member in this place.

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (17:52): It is an honour and a privilege to speak in debate on the Motor Racing Legislation Amendment (Newcastle 500) Bill 2017. I begin my contribution by commending the newly minted Minister for Tourism and Major Events, and Assistant Minister for Skills for bringing this excellent bill before the House. This initiative will ensure that Newcastle holds an event the significance of which, as we have heard, will be recognised not only across this country but also internationally. The Minister has a history of long-term civic involvement and of understanding what drives communities and local economies. In a recent speech in this place he expressed particular interest in tourism and major events, and spoke of taking them to regional areas. That is an outstanding example of the type of work we can expect to see from this Government, and particularly from this excellent Minister. I look forward to the future.

Events and tourism are at the core of many communities, and are particularly important to regional communities as well as to large cities such as Newcastle. As we have heard this afternoon, tourism and events bring financial benefits to the local community—they bring jobs, they bring visitors who need accommodation and hospitality services, and they encourage people to attend entertainment venues and to spend dollars. Financial benefits are derived from people merely turning up to events, stopping to refuel their cars and to buy food, taking children to various events, and engaging in different activities. In fact, if people get a feel for the place—and we all agree Newcastle is a wonderful part of the world—they may return in future. The significant benefits from holding major events in major areas, particularly in regional New South Wales, cannot be underestimated.

Mr Assistant Speaker, I know the World Rally Championship at Coffs Harbour is dear to your heart. As a young media adviser with the NSW Police Force I attended the rally on a number of occasions. It is certainly a significant event for that part of our great State. Mr Assistant Speaker, you will be aware of what it means to the Coffs Harbour community—the spend that goes into the area and the enthusiasm for the sport that the event generates. Encouraging people to follow sport is recognised as being a great part of the Australian tradition. Motor racing enthusiasts from across Australia and throughout the world attend the world rally at Coffs Harbour, which,

as the good member for Coffs Harbour may indicate later, is significant for the State economy. Indeed, I have discovered that many people fly to the region to attend the event.

We can expect many similar benefits for Newcastle. Motor racing enthusiasts will attend from all over the State, including from my electorate of Seven Hills. Many Seven Hills residents are involved in motor racing as enthusiasts and as participants in the industry. My electorate office is not far from many motor repair businesses, tyre businesses, mechanics and, importantly, many specialist motor trade operators and dealers who involve themselves in some very specific technical aspects of the motor vehicle industry, providing parts, services and advice that go to the heart of the industry. We know that events like motor races encourage competition and that competition drives and improves our economy. Motor racing is renowned, particularly in this country, for encouraging competition and innovation, which flows to the manufacturing industry and the various industries where highly skilled workers have opportunities to develop better materials and more efficient fuels and oils, and to design more effective engines. Such innovation, in turn, is applied to regular motor vehicles. So the benefits of competition and of holding major events across the State and the country should not be underestimated.

In September 2016, former New South Wales Premier Mike Baird and the Supercars Australia chief executive announced that Newcastle was to be the new host city for the series final of the Virgin Australia Supercars Championship for the next five years. This will be the first ever Supercars race to be held in Newcastle. The Newcastle 500 will replace the Sydney 500 at Sydney Olympic Park, Homebush, from 2017 onwards. The bill amends the Homebush Motor Racing (Sydney 400) Act to facilitate the holding of the event in Newcastle and will provide a legislative framework for the construction of the necessary infrastructure to ensure that it will be ready by November, when the race will be held. The race will also provide a legacy benefit for the Newcastle community through significant improvements to roads and services infrastructure. Without the measures being put in place by this bill, it would be impossible to meet the time frame of this important event.

The legislative framework that will apply is the same that currently applies to Homebush to facilitate the Sydney 500. In other words, the experience and those lessons learned will be transferred. That, of course, makes for a streamlined, efficient, effective, safe and environmentally protected race for the community of Newcastle. This means that all the provisions establishing Destination NSW oversight, a streamlined authorisation and approval process, and safeguards relating to consultation, public safety and environmental protection will be maintained. For example, Destination NSW will be able to impose any conditions it considers reasonable on the race promoter, including for the protection of the environment and public safety. If the promoter breaches one of those conditions it can be prosecuted, and in the case of the most serious or a continuing breach have its authorisation revoked. There is certainly the oversight and the authorisation approval processes necessary to make this an appropriate event for the location.

Pre-race works cannot commence until Destination NSW is satisfied that the race promoter has complied with the statutory requirements to consult with stakeholders affected by its works proposal, including residents and the local council. Item [10] of schedule 1 to the bill strengthens the current requirement by adding an obligation on the race promoter to consult with any other public or local authority prescribed by the regulation to ensure that civic issues are addressed. This Government is all about listening to and consulting with the community. We know that if we come together we make better decisions to deliver an improved outcome and a fantastic event which is safe and which protects all those involved.

The race promoter must demonstrate also to the satisfaction of Destination NSW that adequate steps will be taken to prevent and minimise any harm to the environment. Prior to issuing an authorisation for work, Destination NSW is required under the current Act to consult with the Sydney Olympic Authority. Item [9] of schedule 1 to the bill will amend this requirement to ensure that consultation occurs with Newcastle City Council for the motor races in Newcastle and to expand with whom Destination NSW needs to consult to include any other public authority prescribed by the regulations. Government members have spoken about the outstanding benefits that this event will bring to the local economy, to the wider New South Wales economy, and to its reputation. The Opposition has no difficulty with the bill. Opposition members think it is a great idea; indeed, they support it. Sometimes the Government brings forward great legislation. I look forward to this event and commend the bill to the House.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (18:02): On behalf of The Greens I speak in debate on the Motor Racing Legislation Amendment (Newcastle 500) Bill 2017. The electorate of Balmain is not well known for its racing enthusiasts nor is it well known as a racetrack. However, the community respects the feelings of residents and wants to make sure that people are treated fairly and properly. The House should discuss this bill because it overrides a range of legislation designed to protect residential amenity, communities and the State such as the Roads Act, the Heritage Act and local environmental planning instruments. It should be considered seriously. Those Acts and planning instruments have been developed over time to ensure the proper, orderly development

and management of a range of activities. It is important that we take the time to consider the justification for this project and decide whether the issues raised require our support.

The Greens are very concerned about this proposal. I, like many members, have received correspondence from people outside my electorate who are strong advocates, stating that this proposed racing event is fundamentally incompatible with its proposed location. It is very different from the legislation the Government is seeking to amend, which applies to the Homebush circuit—also known as the Sydney Olympic Park street circuit—in the former Sydney Olympic Park precinct. The area is non-residential and the only controversial element of the proposal was the necessity to remove 140 mature trees around the track.

We know that government—I am talking not about this Government but about the former Government, and government in general—has a poor record when it comes to that issue. The Auditor-General undertook a review of the Homebush proposal and found that there was very poor evidence that the race would be a financially viable investment for the public. The Auditor-General's report found that the awarding of the contract to V8 Supercars Australia was flawed as there had not been an adequate cost-benefit analysis and there was little consideration of alternatives before the contract was awarded. The use of public funds is also an important matter for the House to consider. We have heard that \$52 million will supposedly be injected into the Hunter region, but we know that such numbers are often rubbery and, depending on assumptions, can change dramatically.

Mr Adam Marshall: It will be higher than that.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: I congratulate the Minister on his appointment; I wish him all the best. It is important that we take our time and examine the bill carefully. In considering the impacts on the community, a civic works program is planned for May to September 2017. Temporary infrastructure will be installed six weeks before the event and removed three weeks after it. There is significant concern about heritage impacts because the proposed track covers the Coal River Precinct, which is listed on the State Heritage Register. The track will also cover two local heritage conservation areas. There will be noise impacts from construction, cars and attendees as well as impacts from the removal and disturbance of trees and related air pollution from the vehicles.

There are also access issues for pedestrians and residents. Three public housing complexes for the aged will be inside the proposed track, where access will be significantly limited for several months. Also, 150 small businesses within the track footprint will have reduced access. I understand many of those businesses are concerned about the process. It is important that community consultation happens first and that residents are included in a proactive way. Perhaps the Minister can clarify this point, but I understand that the legislation, which modifies the existing Act, proposes to delete from the Act the requirement to consult with "any person having a right of occupation of land within the works area" and "any person occupying land immediately adjacent to the works area". I understand that those requirements are to be deleted from the Act. If that is wrong, I stand corrected, but I would appreciate the Minister clarifying why those two categories of people who were required to be consulted have been excluded.

Holding a V8 Supercars race in the narrow streets of Newcastle East is obviously a significant problem for residents, and The Greens share their concern. It is completely inappropriate that a race of this magnitude and style will be held in such an historic residential area that currently has a speed limit of 40 kilometres an hour. Residents have said that it is the wrong location for the race. The Government is fast-tracking the approval process and diminishing environmental and heritage controls by introducing this stand-alone legislation and nominating Destination NSW as the sole approval authority. The proposed track overlaps areas of State and local heritage significance. The Minister said that a heritage impact statement will be developed. It is always optimal that such statements be developed before the introduction of the legislation to ensure that there are no insurmountable obstacles. The heritage impact statement should have been completed before the legislation was introduced.

I ask the Minister to address also the issue raised with me about the Raymond Terrace track. Residents have told me that construction has started for a \$12 million motor racing circuit at Raymond Terrace, north of Newcastle, and question whether the Government has considered holding this event at that dedicated motor racing facility. It could be recommended that the V8 supercars organisation consider that site. I am interested to know whether it has considered that option and whether the Government has suggested it. Community consultation is always at the heart of every issue. The Greens believe it should have occurred in a thorough way prior to the introduction of this bill. It would have allowed consideration of the impacts on residents, heritage and the environment. The Greens do not support the bill as it stands. If the Government is committed to progressing the bill, The Greens encourage an approach that will minimise its impact on residents. The Greens support the amendments to be moved in the other place. The Greens recognise the fundamental incompatibility of this race in this area.

