



New South Wales

Legislative Assembly

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Sixth Parliament
First Session**

Wednesday, 22 February 2017

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 22 February 2017

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

The SPEAKER read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

Bills

ABORIGINAL LAND RIGHTS AMENDMENT (LOCAL ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCILS) BILL 2016

RETAIL LEASES AMENDMENT (REVIEW) BILL 2016

Returned

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

[Notices of motions given.] [During the giving of notices of motions]

Notices

PRESENTATION

The SPEAKER: I reiterate my warning about the length of motions, as I did yesterday. I am reluctant to introduce a word limit, but I am certainly considering it at this stage.

Bills

SPORTING VENUES AUTHORITIES AMENDMENT BILL 2017

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 16 February 2017.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (10:12): I speak to the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment Bill 2017 on behalf of the New South Wales Labor Opposition and the shadow Minister in the other place, the Hon. Lynda Voltz. The Labor Opposition is opposed to this bill and the Hon. Lynda Voltz will seek to amend the bill in the other place. Since the release of the Brogden report of the Stadia Strategy implementation, the Minister for Sport has handled the program disastrously. During my time as shadow Minister for Sport in this place, the Minister for Sport supplied glossy magazine diagrams and computer-generated animations about what life will be like following the Government's \$1.6 billion investment. The Minister now has carriage of WestConnex. According to the recommendation in his own report, the Government proposed:

A single governing entity be established over the Sydney Cricket Ground, Sydney Football Stadium, Stadium Australia, the Parramatta Stadium, the new 15,000 seat indoor facility and the new Greater Western Sydney Stadium to maximise commercial viability and the coordination of sports and events.

It leaves us wondering about this stadia strategy and where in the vicinity of the central business district this Minister has plans for the 15,000-seat facility. We know that Pirtek Stadium is being demolished. Prior to its demolition, the Minister failed to acknowledge that there was a memorial swimming pool immediately next to Pirtek Stadium. Unfortunately, that too is going. It is a vital piece of community infrastructure that is used by people in Western Sydney, which has a growing population in the Parramatta region. This swimming pool is now going as a result of this Minister not being clear and not having direction about stadiums and sporting infrastructure in this State. Today in this Chamber we are presented with a piece of legislation that is almost the antithesis. The major venue at Sydney Olympic Park is a tier one stadium and it will be tied together with three tier two stadiums, including regional stadiums in Wollongong and Newcastle, in a government entity that, according to the Minister, is also required. I will read onto *Hansard* what the Minister said in his second reading speech:

... will allow the Government to realise synergies across the stadia network, including: improved hiring agreements; better matching of supply and demand of sporting content and other major events to the appropriate facilities; an enhanced ability to offer a coordinated offering to attract large events; benefits from joint catering operations; benefits from joint procurement of supply rights such as ticketing and pourage rights; benefits from joint sponsorship opportunities; and economies of scale in operating expenses.

That is what the Minister put forward in this place. Other tier one major competitors such as the Sydney Cricket Ground, which is run by the Minister's mates in the eastern suburbs, will stand alone as a single facility whilst

Stadium Australia will be tied to the other tiered stadiums. The Sydney Cricket Ground will be able to compete in the open market while the Sydney Olympic Park Authority is tied to the fate of those other three stadiums, which are under joint control. Likewise, regional stadiums are now having their commercial rights negotiated alongside what will be the largest rectangular stadium in Australia. We must put on record that the Government is buying back the lease to Stadium Australia much earlier than was first anticipated at a cost of \$220 million. Who is going to foot the bill? The member for Newcastle, who is a great regional member of Parliament, is in the Chamber and he will touch on who will foot the bill. We know that Newcastle and Wollongong will foot the bill. Will those stadiums receive upgrades? No, they will not.

Mr Mark Coure: How do you know that?