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour) (18:09): I congratulate the Minister on his recent elevation and commend him for bringing this legislation to the House. I declare an interest. I have been involved with the

Confederation of Australian Motor Sport [CAMS] and motor rallying for more than 40 years. As has been mentioned in the Chamber this evening, Coffs Harbour hosts a round of the world rally championship. During my biannual visits to France I meet with the head of the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile, Jean Todt. Europe follows motor racing in Australia closely. The Bathurst 12-hour race is an example of the increased participation by Europeans in Australian motorsport. With the exception of a couple of Australian drivers in World Rally Championship-2 [WRC-2], the world rally championship teams are European.

Interest in Australian motorsport is increasing due to the world rally championships and the Bathurst 12-hour V8 race. European manufacturers such as Ferrari and Mercedes are placing teams in Australian motorsport. CAMS-sponsored events in Australia contribute about \$7 billion annually to the Australian economy. I have listened to complaints about the environmental effects of such a race upon Newcastle. Last Saturday night Melbourne hosted the CAMS awards night. Unfortunately my wife, Kerry, and I could not attend. Colin Trinder was recognised on the night for his service to motorsport in Australia and overseas.

Colin has extensive experience in environmental management and policy. He carefully watches the world rally championship in Coffs Harbour and all CAMS events across Australia. As a result of his diligence the world rally championship in Coffs Harbour is the only event to have won a world environmental award. Colin will have oversight of the Newcastle race. I have had letters of complaint from residents who do not want the race to be held in Newcastle. There has been mention of the mortar in houses being shaken out by the V8 race. Those houses have stood for literally hundreds of years. I was born and raised in Newcastle and I know the region's enthusiasm for motorsport.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): Order! The member for Newcastle will cease interjecting.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: The enthusiasm of Newcastle and Hunter Valley residents for motorsport is legendary. In Kurri Kurri, Maitland and Cessnock, if you do not drive a V8 you are not considered a local. There is considerable enthusiasm for V8s across the Hunter Valley. There is a song about V8s and Hunter Street. The vast majority of people in Newcastle welcome the event. As the Minister will enunciate in reply, the track itself has not yet been finalised. The Minister has authorised a local committee to consider the issues presented by residents.

The member for Newcastle has been grandstanding while the reality is that \$50 million plus will flow into the Newcastle economy. Coffs Harbour is a far smaller city than Newcastle. The world rally championship in Coffs Harbour runs over two weeks from the time the teams set up service areas and contributes between \$13 million and \$15 million to the local economy. It places Coffs Harbour on the world map. This race, in the location suggested by the map, will put Newcastle on the world map. It will bring international visitors.

There are a lot of New Zealand drivers in the Australian competition, and I guarantee that the planes from New Zealand will be full of people attending the race in Newcastle. European visitors will attend because of their interest in V8s and supercar racing. I commend the bill to the House. This bill was signalled prior to the last cabinet reshuffle and this Minister has grabbed hold with both hands because he realises the importance of motorsport. The member for Wyong spoke of speeches expressing concern about the Homebush race. There are always concerns. I urge members to read the *Hansard* concerning all motorsport bills. I do know the value of motorsport. My twin brother and younger brother live in Newcastle. My younger brother owns a tyre dealership at Warners Bay called Jax Tyres. If the members for Newcastle or Wyong need new tyres, I am sure he will give them a good deal.

My family are enthusiasts for motorsports. These are well-organised events. I have attended the Homebush event and I feel sure there will be superior spectator opportunities at Newcastle. I commend the Minister and the Government for bringing this major event to Newcastle. Newcastle will provide far better spectator opportunities than Homebush. Once the event is over those people complaining now will be praising the event and its environmental credentials. I congratulate Colin Trinder. I am sorry I could not attend the awards night in Melbourne last week. He has done a phenomenal job for rally and motorsport in New South Wales and Australia. That award was a long time coming. The Confederation of Australian Motor Sport is an elite body. He is recognised on a national and international basis. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (18:18): Start your engines and buckle in—vroom vroom—this redhead is going to out herself in this place as a revhead. One of my earliest and fondest memories is sitting with my father to watch the Hardie-Ferodo 1000. It was a time when my dad was at his most relaxed. He did not drink. We would sit down and watch the race, Peter Brock and the Holdens. It was an important bonding time between us. My poor father had no sons to share this experience with. I blame him and that early grounding in motorsports for my feminist tendencies. When I met my husband he drove an SS Commodore with sports suspension, but as we aged it became hard on the back and we traded it in.

I have to declare that I have a serious interest in motorsports. I also have to declare that in the past I was a tourism operator. I have sold my business now, but I have seen the tourism benefits that these events bring. They are really important. For that reason I am glad that V8 Supercars will be coming to Newcastle. I remember many years ago I went to a dragway somewhere near Port Stephens—I am not sure whether it was the same one that the member for Balmain spoke about—and I saw Peter Brock, which was very exciting for me. I remember the excitement that the event generated in the crowd of people—ordinary people, such as my accountant, who enjoy motorsports. On tour, in my former life as a tourism operator, I enjoyed the buzz and hum of an 11-litre engine and a 420-horsepower coach going down Conrod Straight at Bathurst. I have driven around the bends at Bathurst with a busload of pensioners and seen firsthand their excitement. They were perhaps not experiencing the power of a 600-horsepower V8 Supercar, but it was definitely more than six litres. Many people, old and young, have enthusiasm for the sport.

We need to talk about how we are going to manage the event. I congratulate the new Minister for Tourism and Major Events on his appointment to the portfolio. It was good to see him at an event in the Hunter Valley recently. I do not know if the Minister attended the game, but it was good that he was there for the lunch. It was nice to see someone from the Government supporting the community there. Goodness knows, that has not always been the case with this Government. My advice to the Minister is: Please do not make the same mistake as your colleague the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, who is not welcome in many parts of the Hunter Valley because of the paternalistic and ferocious way that he negotiated—some would say dictated—public transport arrangements in our community.

I hope that the Minister will take into consideration the amendments that Labor will move in the other place. They go to the governance arrangements of this event. It is reasonable to move an amendment to reinstate a special government coordination unit to act as a central point between affected local residents, businesses, relevant government agencies, the council and the promoter. There will be no conflict of interest for that body. It will ensure that the event runs well and achieves its aims for tourism, for the fans and for the environment. I like trees; I like heritage; I like the way the east end of Newcastle looks. If we are to host this massive event, the Government says it will bring in more than \$55 million. This event will be a love letter to Newcastle. It will tell the world to come to Newcastle and to experience its fantastic beaches. This event is similar to the motorcycle event on Phillip Island. People really enjoy the event, but they also enjoy the destination and they decide to go back for another visit. Similarly, many car advertisements are filmed on the Great Ocean Road to highlight the road as well as the car. That makes people want to drive on it. These are all important considerations.

We want to see the heritage, the beautiful buildings in that part of town, protected. We want the residents who live there to be looked after. Labor's amendments are not unreasonable. We are not saying that we want to take over the running of the event. That is how members on the other side of the House tend to do things. We are saying: Involve the community. Make it something we can all look forward to. Make it a worthwhile event so that I am not embarrassed when I go to Newcastle. I do not want to have a fight with The Greens or residents in the east end of Newcastle. I want this to be a fantastic event. If we can make this event positive for our community—and I mean the whole of the Hunter region—it will have a life beyond this year. We will start to see a long-term return on investment. That is really important.

I do not know whether the Minister for Tourism and Major Events is aware that we still do not have a Minister for the Hunter. The Minister for Tourism and Major Events represents our community on this issue in Cabinet. There is no other Cabinet representation for the Hunter on this matter. We want to ensure that local voices are heard in this debate. That is not unreasonable. It is not much to ask that the Government include the community and the stakeholders. The Government should make sure that the person who makes decisions is removed from the influence of one party or another. I am pleased to see that the Minister is nodding. I am sure that is a good sign of how the amendments will be received in the other place.

I do not have much more to say in the debate. I will give another plug to the car racing industry. The industry might be scared to see me embracing this event, because I like the environment and I like heritage, but I acknowledge the innovation in cars. The industry has improved. It trials and manufactures new technologies. That means we drive around in cars and buses with tyres that last longer. The Newcastle 500 is an important event. I beg the Minister not to make the same mistake as the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Andrew Constance. It would be nice to continue to welcome the Minister for Tourism and Major Events to the Hunter as a friend, rather than as someone who cuts train lines and does not talk to people.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) (18:25): I support the Motor Racing Legislation Amendment (Newcastle 500) Bill 2017. Although I detect some angst from Opposition members, I think we are all in unison. This bill will be unopposed, but there may be an amendment or two in the upper House. Let us start with the positives. The event will be fantastic for Newcastle. We all agree that an injection of \$55 million into Newcastle is not to be sniffed at. The majority of Novocastrians will be proud to call the event their own. I heard the member

for Wollondilly say that this is the type of event one would welcome in one's own area. In Camden there are currently a lot of roadworks, so the area would not be eligible for such an event for a couple of years, but this is the type of event that I would love to have in my backyard. I am cognisant that the people of Newcastle have concerns about the impact of the event on their homes, backyards and streets. That is not to be scoffed at nor dismissed. As a government we have a responsibility to address their concerns.

I congratulate the new Minister for Tourism and Major Events on his position. I spoke to him about this legislation and I have every confidence that all the concerns have been acknowledged and will be addressed, to minimise the impact on the residents of Newcastle. I mentioned the roadworks in my electorate in jest, but those roadworks have an impact on residents. There are perceived negatives before the positive aspects of the project are apparent. I acknowledge the Minister and thank him for our in-depth discussion on this bill. I am assured that the Government has listened to the people of Newcastle and that it will address their concerns. The media release put out yesterday by the Minister is an example of that.

I think one of the concerns is in relation to the coordination office. The Minister's press release states that there will be an office staffed by Destination NSW that will oversee community engagement and work closely with Supercars Australia and Newcastle City Council. Earlier I spoke to the Minister for Sport, who said that Destination NSW will install a local component which will take into account local knowledge of councils and which will be run by a local administrator. As Destination NSW has a proven events record, a local component will guarantee this event is the success that we all believe it will be and want it to be. We all want this to be a successful event which will provide a much-needed financial boost to Newcastle and which will have minimal effects on local residents.