Mr GUY ZANGARI: I note the interjections from the member for Oatley as well as other members. They claim they are on top of what the Government is doing with stadiums. We know that this issue has been a debacle since day one. The Minister said that the Government would build a brand new stadium at Moore Park on the lakes. One minute it is happening, the next minute it is not. This Minister went behind the back of the former Premier, Mike Baird. It seems that the same thing is happening now—this Minister is going behind the back of Premier Gladys Berejiklian. Government members laugh because they know it is true. The Government commissioned this report, the *Stadia Strategy Implementation Report—Progress and Recommendations*. Former leader of the Liberal Party and former member of this place John Brogden was commissioned to write it. The report took a long time to put together. Recommendation 4 says:

A single governing entity be established over the Sydney Cricket Ground, Sydney Football Stadium, Stadium Australia, Parramatta Stadium, the new 15,000 seat indoor facility and the new Greater Western Sydney Stadium to maximise commercial viability and the coordination of sports and events. This is critical to retain and attract sporting and major events to NSW and to ensure competitive neutrality for Government.

Today we have this bill, introduced by the Minister for Sport—and Minister for WestConnex, amongst other things—the Hon. Stuart Ayres, which pits Stadium Australia against the Sydney Cricket Ground and ties it in with regional stadiums. We know that the Sporting Venues Authority has trust structures in place for Sydney Olympic Park, alongside the regional stadiums at Wollongong, Newcastle and Parramatta. As a member of Parliament from Western Sydney, I am happy that Parramatta stadium is receiving a significant upgrade. I will not lie about that. My counterparts in Western Sydney are also happy about that. I know that there is to be no investment in sporting facilities in the electorates of Newcastle and Wollongong, that is, WIN Stadium and Hunter Stadium.

Mr Kevin Conolly: How does he know this?

Mr GUY ZANGARI: We know these things. We know that Sydney Olympic Park will be dissolved as a proprietary limited company. It has a debt to the tune of \$220 million. This will be assumed by the single venues authority. That leaves little opportunity for regional upgrades, as I keep saying. As former Premier Mike Baird stated, the debt and the purchase price for this lease will be paid by future earnings. The Opposition opposes this bill. The Hon. Lynda Voltz in the other place will move amendments to this bill, which has been put forward by the Minister for Sport and member for Penrith.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (10:23): I speak on behalf of the Government in support of the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment Bill 2017. I am disappointed to hear Opposition members yet again opposing this logical and rational amendment bill. In a heated debate here last night we heard the member for Newcastle bleating his false concerns about car racing. He is a man who does not support his local community.

Mr Tim Crakanthorp: They were not at all false.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Newcastle will have an opportunity to speak later in the debate. He will cease interjecting.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: The member for Newcastle has come here to complain again.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Newcastle will cease interjecting or leave the Chamber.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: He says that sporting fields will not be funded. There is no proof of that and no detail on it, which is what we have come to expect from the Opposition. The objective of the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment Bill 2017 is to amend the Sporting Venues Authorities Act 2008 to give the Government full control and governance over the Stadium Australia—ANZ Stadium—business, under Venues NSW following its return to New South Wales government ownership in July 2016.

In July 2016, the New South Wales Government, through the State Sporting Venues Authority [SSVA], acquired the shares in Stadium Australia Holdings Pty Limited which, through its wholly owned subsidiaries, holds leasehold rights for Stadium Australia. Although SSVA now wholly owns each of those entities that comprise the Stadium Australia Group [SAG], the acquisition did not bring Stadium Australia—ANZ Stadium—

under full government control. To meet the obligations of the New South Wales Government under the Commonwealth Competition and Consumer Act 2010, an independent board was established to oversee Stadium Australia.

The Commonwealth Corporations Act 2001 sets out the process and requirements for the entities comprising SAG, so no New South Wales government agency or authority is currently a party to Stadium Australia's contracts with hirers, suppliers and sponsors. A New South Wales government entity needs to replace the SAG entities as a party to those contracts and for this reason the Minister is to be given the power to vest those contracts in New South Wales. In order to ensure New South Wales does not contravene the Competition and Consumer Act 2010 that prohibits acquisitions that substantially reduce competition, the Act will be amended to enable the New South Wales Government to control and operate the stadia network.