The last time I was in Newcastle was at a State Council meeting when I was lobbying for the wonderful honour of being a member of this House, but I will go back to Newcastle for this event. Newcastle has so much to offer, but our busy lives prevent us visiting there. The Supercars in Newcastle will be a tourism drawcard that will enable people to enjoy other attractions that Newcastle has to offer. I hope it is beautiful weather in Newcastle in November, and I look forward to watching the cars go around—

Ms Trish Doyle: At Nobbys.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: Up at Nobbys Beach. Port Macquarie also has a Nobbys Beach so it is a common name for beaches along the eastern coast. Yes, I will stop at Nobbys when I am there. I will be in boardies and a rashy because just wearing the old Speedos can be a career killer for Liberal politicians.

Ms Anna Watson: Not in your case.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: Remember Peter Debnam.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): Order! The member for Camden will return to the leave of the bill.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: This legislation has bipartisan support, which is fantastic. I acknowledge what the member for Newcastle is doing in relation to local input. We need a proven body, Destination NSW, to run the event as it has delivered all types of events across the State and always involves the locals. The people of Newcastle will have input with their local knowledge considered by Destination NSW. I commend the Minister for Tourism and Major Events for his enthusiasm for this legislation, for his willingness to take on board other concerns, and for being inclusive. This is a fantastic event. Well done, and I look forward to supporting it in Newcastle.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Tourism and Major Events, and Assistant Minister for Skills) (18:35): In reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Fairfield, Upper Hunter, Myall Lakes, Newcastle, Wollondilly, Bathurst, Charlestown, Sydney, Tweed, Wyong, Seven Hills, Balmain, Coffs Harbour, Maitland, and Camden for their contributions to debate on the Motor Racing Legislation Amendment (Newcastle 500) Bill 2017. Unfortunately, the member for Blue Mountains was saving herself for another debate this evening, I am sure.

In September last year, the former Premier Mike Baird and Supercars Australia Chief Executive James Warburton announced Newcastle as the new host city for the series final of the Virgin Australia Supercars Championship for the next five years. As I set out in my second reading speech, this will be a fantastic event for Newcastle. It is pleasing that almost every contributor to debate on this bill has acknowledged that it will be a fantastic event for Newcastle and the Hunter region more broadly. During the first five years of the event, it is expected that there will be a direct injection of \$57 million into the Newcastle economy in direct visitor expenditure. That does not account for the flow-on effects, and I will talk about my meeting and discussions with council a little later. But it is very obvious for those who have ever been involved in major events that the direct

spend can be multiplied three or four times, still being conservative, to the full economic benefit that the event will have on Newcastle. I was pleased that everyone acknowledged that.

I am very new to this portfolio, and for my part I, and this Government, are not interested in making this event political, or the nature of this legislation. The fact is that the race is moving to Newcastle as announced last year and it is the job of all members of this place, together with council and Supercars Australia, to ensure that this event is as successful as possible to maximise the benefits for the region and community, and also to ameliorate, in so far as is reasonably possible, any of its impacts that are inevitable with an event of this scale. Such a big event will always have a community impact but the task before all of us, particularly those on the ground, is to work around those issues in a very sensible way, listening to the community every step of the way, and making those adjustments wherever possible.

This bill facilitates the event by amending the Homebush Motor Racing (Sydney 400) Act 2008 so that all the existing provisions will apply to the Newcastle local government area. The bill will provide a legislative framework for the construction of the infrastructure necessary for the race, and ensure that the infrastructure will be ready by late November when the inaugural race will be held. I thank all members for their contributions, particularly those who acknowledged how exciting this event will be for the region. This event will be a game-changer for Newcastle, building on some significant momentum that is being generated in that city and in that region at the moment. Turning to the contributions of members in this debate, I note that the Opposition has repeatedly called for a "government coordination office" to be established.

Ms Jodi McKay: Say yes to the coordination office.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: I am happy to report that, as I announced yesterday, the Government is establishing a coordination office for the Newcastle 500.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): Order! The member for Strathfield will come to order. The member for Newcastle will be removed from the Chamber if he continues to interject.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: The coordination office will be in place from early March. In establishing the Newcastle 500 coordination office, the Government is keen for it to oversee all aspects of the implementation of the Newcastle 500 ahead of its first running in November this year. I particularly note the contribution of the member for Newcastle in this debate. As the local member is he is obviously passionate about this race and the concerns his community has raised. I acknowledge that in all sincerity. If I had an event on this scale in my electorate I would be just as passionate as he. As I have said many times since I have taken on this role, I want to work with all stakeholders to ensure that this event is successful.

When I looked into this event I saw a photo of the launch featuring former Premier Mike Baird, the member for Newcastle, the Newcastle lord mayor and the V8 Supercar drivers. I think that is terrific. It shows that this is an exciting time for the city and everyone is on the same page in wanting to make this a success. The member for Newcastle said he had been calling for a coordination office since last year. I have been in the job for a couple of weeks now.

Mr David Elliott: You're an expert.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: I acknowledge the interjection. Neither the member for Newcastle nor any members from the area have attempted to meet with me to discuss their concerns. Again I say that I am willing to work with all stakeholders to make this event a success. One person who did reach out to me was the Newcastle Labor lord mayor, who raised the council's concerns directly. Only a few days after being sworn in, I travelled to Newcastle to meet with her and other council officials. I found the discussion quite positive and enlightening. I acknowledge the lord mayor's concerns regarding the need for better local coordination on the ground to ensure that there is effective community consultation. As a result of that meeting, I gave the direction to establish a coordination office to make sure that it happens.

Despite the fact that Supercars Australia and Newcastle City Council certainly have strong obligations to consult with the community and to resolve the issues for which they are responsible, there is a need for better local coordination on the ground to ensure that this event can bring every benefit to Newcastle. I put on record my thanks to the lord mayor, who clearly understands the benefits the event will bring. She is strongly supportive of the event and very willing to work with Destination NSW, Supercars Australia and the Government. As I said, the Government has a role to play in engaging with the community and working closely with Newcastle City Council and Supercars Australia to coordinate the implementation efforts, particularly in the lead-up to the inaugural event. That is why we are establishing the coordination office, which will include staff permanently based in Newcastle. It will coordinate all government functions related to the event, including communications. The office will include a full-time New South Wales government community liaison officer based in Newcastle,

as well as other expert Destination NSW staff who will be in Newcastle as required every week in the lead-up to the event.

I note the reference by members opposite to the need for an authority similar to that established in 2008 to oversee the implementation of the Sydney 400 at Homebush. I must remind members that Destination NSW did not exist in 2008 when that original legislation was introduced; hence the authority was created. The creation of Destination NSW in 2011 removed the need for the separate Homebush Motor Racing Authority, which is why the body was abolished in 2014 following a review by the New South Wales Auditor-General. As we have heard in this debate, Destination NSW has successfully exercised authorisation and approval functions in relation to the Supercars race at Sydney Olympic Park for the past three years. Destination NSW has the expertise, experience, resources, and track record to carry out that role equally as successfully in Newcastle. There are sufficient provisions in the legislative framework for government coordination without the need for an additional or duplicated government body.

Anyone who doubts the ability of Destination NSW to coordinate an event on this scale need only look at its track record. It has increased visitation rates to this State by 30 per cent and attracted and secured 148 major events, many times coordinating and running the events itself. Those who have had anything to do with the Vivid Festival know that the success of that event speaks for itself. Destination NSW is the perfect body to coordinate and to run this event because the staff are experienced and the office has experts. People from Destination NSW will be on the ground to ensure that all parties perform their roles, the community is properly consulted, and its concerns are adequately addressed.

With regard to concerns raised about the role of Newcastle City Council in engagement with the community, I clearly state that the council is a willing partner in delivering this event, and the Government will continue to work closely with it during the implementation. The council is centrally involved in the engagement process with the community. In partnership with Destination NSW and Supercars Australia, it has already developed a thorough engagement plan and has held three engagement sessions so far. It has developed a thorough online resource for residents, businesses and stakeholders that contains a huge amount of information on the race, the track and the impacts on the local community. That information has been compiled in partnership with Supercars Australia and Destination NSW. The council is also convening a major events residents' working group, with expressions of interest expected to be called for next week. The working group will be made up of local residents and business owners. Its members will be able to relay concerns and questions directly to council and the event organisers at those meetings.

The member for Balmain raised concerns about the removal or watering down of community consultation clauses in the bill. I advise members that none of the amendments in proposed new section 18 water down any of the requirements for community consultation. The bill simply changes section 18 (a) (iii), which refers specifically to the Sydney Olympic Park Authority, to include Newcastle City Council and any other public authority. The clauses requiring the consultation to include any person having a right of occupation of land within the works area and any person occupying land immediately adjacent to the works area still exist. There is now an additional clause that Destination NSW must be satisfied that the race promoter has taken all reasonable steps to consult with those two groups in addition to Newcastle City Council in relation to a motor race within the city of the Newcastle Local Government Area. To further strengthen consultation, proposed new subsection (5) (c) includes any other public or local authority prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of the subsection. Far from watering it down, the requirements for consultation are strengthened and made very specific in the bill.

I note concerns raised by various members about the existing trees in Newcastle. The creation of the race circuit will necessitate the removal of some trees and shrubs. At this stage of the process it is not known exactly how many or which trees and shrubs that will involve. More information will be available to the public as the track route is finalised and the work commences. However, in recognition that some trees will be removed, Supercars Australia and Newcastle City Council are working together to deliver a program to ensure any trees and shrubs removed are offset by extra tree planting. Current analysis and landscape design suggests there will be a threefold increase in tree canopy in the Newcastle Local Government Area. This will provide a welcoming space during the summer months in the years to come, even after the event is finalised. Those trees will make a significant and positive contribution to the Newcastle urban forest. This program meets the objectives of the Newcastle Urban Forest Policy by maximising and sustaining the benefits on an intergenerational basis.

Regarding the concerns raised by members in relation to heritage, the Government is committed to preserving the natural beauty of Newcastle—that is absolutely paramount—in both the built and natural environment. The Heritage Act 1977 will apply before, during and after the race, meaning that Supercars Australia will need to obtain approvals or exemptions under this Act should any be required. Concerns were also raised regarding noise and air pollution. As anyone who has attended a motorsports event knows, they are inherently noisy. However, Supercars Australia is working with acoustic engineers and government agencies to develop a

noise management plan that will identify and mitigate noise-related impacts during the event. Vehicular emissions will be monitored and managed by Supercars Australia in consultation with relevant government agencies. I am advised that further information will be made available as soon as it comes to hand. It is important to remember that the event is, as has been stated in this debate, of limited duration. However, every step will be taken to mitigate those impacts in partnership with government agencies in accordance with the required regulations.

The New South Wales Government is committed to making the Newcastle 500 a successful and safe event for the community. In addition, the bill requires Supercars Australia to demonstrate that it has consulted with the council prior to carrying out any works. Matters relating to heritage will be addressed by Supercars Australia as part of its consultation with Newcastle City Council. To this end, Supercars Australia has advised that a heritage consultant has been engaged and is working closely with the heritage division of Newcastle City Council to develop a heritage impact statement that will address the management of State heritage items. I also note concerns raised in the debate with regard to reinstatement works. I can inform the House that the vast majority of works will be completed within three weeks of the event. There may be some additional reinstatement works required, and they will be done as a matter of priority after the race.

This will be a magnificent event for Newcastle and the wider Hunter region. This bill demonstrates the Government's continued commitment to attracting major events to regional New South Wales, which will ultimately generate jobs, stimulate the economy and boost tourism the regions. I look forward to continuing to work with Supercars Australia, Newcastle City Council and the other stakeholders to make sure that this event truly is one that Newcastle can be proud of, one that will fulfil its commitment to bring great economic growth to the city, and one that I am sure will attract more than 81,000 international and domestic visitors to Newcastle over the course of the event. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Visitors

VISITORS

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): I welcome Jenna and Alex Molesworth to the Chamber this evening. They are guests of the Minister for Counter Terrorism, Minister for Corrections, and Minister for Veterans Affairs, the member for Baulkham Hills. We appreciate their support of Diggers' Day, supporting our very worthy veterans, and we wish them an enjoyable evening in the New South Wales Parliament.

Bills

TRANSPORT ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT (INDEPENDENT TRANSPORT SAFETY REGULATOR) BILL 2017

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 14 February 2017.

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (18:53): I lead for the Opposition in speaking on the Transport Administration Amendment (Independent Transport Safety Regulator) Bill 2017. Labor will not oppose this bill; however, we have some concerns, on which I will elaborate. As outlined by the Minister, the purpose of the bill is to abolish the Independent Transport Safety Regulator [ITSR], with rail safety regulation in New South Wales handed over to the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator. Labor agrees it is important to have national consistency in rail safety, which is why we will support this bill. However, it is concerning that this comes at a time when a core responsibility of the New South Wales regulator has been to oversee safety on the construction of the Sydney Metro and Newcastle Light Rail, two critical rail projects in New South Wales. The ITSR was established in 2003 as a result of Waterfall and Glenbrook rail disasters. In introducing legislation to establish the authority in 2003, the then Minister for Transport Services, the Hon. Michael Costa said:

On 8 April this year I announced the Government's intention to put in place a range of reforms to focus the full resources of the State's public transport system on safety, reliability and cleanliness. The first priority is safety. A clean, safe and reliable system will be achieved only if accountabilities and responsibilities are clear to its operators, the Government and the public.

The regulator's role has evolved since then, but its core function on safety, on regulatory compliance and on enforcement activities has remained and, on the Minister's advice to the House, will continue with the transfer of responsibility to the national body. Key to the authority's operational effectiveness has been its independence. In 2003 the Minister said:

Independence is critical for the regulatory and investigative functions to be effective. That is why the regulator will be a stand-alone statutory authority, independent of other transport agencies and the Ministry of Transport.

To this day ITSR remains independent of ministerial direction in exercising its functions under the Rail Safety National Law. It is critical that this independence continue under the new structure. While the Independent Transport Safety Regulator will cease to exist, the Minister has indicated there will remain a local presence which will be fully integrated into the national scheme. I understand from the Minister's second reading speech that the regulator currently operates the New South Wales Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator through a service level agreement. I note the Minister's advice to the House that under the transfer agreement the national regulator has offered permanent employment to all permanent ITSR staff based on their existing roles. Given the critical nature of the work undertaken by the New South Wales and national regulators, it is critical that the transfer of responsibilities does not in any way lessen the focus on its regulatory functions. This is even more important given the work currently underway in New South Wales.

As mentioned previously, I understand the Independent Transport Safety Regulator has been involved in the Northwest and Southwest Metro projects, the Newcastle Light Rail project and the CBD South-east Light Rail project. This was, perhaps for obvious reasons, not included in the Minister's second reading speech. I expect more information in the Minister's speech in reply. It is my understanding that ITSR has had input on rail safety requirements for these projects. Labor would like to hear more from the Minister on ITSR's role in these projects to date and on how the national body will continue its work. It is fair to say that, given the size and scope of these projects, it is very important that the transfer of services and the focus on national interests does not in any way undermine the regulator's involvement in these transport projects.

As we know, there have been very serious defect issues identified with the Skytrain, which I understand involves cracking in the pre-cast concrete used to form the elevated rail track. As with all transport and roads projects, the Government has been less than transparent with the community about the problems with the Skytrain. Now is a good time for the Minister to provide information to the House on those defects and on the involvement, if any, of the Independent Rail Safety Regulator. If the Government wants the community to have confidence in the construction of the Skytrain as well as in the other projects I have mentioned, it should give the House the information to understand what has transpired with this project. This information has not been forthcoming from the Government. As mentioned, Labor will not oppose this bill. I eagerly await the Minister's answers to the questions I have raised.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (19:59): I support the Transport Administration Amendment (Independent Transport Safety Regulator) Bill 2017. Moving to a direct delivery model under the National Rail Safety Regulator marks the final step for this State fully joining a national rail safety regulatory scheme. The proposed changes to rail safety regulation in New South Wales are part of national reforms initiated by the Council of Australian Governments in 2009 to establish national laws and national regulators for the heavy vehicle, rail and maritime sectors.

The New South Wales Government is committed to maintaining the high standard of rail safety regulation while delivering seamless economy by reducing red tape for rail operators across State and Territory borders without compromising safety. The Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator was established in 2013. It signed a service level agreement with the Independent Transport Safety Regulator to ensure adequate local resources while delivering the nationally consistent approach sought by industry. In 2014 an independent review into the delivery of rail safety regulation in this State recommended moving to a direct delivery model with the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator. Having only one entity deliver rail safety regulation in this State streamlines accountability, helps build a single, nationally-consistent regulatory culture, and reduces costs.

In a day-to-day sense, there will be minimal change to rail safety regulation in this State. The powers and scope of regulation will not change; it is just that the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator will directly employ the New South Wales staff for the delivery of its regulatory function. The transition agreement also supports staff at the Independent Transport Safety Regulator to transition to the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator through a transfer package. The transfer package will enable staff at the Independent Transport Safety Regulator to transition smoothly to the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator.

Supporting the transfer of staff from the State regulator to the national regulator will ensure that the national regulator can retain and use specialist rail safety staff from a long-established organisation for the benefit of rail safety in this State. The transfer package also addresses the prior service and leave conditions that will

continue and be recognised, as well as an allowance to compensate for different work hours and leave conditions. This bill will streamline and economise our rail safety regulation and simplify compliance for cross-state rail operators without compromising our high standard of rail safety regulation in New South Wales. I trust that all members of the House will lend their support to this bill, and I am encouraged by the speech of the member for Strathfield in that regard.

I spoke recently in the House about the Granville train disaster, and so many other rail safety events also lead us to support this bill. Today I recognise Margaret Warby for her tremendous bravery and professionalism. Margaret now lives in Mittagong, and she continues to serve her local community through the Mittagong Country Women's Association. She was one of the first responders, helping the distressed and injured during the Granville rail disaster some 40 years ago. For her feats on that day, Mrs Warby was awarded the Queen's Gallantry Medal, which honoured and recognised her selfless acts of heroism. Unfortunately, the medal was stolen by thieves in 2008, and Mrs Warby was never again to see her medal. However, due to the fantastic work of the Hume Local Area Commander, a replacement medal was able to be organised with representatives of Buckingham Palace. It was presented to Mrs Warby in a ceremony at the Bowral police station.

As we pause to remember those who lost their lives on that tragic day, we also express our gratitude for those who put their own lives at risk to save those who could be saved and to comfort those who sadly could not. Today we hear of other tragic circumstances in the news: the unfortunate aircraft accident at Essendon Airport in Melbourne in which others have lost their lives. Everyone on both sides of the Chamber does their best to improve regulations and to improve safety. Obviously this bill before us today goes a long way to doing that. I commend the bill and the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure to the House.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (19:03): I also support the Transport Administration Amendment (Independent Transport Safety Regulator) Bill 2017. The purpose of this bill is to abolish the Independent Transport Safety Regulator [ITSR] and to have its functions absorbed by the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator [ONRSR]. The Independent Transport Safety Regulator is a New South Wales based regulator responsible for facilitating the safe operation of railways in New South Wales, including regulatory compliance and enforcement activities. Its proposed abolition follows the Intergovernmental Agreement on Rail Safety Regulation Council of Australian Governments [COAG] agreements in 2009 and 2011, where all States and Territories agreed that a single national rail safety regulator have oversight of the regulatory and compliance activities of the rail network.

The New South Wales Parliament has previously passed the Rail Safety (Adoption of National Law) Act 2012 as part of the transition. The ITSR has been delivering National Rail Safety Regulations since 2013. The transition agreement between ITSR and ONRSR includes specific arrangements for the ongoing employment of ITSR staff by ONRSR. The Minister has also given a guarantee that workers will not be placed on less favourable working conditions and will not have an unreasonable increase in travel to work time. I commend the Minister and note that the Opposition does not oppose this legislation. Having worked in mine safety for some 10 years, I am aware of the national incentives and agreements being introduced to bring the States together so that we have common legislation across the country. The annual report for 2015-16 of the Independent Transport Safety Regulator states:

The executive leadership group [ELG] monitored support provided for NSW's new rail projects such as the Sydney Metro (Northwest and Southwest) and the Sydney and Newcastle Light Rail projects to ensure appropriate engagement with proponents and to promote the safety risk management practices required for the design, build and operation of NSW's major new rail infrastructure.