The Act is also to be amended to ensure that the rights of the members at Stadium Australia do not terminate at that point and will continue after the vesting of the leases. The agreements that underpin the Stadium Australia Members Club Limited provide that they expire when the relevant head lease between the Sydney Olympic Park Authority and the Stadium Australia Trust and the operating sublease are effectively terminated. This will occur when both those leases are vested in New South Wales. Major venues such as stadia are often considered social assets, delivering significant non-commercial outcomes for society, including community, social and economic benefits. Key stadia infrastructure with sound governance can deliver the social and economic benefits of a strong cultural and sporting sector, significantly supporting liveability for the people of New South Wales.

Our stadia are tangible acknowledgements of the place sport holds in our communities and the pride generated by major events. The events that they can attract and host can significantly boost the visitor economy, as there are strategies that can be employed to maximise the commercial outcomes, as well as the social ones. I heard the earlier comments from those opposite. Some pretty shabby scare tactics were employed, and I have no doubt that the Minister will be more than happy to answer those in his reply speech. He will be able to put to bed some of those statements.

Mr Mark Coure: Misleading, fake news.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: As the member for Oatley says, it was fake news. It is becoming commonplace from those opposite. The member for Oatley hears it as regularly as I do. It is disappointing that we get those kinds of comments on something as straightforward as the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment Bill 2017. The Opposition has, yet again, employed shabby scare tactics to try to demonise something that is straightforward and logical. The member for Oatley is interjecting and I know his frustration levels are quite high, like mine, when he hears this.

Mr John Sidoti: No common sense.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: I thank the member for Drummoyne for his interjection. He is right, sometimes common sense is not so common. From some of the statements we have heard this morning we can see that that is the case. Key infrastructure with sound governance can deliver the social and economic benefits of a strong cultural and sporting sector that we see across New South Wales. The events that they attract and host can significantly boost our visitor economy, which is a key economic driver in New South Wales, as there are strategies that can be employed to maximise the commercial outcomes of these stadia, as well as the social ones that accompany them.

Joint governance and operation of Stadium Australia within the Government Stadia Network that includes the new Western Sydney Stadium is likely to result in a number of advantages to the New South Wales government and the broader community including: hosting the right events at the right venues—the ability of the Government to have greater influence over venue selection for each event type will result in improved event outcomes; improved utilisation across the stadia network; and stopping hirers playing New South Wales government venues against each other. This competition results in lower margins for stadium owners which in turn impacts on their ability to make desired facility investments. We know that the investment in stadia is a key issue in New South Wales. We are seeing significant reinvestment in stadia across the State under the Berejiklian Government, which I am particularly proud of.

The people of New South Wales will have a stadium network that can deliver commercial outcomes, boost the visitor economy and meet national and international trends in venue design and operation by providing innovative product offerings, customer-centric design and vigorous effort to attract major sporting events. Only last night Mr Assistant Speaker spoke in this Chamber to promote the benefits to the good people of Coffs Harbour and the region from the rally car event that is held there. That is just one of the many events held around the State from which the people of New South Wales and the State economy directly benefit. In short, this bill will deliver

a stadia network that the people of New South Wales deserve and can be proud of. This legislation is straightforward and uncomplicated and easy to understand. Yet again I am disappointed and dismayed that those opposite are using grubby scare tactics about something as straightforward as an amendment bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (10:32): The member for Terrigal referred to the debate on the Supercars race in Newcastle. I state that Labor is supportive of the Supercars but the legislation certainly needs amendments to tighten up consultation and historical elements. Despite the scare tactics of the Government, that is certainly our position. The Opposition will be opposing the Sporting Venues Authority Amendment Bill 2017. The Sporting Venues Authority Trust structure places the Sydney Olympic Park stadium in a single trust alongside the regional stadiums in Wollongong, Parramatta and Newcastle. While Parramatta is getting significant funding, Newcastle and Wollongong have not received any investment. Furthermore, Sydney Olympic Park stadium will be dissolved and its estimated debt of \$220 million will be assumed by a single venues authority. This leaves little opportunity for future upgrades, as former Premier Mike Baird said the debt and purchase price for the lease would be paid for by future earnings. Being \$220 million in the red is not a good place to begin.