I commend the Independent Transport Safety Regulator. As I said, I have worked in mine safety. This particular area uses heavy machinery. Big construction projects such as the Sydney and Newcastle Light Rail projects certainly require a big focus on safety. I have made a number of requests for information on the light rail project in Newcastle, and specifically on the final business case urban renewal and light rail assurance review report. I have asked many questions on notice and have also asked the Minister for information, but that information has not been forthcoming. In fact, I have had to submit a second Government Information (Public Access) [GIPA] Act information request.

I have also submitted a GIPA request for all documents including but not limited to briefing notes provided by Transport for NSW to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure concerning the capital costs of light rail in Newcastle, and also all documents that deal with cost variations caused by changes in specifications for the Newcastle Light Rail project. It is not the first time that I have asked for these sorts of documents. Only recently I received a response to a previous GIPA request about the cost of the interchange for the Newcastle Light Rail. It seemed to have changed substantially—from \$73 million to more than \$200 million.

Mr Adam Crouch: Point of order: Mr Temporary Speaker, I ask that you direct the member for Newcastle to return to the leave of the bill. The bill deals with the Transport Administration Amendment Act not GIPA requests for information in regard to the Newcastle Light Rail project.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith): Order! The member for Newcastle will return to the leave of the bill. I recognise that he is discussing transport-related matters, but he is veering off course. Although I do not uphold the point of order, I ask the member for Newcastle to address specifically the provisions in the bill.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP: Certainly. However, to finish that point I advise the House that the responses that I did receive about that issue showed that the cost had more than doubled from \$73 million for that and other projects. This certainly caused concern in Newcastle. Going back to the topic at hand in a more specific sense, apart from the fact that it is light rail as well that we are referring to as quoted in the annual report, I hope that the Government is focused not only on safety. There will be a national body getting onto it that has a concern for transparency as well, showing the people of Newcastle and the Hunter exactly what things cost and how they are going to operate in the future with an open book. I commend the legislation.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (19:09): I support the Transport Administration Amendment (Independent Transport Safety Regulator) Bill 2017. As we have heard, the New South Wales Government is committed to maintaining the high standard of rail safety regulation in this State, simplifying rail safety regulation, and strengthening the Federation. This bill takes another step in a direction that Australian governments have been progressing for some time. I suppose one could see it as the heritage of rail systems in Australia over 150 years since we started with separate gauge rail and built our own independent systems way back in the middle of the nineteenth century. We have been progressively trying to harmonise and come back together ever since. This is one more sensible step in building a Federation which really works, which is efficient and which interacts across State borders without interruption. For these reasons, we are ushering in a new era by moving to a direct delivery model as part of national reforms initiated by the Council of Australian Governments.

Moving to a direct delivery model under the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator [ONRSR] marks the final step for this State fully joining a national rail safety regulatory scheme. A bill amending the Transport Administration Act to abolish the Independent Transport Safety Regulator [ITSR] is required to complete the transition. In a day-to-day sense there will be minimal change to rail safety regulation in this State. Indeed, the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator is already accountable for the administration of rail safety legislation and for enforcing compliance of transport service providers with rail safety legislation.

The Rail Safety National Law (NSW) already enables the ONRSR to directly deliver rail safety services in this State. However, to date the ITSR delivered rail safety services on behalf of the ONRSR through a service level agreement. The two regulators have signed a transition agreement to manage the transfer of functions and staff from the State regulator to the national regulator. Under the transition agreement, the ONRSR has agreed to maintain at least the current level of rail safety regulation in New South Wales unless the safety risk profile of the State's railways changes. The ONRSR has also agreed that any future change to roles and structures will be consistent with its commitment to maintain the existing level of rail regulatory oversight and capacity in New South Wales.

This bill will ensure that the Minister will continue to have access to advice from the ONRSR on the safe operation of railways and whether rail operators comply with safety recommendations or reports. This advice will be based on safety and compliance investigations performed by the ONRSR. The Minister will also have the power to direct the national regulator to investigate or to advise on rail safety matters. As I said earlier, this is one more step in a long progression towards harmonisation of regulation across State boundaries. It has a particularly long history when it comes to rail.

As it happens, in my electorate I have two railway lines now: one that was built in the 1860s and one that is being built by this Government now with the new station at Cudgegong Road. We have reserved the corridor. Perhaps one day we can link them up. It means the responsibility and the task of regulating rail from a safety point of view will continue well into the future. There will be a need for the expertise that we have had in the State regulator to be transferred to the Federal body and to be maintained so that as we introduce new technology in the new metro line we have the best minds and skill sets on the job to make sure that people travelling on rail in New South Wales remain safe in the future. To that end, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (19:14): Simplifying regulation, removing duplication and cutting red tape are the hallmarks of any good Liberal government, and the Berejiklian Government is no exception to that rule. The Transport Administration Amendment (Independent Transport Safety Regulator) Bill 2017 ensures that a high standard of rail safety regulation in this State continues while at the same time simplifying rail safety regulation and strengthening the Federation. We have heard tonight that those opposite are not opposing this bill,

and rightly so. It is a logical step forward by the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure for which I commend him. As the member for Terrigal I have a large number of residents in my community who spend quite a bit of time commuting to and from Sydney. The stations in Gosford and Woy Woy are utilised by our residents. Our residents from the Central Coast hop on those trains in the comfort and knowledge that they are being transported in a very safe method—in some cases a lot safer than travelling down the M1. That is why the patronage is so high.

A recent article in the *Central Coast Express Advocate* reminded me of the Cowan rail disaster, which happened in the 1990s. A steam train, the *3801 Limited*, was struggling to climb the Cowan Bank on the Sydney side of the Hawkesbury River when it was struck by a passenger train. Unfortunately and most tragically, six people lost their lives and approximately 100 were injured. I note the member for Granville is in the Chamber this evening. The Granville rail disaster was an absolute tragedy with a large loss of life for people who were just going about their daily commute. We have seen huge advancements in rail safety in New South Wales. Every day now people hop on trains in their thousands knowing they can get to and from work and go about their daily business safely.

By moving to a direct delivery model under the National Rail Safety Regulator, New South Wales transitions to the national rail safety regulatory scheme. This bill amending the Transport Administration Act to abolish the Independent Transport Safety Regulator is required to complete the transition. By way of background to the bill, New South Wales committed to establishing the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator [ONRSR] following the Council of Australian Governments [COAG] decision in 2009, and again in 2011 on an intergovernmental agreement on rail safety regulation reform.

The ONRSR was established under the Rail Safety National Law (South Australia) 2012, and New South Wales passed the Rail Safety (Adoption of National Law) Act 2012 to join the national regulatory scheme. The Independent Transport Safety Regulator [ITSR] is a statutory corporation created under the Transport Administration Act [TAA] 1988 to facilitate the safe operation of railways in New South Wales. As I mentioned earlier, there have been massive improvements to commuter safety on our rail networks throughout New South Wales, whether in the electorate of Riverstone or the electorate of Terrigal.

In 2014 the then Minister for Transport requested an independent review of the direct delivery of rail safety regulation in New South Wales by the ONRSR. That review recommended ending the service level agreement [SLA] and abolishing the ITSR, with the ONRSR taking direct responsibility for rail safety regulation across the great State of New South Wales. The then Minister endorsed the recommendations that were put forward. An amendment to the TAA is required to abolish the ITSR and for the ONRSR to directly deliver regulatory and compliance activities. All of the general functions conferred on the ITSR by the TAA will be undertaken by the ONRSR—that is quite a mouthful.

The assets, rights and liabilities of the ITSR once these have been abolished under this amendment will be transferred to the Crown. The amendment bill will enable the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure to transfer the ITSR assets, rights and all liabilities which have not otherwise been dealt with to the ONRSR or a New South Wales Government agency by way of an arrangement. The transition agreement between Transport for NSW, the ITSR and the ONRSR specifies arrangements for the ongoing employment of the ITSR staff at ONRSR, including the extent to which the ONRSR will maintain the accrued rights of those employees. By transferring permanent staff from the ITSR to the ONRSR, the ONRSR retains the expertise and the corporate knowledge of staff currently employed by the ITSR for the benefit of everyone in New South Wales.

Consequential amendments to other legislation are required if we are to abolish the Independent Transport Safety Regulator. The chief executive of the ITSR will also cease to be the statutory officer upon its abolition. The two regulators have signed the transition agreement to manage the transfer of functions of those staff to the national regulator. Under the transition agreement, the regulator has agreed to maintain at least the current level of rail safety regulation in New South Wales unless the safety risk profile of the State changes. There will be minimal change to rail safety regulation in the State with the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator already accountable for administering rail safety legislation and enforcing those compliance issues across transport service providers.

This bill ensures that the Government will continue to have access to and advice on rail safety operations. Further, the Minister will have the power to direct the national regulator to investigate or advise on rail safety matters. As I said earlier, having the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator [ONRSR] delivering rail safety regulation will lead to greater efficiency, ensure clearer accountability, create a single national rail safety culture, and reduce government expenses through less duplication of functions. It will benefit the ONRSR as it will now be able to draw on the expertise of ITSR staff.

I am heartened by this legislation. As I said earlier, thousands of people from my constituency hop onto trains every morning and commute for an hour to the Sydney central business district. There has been a large increase in the use of rail on the Central Coast as it is such an efficient and reliable mode of transport. People can hop onto a train using the brilliant Opal card and they know they will arrive safely at their destination. I trust that all members will support this bill. I am pleased that Opposition members have already indicated they will not oppose this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) (19:21): I speak in debate on the Transport Administration Amendment (Independent Transport Safety Regulator) Bill 2017, which has received bipartisan support. The member for Terrigal referred to the Independent Transport Safety Regulator, the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulation and to other bodies. I do not have a train station in Camden, but there are stations at Campbelltown, Leumeah, Picton, and Wollongong. As every member in this House and their communities use the rail network, it is our responsibility to work with the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure to ensure we have the safest rail network for our constituents.

The member for Terrigal spoke eloquently and referred to a number of things to which I would have liked to have referred, but I do not believe in repeating what has already been said. This Government is committed to maintaining extremely high standards in rail safety regulation. These proposed changes to rail safety regulation form part of the national reforms initiated in 2009 by the Council of Australian Governments to establish national laws and regulations for the heavy vehicle, rail and maritime sectors. Moving to a direct model to be delivered by the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator is the final step towards achieving such a scheme.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (19:25): I contribute to debate on the Transport Administration Amendment (Independent Transport Safety Regulator) Bill 2017, and state at the outset that the New South Wales Government continues to support any models to ensure safety across our rail network. This Government is beginning a new era of cooperation by moving to a direct delivery model as part of the national reforms initiated by the Council of Australian Governments. Moving to a direct model to be delivered by the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator [ONRSR] is the final step towards achieving a national rail safety regulatory scheme. This bill will amend the Transport Administration Act to abolish the Independent Transport Safety Regulator [ITSR]. Having one national rail safety regulator will reduce the regulatory burden on the rail industry and on businesses in New South Wales, make clear who is accountable for regulating rail safety in New South Wales, create a single and nationally consistent rail safety culture, and provide for the more efficient use of funds and resources.

The two regulators signed a transition agreement to manage the transfer of functions and staff from the State regulator to the national regulator. Supporting the transfer of staff from the State regulator to the national regulator will ensure that the national regulator retains specialist rail safety staff from established organisations for the benefit of rail safety in this State. Under the transition agreement all permanent employees of the ITSR will be offered permanent roles at the ONRSR. There will be minor changes to rail safety regulation in this State with the ONRSR already accountable for administering rail safety legislation and enforcing compliance by transport service providers. The bill ensures that the Government will continue to have access to advice on rail safety operations.

Further, the Minister will have the power to direct the national regulator to investigate or to advise on rail safety matters. With the increase in freight rail and coal being transported on our rail network, this legislation is critical to ensure we have the highest level of rail safety across New South Wales. In the Tamworth electorate an increasing number of coal trains are using our rail networks, in particular the XPTs and Explorers, and we must ensure that our regional rail networks are safe. Having one national rail safety regulator instead of separate State-based regulators will reduce the regulatory burden on the rail industry and on businesses in New South Wales. I trust all members will support this bill thus ensuring a new era of efficiency in rail safety regulation. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Infrastructure) (19:28): In reply: I thank all members who contributed to debate on the Transport Administration Amendment (Independent Transport Safety Regulator) Bill 2017. I note that the Opposition supports the legislation. The Government has indicated a strong commitment to making transport safety regulation more efficient without compromising safety standards. That is why we adopted the national laws that streamline the regulation of heavy vehicle, rail and maritime transport. Our journey towards a single national rail safety regulator is almost complete. The purpose of this bill is to take the final step of abolishing the current New South Wales Independent Transport Safety Regulator. Once that occurs, the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator will take over as the rail safety regulator in New South Wales.

A key part of a smooth transition is to ensure that the national rail safety regulator retains and uses the rail safety talent and expertise currently within the Independent Transport Safety Regulator, which has previously operated at a State-based level. Pooling rail safety resources within one organisation will help to create a national

rail safety culture that provides a better assessment of risk and a more efficient allocation of resources. The Independent Transport Safety Regulator currently acts as the State branch of the national rail safety regulator under a service level agreement. Most of the roles of the Independent Transport Safety Regulator are already integrated into the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator for the delivery of services specified by the service level agreement.

The Government introduced this bill only when the Independent Transport Safety Regulator and the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator had agreed on a transition agreement that will enable staff to smoothly transition to the national rail safety regulator. Its provisions fairly balance the requirements of creating a single national rail safety culture within the national rail safety regulator and ensuring that staff of the Independent Transport Safety Regulator will have similar and no less favourable work conditions if they move to the national rail safety regulator. The movement of staff from the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator and the Independent Transport Safety Regulator is governed by the Federal Fair Work Act. The national rail safety regulator will offer employment under its own enterprise agreement and is committed to ensuring that staff receive no less favourable terms of employment.

With the support of staff, Fair Work Australia has agreed to set aside the Independent Transport Safety Regulator Award in favour of the national rail safety regulator enterprise agreement. As such, the transition is due to take effect on 10 March 2017. No additional budget will be required to fund the transition agreement as this will be met from within the current budget of the Independent Transport Safety Regulator. The Government would not have put this bill up for consideration unless it had provided for staff of the Independent Transport Safety Regulator. The two regulators have consulted extensively with employees on providing for a smooth and fair transition, and the transition has the support of Independent Transport Safety Regulator employees. This bill is important for implementing a single nationally consistent rail safety culture that makes it clear who is accountable for rail safety. The Government is working to ensure a smooth transition without compromising its current high-level safety standards or the conditions for the staff of the Independent Transport Safety Regulator.

Rail safety regulators play an important role in the delivery of some of the major projects on which this Government has embarked. This Government is delivering one of the most comprehensive and largest infrastructure programs in the world. This Government is delivering an infrastructure program never seen before in the history of this State. Major rail projects include the Sydney Metro Northwest; stage two of the Sydney Metro Northwest program, which will include Sydney Metro City and Southwest and three light rail projects in the heart of the central business district in Sydney, Parramatta and Newcastle. I note the contribution of the member for Newcastle in this debate, although it was outside the leave of the bill. It is important that I refer those opposite to the Independent Transport Safety Regulator 2015-16 annual report, which cited the fact that the State body had continued to support the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator under the service level agreement and had committed to contributing to the overall effectiveness of the national body.

In the past 12 months, the New South Wales agency continued to monitor our rail network to ensure compliance with rail safety regulation, to deliver the strong governance required of a public service agency and to maximise the value of regulatory efforts delivered through the service level agreement. As part of that, the Executive Leadership Group—and I acknowledge the work of Paul Harris—monitored support provided for the new rail projects in New South Wales, such as the Sydney Metro Northwest and the Sydney and Newcastle light rail projects, to ensure appropriate engagement with proponents and to promote the safety risk management practices required for the design, build and operation of this major new rail infrastructure. As these projects are integrated into the existing rail network, I have been mindful as Minister to have that important regulatory oversight, particularly during the building phase, to ensure we are passenger-ready in 2019 with these major projects, especially with the Sydney Metro Northwest and the CBD and South East Light Rail.

These amazing projects will transform passenger rail in this city for decades to come. With the delivery of a driverless train—a fully automated single-deck train—it is important that the community is assured of regulatory oversight by the national body. The report to which I referred spells out clearly the engagement of proponents in major rail projects in New South Wales. As I indicated in the report, early input on rail safety requirements for State significant major projects has been provided for the following major projects: Sydney Metro Northwest, which we all know will operate from Cudegong Road, Rouse Hill, to Chatswood and will be the first fully automated metro rail system in Australia; and Sydney Metro Southwest, the second stage of the Sydney Metro project, which will extend the rail from the north-west at Chatswood, under Sydney Harbour, through to the new underground stations in the central business district and south-west to Bankstown. The Newcastle light rail will be a 2.7 kilometre light rail track with a new transport interchange at Wickham to Pacific Park.

On Friday the Premier and I announced the first stage of the Parramatta light rail project. That light rail route will have 16 new stations extending from Westmead through to North Parramatta and then on to the

Parramatta central business district. It will go to important venues such as the new Western Sydney Stadium, travelling through the heart of the Parramatta central business district and Camellia, where the stabling facility will be located. There will also be the conversion of the existing heavy rail line to Carlingford—where there will be enormous change in that part of the city with social housing transformation and a change in the housing mix—through to Rydalmere and to the university. This enormous transformation will be driven by major investments in these projects. With this project, along with the CBD and South East Light Rail project, which extends from Circular Quay all the way to Randwick, we must ensure that engagement with the National Rail Safety Regulator occurs in a way that continues to give that project confidence and ultimately delivers passenger safety upon its completion.

In light of concerns raised by the shadow Minister, the report clearly spells out that the regulatory activity supporting progress with these major rail programs has included: assessment and accreditation of Metro Trains Sydney to allow construction activity at the Sydney Metro Trains Facility and railway construction both within the recently completed Sydney Metro Northwest tunnels and the existing Epping-Chatswood rail corridor; assessment and accreditation of the ALTRAC Light Rail Partnership to allow construction activity to commence on the Sydney Light Rail project; review of the safety assessments underpinning the Transport for NSW strategy for the delivery of automatic train protection; oversight of the Transport for NSW construction activity for the Sydney Metro Northwest tunnels and, of course, the elevated railway structures; and engagement with Transport for NSW both in relation to light rail development and the procurement of new inner-city rolling stock.

Of course, there has been ongoing provision of technical expertise by the regulator in relation to a number of key deliverables by Sydney Trains. That has included advice and support from the regulator to Sydney Trains in relation to the implementation of the digital train radio system [DTRS]. It has also involved the regulator from the perspective of the assessment of Sydney Trains' application to vary its accreditation to operate the DTRS within the initial operating sector between Bondi Junction, Waterfall and Cronulla. As we know, the DTRS will replace the existing analogue radio system, MetroNet, and will address the recommendations arising out of the Glenbrook and Waterfall special commissions of inquiry. That type of technical expertise also extends to the review of draft Australian Transport Safety Bureau rail safety investigation reports provided to the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator.

I acknowledge the fact that again cited in the report is the focus on learning and development. It is important to build expertise and capacity to deliver rail safety regulation and to recognise the effective learning and development function which is aligned with the organisation's strategic direction and which addresses identified training needs. That is spelt out clearly in the report. The State agency, given the expertise that resides within it, has been able to support the National Rail Safety Regulator in this endeavour. That is clearly spelt out in the report and is a key factor because regulators have a critical role to play in the ongoing professional development of their staff to ensure that regulations are agile, timely and responsive to the needs of the community.

Given that, unfortunately, we have seen some very significant events on our rail network, it is important that the community has confidence in the National Rail Safety Regulator. It is important to note that government agencies such as Sydney Trains and Transport for NSW have been proactive in reaching out to the regulator for advice and support. It is important also that engagement occur early on, particularly with major builds such as those currently taking place across the city. With the advent of light rail projects, for instance, it is important to have engagement with the regulator, particularly regarding some of the design principles that may be embedded into such a project. That relates particularly to challenges that can beset the community with the interface, for instance, between pedestrians and light rail vehicles and the very obvious challenges that might arise from the advent of new projects.