All of the current \$1.6 billion in stadium funding has been allocated to the Sydney metropolitan area. The time required to pay off the lease purchase and debt would be equivalent to when Sydney Olympic Park would have reverted to government ownership in any case, which makes the decision to purchase the lease rather than allowing Stadium Australia to continue to own and operate Sydney Olympic Park stadium very questionable. It again raises the issue of our regional stadiums. Newcastle is certainly the poor cousin. The Government is selling off our port for \$1.75 billion but less than one-third of that money is coming to Newcastle. The money from the port and the sale of other private assets seems to be pouring into Sydney, which is very disappointing. Many sports have expressed concern that the major venues authority places them at a competitive disadvantage. Whilst most rugby league, rugby union, A-League and Australian Football League [AFL] teams have long-term contracts with grounds at a club level, there is ongoing competitiveness in the market, particularly amongst the tier one stadiums.

Also within the single authority is the Newcastle Showground. In 2008 the then Labor Government placed the Newcastle Showground with the previous Stadium Venues Authority. At the time it was included in legislation it was intended that it would be charged no fees for the use of its lands. Through the venues, this Coalition Government has been charging the showground \$60,000 for the use of the Entertainment Centre, which was previously part of its lands during the agricultural show, and also taking \$60,000 a year from its income from parking at the weekly farmers market. If this situation is allowed to continue the Newcastle Show will fall over. Show organisers have been vocal in saying that this will be the last year. They started with a bank balance of more than \$3 million in 2006 and it is now down to \$10,000.

As a result of the legislation change and the Government's dubious implementation of it, a disaster is looming for the community of Newcastle and the Hunter. That set up is in contrast to the Royal Agricultural Show at Sydney Olympic Park, which has a 99-year lease and control of Spotless Stadium. For this reason my colleague in the upper House the Hon. Lynda Voltz will be looking to find a remedy for this situation so that Newcastle Showground can get a better deal. The Newcastle Show is an iconic institution in Newcastle and the Hunter, but it will be wound up. There are no two ways about it. Show association president Brett Gleeson has said:

The show association is going broke because we can't access any income while Venues NSW is sitting on money that belongs to the Hunter.

To partly address that financial issue, Mr Gleeson has requested that the Government increase the cost of parking for the weekly farmers market at the showground from \$2 to \$3 and give the dollar to the show association. The association is also looking for a grant. I believe Mr Scot MacDonald and the Hon. Catherine Cusack in the other House are working on that. I will meet with Ms Cusack tomorrow about the issue. I believe they also looked for a grant from the Deputy Premier. Unfortunately, these are stopgap solutions rather than long-term solutions for the ongoing continuity of the show.

The intention of the original legislation was not to cripple and kill the regional show of the second-largest city in the State. When in Newcastle at the beginning of the month the Leader of the Opposition also called for the show and Venues NSW to return the money to the people of Newcastle, because that is where the money is coming from. It would be devastating to lose the show, which this Government is using as a cash cow. Volunteers have put in enormous numbers of hours repairing and replacing around the venue but they have not been compensated by Venues NSW.

In my research for this speech I looked at the review of the Sporting Venues Authority Act that Minister Stuart Ayres undertook. The Newcastle Showground put in a submission that called for the ownership of the showground to be transferred from Venues NSW to the Newcastle Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial

Association or for the long-term lease to be provided to the association. It also requested that a showground advisory board with governance powers be set up to oversee the showground managers and make a recommendation to the Minister or Venues NSW as to the future development and use of the showground facilities. All this was raised with the Minister, and the Minister responded by saying he would seek clarification on certain issues raised and consider the options in due course.

Minister, it has been a very long time and the legislation before us does not appear to address those issues. The Minister concluded his review by saying that some issues that were canvassed by and with stakeholders during the consultations might best be progressed by legislative amendments. There we go; the Minister said we need legislative amendments to this Act to address some of the issues, but this legislation is bereft of any solution to this particular issue. That is why we, the Labor Party, will seek to pass amendments in the upper House to find a remedy for this outrageous situation whereby the second-largest regional show in the State will go under. Nobody wants that to occur. In an editorial on 30 January 2017, the *Newcastle Herald* said:

The show organisers have asked for revenues from the government, which they see as fair compensation rather than a handout.

This too seems a fair ask, when Venues NSW receives receipts from things like parking and rental income from the Newcastle Farmers Market.

The Newcastle Show is an iconic event—one of those institutions of Newcastle's fabric that we would perhaps miss more if it ever disappeared.

The show remains an important link to Newcastle's history, and a chance to bring the agricultural roots of the Hunter to the city—something that becomes more, not less, important as the region becomes more developed.

It deserves our support.

I conclude by saying it does deserve our support. It is a great shame that, despite the Minister's comments and his review of the legislation, he is not supportive of this particular issue. It is left to us to address those issues by trying to put up solutions where this Government falls down. Again, we are forced to do that.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) (10:41): Following the speech of the member for Newcastle in debate on the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment Bill 2017, it is clear we are in good hands. As stated, the objective of the bill is to amend the Sporting Venues Authorities Act 2008 to give the Government full control of and governance over Stadium Australia, ANZ Stadium, business under Venues NSW, following its return to New South Wales government ownership in July 2016. I recently attended a sporting event at the venue where I noted the size and the scale of the operation.

I watched the great soccer game at the weekend between Sydney FC and the Wanderers. For these types of huge events, the organisers employ hundreds of people. The scale of operation is mind-boggling, and that is why this Government has made it a priority from the day we were elected in 2011 to make this State number one again. In doing so, we have brought before the Parliament this bill and many others, including legislation concerning the construction of the International Convention Centre, to attract business and events to this State. In this overarching legislation we will ensure investment in this State is focused on a real strategy to attract world-class events.

The bill will enable the Minister for Sport, by vesting orders, to transfer assets, rights or liabilities from the companies that underpin the operation of ANZ Stadium to Venues NSW. The bill will also ensure that entry into and giving effect to any contract, arrangement or understanding in which assets, rights or liabilities are vested in accordance with vesting orders made by the Minister is exempt from the application of the Competition and Consumer Act 2010. The bill also preserves the rights of members of Stadium Australia Club Limited during the transition in ownership of Stadium Australia, ANZ Stadium, and thereafter.

Sydney as a world-class city needs world-class sporting facilities to attract national and international events. These facilities create employment and bring business to New South Wales. Our strategy is about building a network of stadiums that deliver for Sydney's diverse sporting needs. We cannot have a stadium that is not designed or purpose-built for a particular event. There is nothing worse than watching a soccer match in a venue that is not purpose-built for it or is not versatile enough to accommodate it. Everybody wants to go to events and feel that they are part of the game. Unless the stadium is designed that way, people are not going to have that experience; they might as well watch an event on television. So it is vital to have a strategy to capitalise on attracting world-class events that bring dollars to this great State.

The New South Wales government ownership of Stadium Australia allows the Government to undertake a more effective and cost-efficient stadia redevelopment program. Since the Sydney Olympics, every capital city with major sports content has rebuilt old stadiums or built new ones, except Sydney. Victoria, South Australia and Queensland have recently made significant investments in developing world-class sporting facilities, and Western Australia is in the process of investing more than \$1 billion in a new sporting precinct. In September 2015 the

New South Wales Government announced the Rebuilding the Major Stadia Network Strategy, the biggest investment in sport and major event infrastructure in New South Wales since the 2000 Olympics.

Dr Geoff Lee: When does it start?

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: I welcome the interjection of the member for Parramatta. He attracts big dollars to his electorate when it comes to infrastructure and stadium redevelopments.

Dr Geoff Lee: How much?