I am very conscious in that regard of the CBD light rail. It is important that we get early engagement and that project teams—be they private sector driven or government driven—engage with national regulators. It is important to note that this whole process was born out of the Council of Australian Governments [COAG] process. It is important to acknowledge we are looking to ensure a culture that minimises duplication and capitalises on the expertise from both a national and a State perspective, which I believe this achieves. As I understand it, this process kicked off in 2010. There were early discussions, it flowed through the COAG process and we are now on a pathway to completion.

I thank the chief executive and the executive leadership group for their work from the State agency perspective. I thank them for the contribution they will make in delivering confidence in rail regulation into the future. It is absolutely key, and I am mindful of it moving forward. It is important to recognise their contribution in delivering a smooth transition for the State agency and work that has been done over many years to build expertise. What is happening in this State means this is a very busy time for regulators. Given the major projects that are being built, it is important not only to ensure that we have appropriate oversight and ongoing assessment

from an accreditation perspective but also to have engagement with the National Rail Safety Regulator early on. Everything from construction planning and delivery through to the ultimate operation is vital to the ongoing operation of the rail network in New South Wales.

I will touch briefly on the contribution made by the member for Newcastle, and I recognise his support. He referred to the Newcastle project. I indicate that the Government is delivering that project incredibly well. Visitors to Newcastle in recent times will have been taken aback by the way in which that city is transforming. At its heart is the way in which the light rail system will integrate with the broader transfer network. Having regulatory oversight with a light rail system that is going to run down Hunter Street is part of that. I assure the member for Newcastle that the Wickham interchange is a vital part of this project. I have visited that site and seen around 100 construction workers delivering what will be an important interchange hub for that city, which I think is highly valued by the local community.

Newcastle's time has come. The member for Strathfield, who has served as the member for Newcastle, is very supportive of the changes happening in that city and of its future. Newcastle is an extraordinary place that offers so much for its residents and for the people who will move there as a result of the city's growth. I have indicated the importance of appropriate oversight for the light rail project, given its interface with motor vehicles and pedestrians. I have every confidence that the work will be done by the national body to support the project's delivery in that city. I thank the Opposition for its support and members of the Government who have made contributions to the debate this evening. It is pleasing to have the bill pass through the Legislative Assembly this evening.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith): The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Private Members' Statements

ONE NATION PREFERENCE ARRANGEMENTS

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (19:51): I condemn the One Nation Party and its leader, Pauline Hanson. In doing so, I remind Parliament of the Labor Party's strong stand against this divisive political party and its refusal to enter into any preferencing arrangement with One Nation, both nationally and in New South Wales. I am privileged to represent a multicultural electorate. Almost half of the people I represent in this Parliament do not have English as their first language. Chinese is the single largest ancestry in my community, with approximately half the electorate having family ties to Asia. Many have made Burwood and Ashfield their home. Homebush West is home to many Vietnamese and Tamil Australians. In Homebush, Tamil and Indian Australians are shaping our community and in Strathfield there are many Indian and Korean Australians. Most nights and every weekend I attend multicultural events. Over the past few weeks I have attended approximately a dozen Lunar New Year events. Last weekend, as part of the China Fun Festival, I led a lion dance up Burwood Road to wish our Chinese community well for the year ahead.

I have spoken many times in this House about my community. It is this commitment and passion for my community that brings me to my feet tonight. In recent weeks there have been disturbing developments involving the Liberal Party and One Nation in Western Australia and at a national level. This was reinforced last week in Parliament when the Premier refused to rule out a Liberal Party preference deal with One Nation. Today a One Nation Senator confirmed that the party will be registered in New South Wales by middle of this year, and in doing so may strike a preference deal with the Liberals and The Nationals at the next New South Wales election. Disturbingly, he indicated that preference arrangements between the two parties have been made easier by Gladys Berejiklian's ascension to Premier. To understand the distress that this has caused for people in my community, particularly the Chinese-Australian community, it is worth reflecting on the comments made some 20 years ago by Pauline Hanson in her inaugural speech, in which she called for Australia's immigration policy to be "radically" reviewed, and multiculturalism abolished. She then went on to state:

I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Asians...

They have their own culture and religion, form ghettos and do not assimilate.

Last year when Ms Hanson again entered the Senate she was asked about the comments. She stated that she stood by them and went further by saying, "people in Sydney, at Hurstville or some of those other suburbs, feel that they have been swamped by Asians". Liberal Senator Arthur Sinodinos has defended the preferencing arrangement in Western Australia, saying that One Nation is a very different beast to what it was 20 years ago. It is not a different party; it is the same party that existed when John Howard ordered One Nation be placed last on Liberal "How to vote" cards.

To his credit, Prime Minister Howard stood up for communities such as Burwood, Hurstville, Chatswood and Ashfield where Chinese-Australians have made their home. In doing so, he sent an explicit message to Chinese-Australians that they were welcome, respected and valued members of our society. There is no such leadership in the Liberal Party today. I believe it is incumbent upon this Premier and every member of this Parliament to stand up against the hate and divisiveness of One Nation. I draw attention to Premier Berejiklian's statement during her first speech as Premier that she will "be governing for everyone". She now has a particular responsibility to do that, given she represents Chatswood. How can she represent a significant Chinese community when she refuses to rule out supporting or receiving support from One Nation?

I joined the Labor Party because I believe in equality for all. I will stand up for the principles of inclusiveness, diversity and a modern, multicultural Australia by saying once and for all that One Nation has no place in the political mainstream. Like my colleagues, I will refuse to take preferences from One Nation, even if it means I lose my seat at the next election. I am privileged to represent the Strathfield electorate in the oldest Parliament in Australia, and I will always fight for everyone equally.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (19:55): I respect the words of the member for Strathfield. But the Australian Labor Party is not speaking with one voice on this matter. Last week the member for Keira spoke to the issue of One Nation and Pauline Hanson. He stated:

I do not believe that all the people who voted for Pauline Hanson are necessarily racist bigots. Some of those people are in our electorates, some of those people feel they have been left behind, some of those people feel that our growing economy has not included their growth and their development.

He said that the Steel Industry Protection Bill 2015 was the first plank towards correcting that.

Ms Julia Finn: Point of order—

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith): Order! The taking of points of order is not permitted during private members' statements. The Parliamentary Secretary is responding to the contribution of the member for Strathfield.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: It is regrettable that the member for Strathfield tonight is singing from a different hymn sheet from the member for Keira. That is the point I wish to make.

TENTH ANNIVERSARY

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (19:57): Yesterday I had the pleasure of attending the tenth anniversary celebrations of the Kincumber Men's Shed. I was joined by the Federal member for Robertson and my good friend Lucy Wicks. The festivities included a showcase of some of the projects the members have undertaken. The skill sets of the members of the Kincumber Men's Shed are staggering, including works in timber. They also assist local schools. Lunch was supplied by the Kincumber Men's Shed, with assistance from some of the wives, who are allowed to attend on occasions.

I pay tribute to President Doug Gordon, Vice President Peter Jessop, Secretary Clarrie Stevens, Treasurer Bob Jones, and committee members Joe Homer, Dave Paton, Guy Remondo, Alan Sparkes, Bill Bradey, and Dave Scott. Peter Jessop is a life member and founder of the Kincumber Men's Shed. Other life members include Mick Clarke, Jack Nickson, Wally Morrison, and Ernie Lawson. I am always made to feel welcome when I attend the Kincumber Men's Shed. For a decade the men's shed has grown both physically and in patronage. The shed now has more than 70 members and continues to grow, with plans to extend up and out.

The rumour is that the shed will be extended up as well as out. I have no doubt that, with all the incredible tradesmen who are members, they will find a way to get things done. The shed is situated within the grounds of the Uniting Church at Kincumber and is next door to the Gosford City Model Railroad Club. The two clubs have a symbiotic relationship, as many people are members of both the men's shed and the model railway club. Men's sheds provide mentally and physically stimulating activities for men of all ages. The Kincumber Men's Shed operating statement is: "Where older men with experience in life and experience in various skills come to pursue their hobbies and talk with mates about anything and everything." Members of the men's shed are encouraged to become involved in projects and they have the facilities to make almost anything in wood or metal. Men's sheds encourage men to socialise in a non-threatening environment. They assist men to be active and creative in the projects they undertake.

Men's sheds also seek to create an atmosphere of mateship. When men come together to work on a project they can also have a yarn. There is also the potential for mentoring, encouragement, and skills sharing. Many older men have the opportunity to become mentors for younger men who, through no fault of their own, have grown up in a home environment without a stable male role model. The men's shed concept is about confronting some of the issues faced by men in today's society. In many cases, men see their role as undefined. This is relevant when men face the challenges that life presents. Early intervention is essential if we are to curb the rates of depression, violence and suicide that affect men of all ages. I have often said that men's sheds, such as the great group at Kincumber, save lives.

Australian blokes do not talk about how they feel. This is a problem on the Central Coast and throughout our society. It gave me great pleasure to present the Kincumber Men's Shed with a certificate to commemorate its milestone. I also had the pleasure of presenting the Terrigal Parliamentary Award medallion. It was only the second one that I have presented since being elected. I pay credit to the Kincumber Men's Shed. I am lucky to have three men's sheds in my electorate. This one is the oldest and has the largest membership. I wish them all the best. I have no doubt that there will be another anniversary in 10 years. I congratulate them on the great work they do.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (20:02): I commend the member for Terrigal for his work in the community and his support for the Kincumber Men's Shed. There are few places in the world as beautiful as Kincumber. The men's shed, now 10 years old, promotes companionship among 70 men from the electorate of Terrigal. It is a great facility that allows them to pursue their hobbies together. We probably all had train sets when we were young. That the men's shed and the model railway club work so closely together adds to the companionship that the facility provides for those men. I commend the member for Terrigal.

OXLEY ELECTORATE BUSHFIRES

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley—Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight) (20:02): Sunday 12 February was a fearsome day in New South Wales. It is now known that the fire index for New South Wales on that day was around 150. On a normal day it is around 40, which gives an indication of how off the charts the fire threat was on 12 February. It was with a very heavy heart that I looked at my phone at about four o'clock on that Sunday and saw the name of Shane Fitzsimmons come up. I answered my phone with trepidation, very concerned for the communities that I represent. I was given a quick and efficient briefing by the commissioner, who, with fires burning across the State on that day, was very busy. He told me that there were fires in the Pappinbarra area, at the back of Wauchope, where Mr Temporary Speaker's mother lived until recently.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): Absolutely.

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY: There were also fires around Dondingalong, which is to the west of Kempsey, near Spring Hill. That area was affected by major fires only last November. Commissioner Fitzsimmons said, "We are on top of it. We have got everybody out, but we will keep in touch." Throughout the night great concern was expressed on Facebook that many properties had been lost. In the cold light of day, on the Monday morning at 10 o'clock, I arrived at the Rural Fire Service [RFS] control centre at Wauchope. I was met by RFS Incident Controller Kam Baker, with John Davidson, a volunteer group captain from the Hastings RFS, who was a Pappinbarra resident. They told me that the community had dodged a bullet. The coordinated effort involving the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Forestry Corporation meant that the damage at Pappinbarra was contained to as small an area as possible. I mention in particular the Forestry Corporation's Forest Protection Manager, Mid North Coast, Karel Zejblik. I commend them for their work.

I will put this in context. I had a call on the Saturday night from an old mate who said that they were very concerned. I held the portfolio of Shadow Minister for Emergency Services pre-2011. My mate said, "This has the same feeling as Black Saturday in Victoria." I went out to the fire ground and realised how lucky we were. I mean no disrespect to the owners of the four homes that were lost, but one could see how close it was for so many others. I stood on the front veranda of a home where the fire had licked the wooden posts. The Forestry Corporation chap I just mentioned had been to the home and had helped to protect it. The positive outlook is that it could have been so much worse. The coordination between all the agencies on the day was superb. Most importantly, people have a much greater respect and a growing appreciation for individual incident control plans.

As I said at a Rural Fire Service volunteer presentation last Sunday, we are very fortunate that volunteer firefighters work at our country shows. They take their trucks along and explain to the community how important it is to have control of the situation. It is important to decide whether you will stay or retreat. It is important to get rid of the leaves in your gutters. That type of work has been instrumental in my community experiencing less damage than could have been the case. It was a privilege and a joy to be with Lachlann Ison at the medal presentation for the Lower North Coast Zone on Sunday. They had had a huge day the previous week and a huge

time in November. We nearly lost the service centre in Kempsey. They have been front and centre of the firefighting efforts for many years.

I thank Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons for being there. I represented the Minister for Emergency Services, Troy Grant, in giving out 54 awards. There were five awards for 40 years of service—third-class medals for people like Glenn Brown, Brian Beilby, Ron Swan, Shirley Boulton, and Joyce Ainsworth. They are legends. One of them has volunteered for 47 years. They do incredible work. It is such a relief that what could have happened on 12 February did not. I thank the Rural Fire Service and all the volunteers for ensuring the safety of this great State.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (20:08): I formally congratulate the member for Oxley on her ascension to the position of Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight. I thank her for being an outstanding representative of her community. It is important for those of us who represent urban electorates to hear about the anxiety that the bushfire threat causes people in rural electorates, as was experienced in Oxley on 12 February. I note that the member for Cessnock is in the Chamber. His community faced similar threats. It was wonderful to hear the tribute from the member for Oxley to the brave men and women of her local Rural Fire Service who put their lives at risk to protect the community.

LAND AND PROPERTY INFORMATION SERVICE

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (20:09): I refer to the potential privatisation of the Land and Property Information [LPI] service. Recently I met two local constituents, a gentleman named Pat, who is a surveyor on the board of the Institute of Surveyors, and a lady named Penny, who had worked for the LPI spatial services in Bathurst for the best part of 35 years before retiring in Cessnock. Together as a united voice they asked me questions about the privatisation of the LPI title and registry service. Essentially it will be a 35-year concession to outsource and allow a private entity to carry on the service. They had read recent media reports in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that showed in a leaked document that the LPI made a \$130 million profit per year.

Prior to that there had been a fair amount of argy-bargy about the exact profit level of the LPI title and registry services. During a lengthy debate in this Parliament I said that despite repeated requests of the Government, the absolute information about the profitability of that entity had never been made available. It is a profit of \$130 million, which had previously been reported at between \$50 million and \$70 million because some of the LPI entities, such as survey and spatial actually cost \$30 million, \$40 million, \$50 million and \$60 million per year to run—there are four other elements.

Pat the surveyor's concern is that his entire business relies on the integrity of the survey and spatial survey of New South Wales. Although Pat operates as a private entity, he was dismayed that he had spent the past 20 or 30 years making sure that his survey points were to the millimetre as accurate as he could possibly make them because he believed in the integrity of the system. He put to me that it was actually part of the surveyor's responsibility, which they all believe in and work towards, of ensuring the absolute accuracy of survey. He felt in some ways that his lifetime's work, and the lifetime work of those in his profession, was being put in jeopardy and at risk in this instance. In fact, he felt betrayed because he believed he had done it for the broader good of the community, and now that broader good was going to be handed over to an individual business entity.

The sentiment of Penny who had spent her time working with spatial survey was almost identical. She was a public servant and had spent her entire working career, in the first instance using a paper form of survey and spatial data. As technology came on board—global positioning systems, cameras, photography and satellite images—she transitioned across to a digital form, and she felt that there was still more work to be done. She told me a story about which I was completely unaware. She said that in recent decades various government departments actually kept their own survey mapping; for example, Roads and Maritime Services [RMS], the Electricity Commission and local councils would have their own.

She said one of the great successes of the LPI as an entity over the past two to three decades had been that it brought together all of this information so that there was a single source of truth. She said that did not happen easily because there were some strong negotiations and resistance from the likes of RMS or Crown Lands because they wanted to have their own map and they did not trust others to do it. In fact, Crown Lands only came on board in the past 10 years, and was the last one to do so.

Penny told me that if a private entity owns and controls that information, it will charge it out at a commercial rate as opposed to the nudge-nudge, mate's rates that have historically been agreed between government departments. She foresees that a local council, an RMS or an electricity service provider will stop handing over its spatial survey information if it is going to be charged a premium to get it back. Penny said that we will go back to a system with five, six, 10, 12, 15 or 20 different survey map instruments across New South

Wales. There will be no single source of truth, and that is the potential outcome of the LPI privatisation. I speak on behalf of my local constituents.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (20:14): The rapidly declining supply of affordable housing impacts on Sydney's liveability, social diversity, functionality and economy, especially in the inner city where land values are escalating. For purchasers, deposit-to-income ratio is the highest on record and principal repayments are rising rapidly against stagnant wages, and have almost doubled since 1970 despite low interest rates. Shelter NSW identified that 54 per cent of lower income households with a mortgage are in housing stress. Renting is the only option for many, but rental affordability is low, particularly for low- or moderate-income earners.

The rental affordability index established by National Shelter, Community Sector Banking and SGS Economics shows that Sydney has the lowest rental affordability in the country with the average household spending 28 per cent of total income on rent. In the City of Sydney region, rents have risen by 70 per cent over the past decade. Only one per cent of Sydney rental homes are affordable to the lowest-income households, none of which are in the inner city. Between 2006 and 2011, average rents increased by 47 per cent while household income grew by only 38 per cent. The rental affordability index identifies the inner city as extremely unaffordable and other inner areas as severely unaffordable. The Government's response has been to increase construction of homes. While this is vital in the face of a growing population, it has not improved housing affordability and other measures are needed.

Any increase in housing supply must guarantee an increase in social and affordable housing supply through mandated targets. San Francisco has an affordable housing target for developments of 12 per cent to 33 per cent; Montreal, 30 per cent; Vancouver, 20 per cent; South Australia, 15 per cent; and Washington, DC, 8 per cent to 10 per cent. New South Wales has a meagre target of 1 per cent to 4 per cent of gross floor area. Barangaroo south will provide only 2.3 per cent per 100,000 square metres of residential floor area for key worker housing for police, nurses, teachers, and paramedics, and I understand Lend Lease wants to provide this offsite.

Shelter NSW is calling for a 15 per cent affordable housing target. The Greater Sydney Commission plan recommends Sydney adopt a 5 per cent to 10 per cent affordable rental housing target in major housing redevelopments—this should be adopted immediately and should apply to the Central to Eveleigh, Bays Precinct and Fish Market projects. Councils should be able to require developer contributions for affordable housing across their region without having to get State approval. The government approved levies in Ultimo-Pyrmont and Green Square and more than 500 affordable homes have been delivered. The City of Sydney's draft Central Sydney Planning Strategy would impose a 1 per cent levy on new commercial, and 3 per cent on residential, central business district developments, and could yield 300 to 520 additional affordable homes.

We must stop dividing Sydney into rich and poor. Public housing sales in Millers Point reduce diversity and inner city social housing stock. I am pleased that the Government agreed to retain 28 homes and I will work with the new Minister to get the best outcome for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable tenants in the area. Shelter NSW wants stamp duty, which can discourage homeowners from selling, withdrawn and replaced with a revamped land tax. A broader land tax system would need to have protections for people who are asset rich and income poor. Shelter NSW recommends an Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal inquiry to investigate benefits and disadvantages of reform.

There is much evidence that negative gearing drives property prices up while the evidence that it keeps rents low is open to dispute. Some reform is needed particularly for investors with multiple properties. Nearly half of all home loans are for investors and they generally get a return on losses when they resell their property. Although this is a Federal issue, there are opportunities for State governments to advocate for reforms. The Government must investigate the impact online holiday let platforms like Airbnb are having on rental and sales markets and ensure any changes to short-term letting laws do not reduce housing affordability.

The Affordable Housing Taskforce 2012 interim report committed to develop a clear policy framework, including a new State environmental planning policy, standard local environment plans clauses, development standards, and integration with strategic planning, but there seems to be no progress. I welcome the Premier's commitment to a housing affordability strategy for first-home buyers informed by former Reserve Bank of Australia Governor Glenn Stevens. We need a multifaceted approach that ensures affordability across Sydney for renters and purchasers, including in the inner city, so that Sydney can house workers who help the city function and support a diverse population to keep it a lively and interesting place to live, work and visit.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 20:19 until
Wednesday 22 February 2017 at 10:00.**