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: I am too scared to put a price on it, but the member for Parramatta is doing a great job. The scale of this investment program recognises the importance of the stadia to the New South Wales economy and, indeed, to our own communities. The implementation of the strategy represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity for this great State to provide a high-level road map for government investment in the State's stadia infrastructure over the next 15 years and beyond. Implementation will ensure that New South Wales does not fall behind its competitors and potentially loses the benefits associated with the winning and the retention of quality sports and other events.

New South Wales is the greatest State in the country. I know it, Mr Assistant Speaker knows it, everybody knows it, and it really hurts when we lose events to Melbourne or Queensland. When we attract events such as the Australian Open to this great State for the next few years—and I know, Mr Assistant Speaker, you played in a pro-am—we know the financial benefits they will bring, the business they will attract and the gains we will make from our children and grandchildren witnessing great events which previously they would not have had the opportunity to see. It can be life changing.

The goal, of course, is to develop world-class, multi-sport, multi-tenanted sporting hubs with improved transport connectivity and associated entertainment precincts that balance major events and community usage. We need versatile stadia; we need to know that we can provide the infrastructure that accommodates multiple events. This Government is currently developing the business case for the redevelopment of ANZ Stadium. The stadium will be redeveloped with upgraded seating and corporate facilities, providing optimal playing conditions and spectator experience for rugby league, rugby union and football in general. The feasibility of constructing a retractable roof over the playing area will also be investigated.

Lendlease has been awarded the contract to design and construct the new Western Sydney Stadium and it is expected to be completed in 2019. The new stadium will have 30,000 seats, high-quality food and beverage facilities, improved corporate and function spaces, big screens and advanced technology including wi-fi and broadcast facilities, and improved security and administration facilities with enhanced pedestrian and public plaza areas. The New South Wales Government has also secured long-term, multi-year content agreements to secure content for New South Wales stadia with the Football Federation Australia, the National Rugby League [NRL] and the Australian Rugby Union. It also includes 20 years of NRL grand finals and State of Origin matches. I have seen the member for Parramatta at quite a few of those.

Dr Geoff Lee: I'm always a supporter of the Parramatta Eels.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: He is a keen Parramatta Eels supporter. Some other events that have been secured include 10 years of Bledisloe Cup matches and an additional Test match each year, and there is a 12-year agreement in principle with Football Federation Australia to host at least 12 Socceroos and 12 Matildas matches. This is phenomenal news for sporting spectators across this State. It will also attract many more tourists from interstate and beyond. The people of New South Wales will have a stadia network that can deliver commercial outcomes, boost the visitor economy, meet national and international trends in venue design and operation by providing innovative product offerings and customer-centric design, and make vigorous effects to attract major events.

In short, it will be a stadia network the people of New South Wales deserve and can be proud of. One has only to attend some of these events to know the difference that this legislation will make. The construction facilities and job growth will be phenomenal. For the first time in a long time, New South Wales has a government with a road map and a strategy to deliver better outcomes and to ensure that the people of New South Wales get best value for their taxpayer dollars. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (10:51): I oppose the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment Bill 2017 for a number of reasons. The Opposition has real concerns about this bill—not because we do not want to see great sporting events coming to New South Wales or the growth of stadiums in New South Wales, but because there are major problems with this legislation. In particular, the transfer of debt to the single Sporting Venues Authority Trust will ensure that it is hamstrung from the outset. The changes this will bring to the Newcastle Showground are ridiculous and incredibly unfair.

The previous speaker, the member for Drummoyne, talked about a pot of gold, a pot of money that can be invested in stadia across New South Wales under this bill. But we see a giant pot of debt encumbered upon all those venues through Sydney Olympic Park Stadium, or ANZ Stadium, as we know it. Thankfully, Parramatta Stadium is already underway, so it will not be affected by the transfer of this debt, but that will have a big impact on the other venues over the next few years. Many major sports have expressed their concern that the major venues authority will place them at a competitive disadvantage. This bill does not have widespread support within the community and from people who are most likely to use the stadia. It also places Sydney Olympic Park Stadium in an uncompetitive position against the Sydney Cricket and Sports Ground Trust, which is not covered by this legislation. These are major problems.

This bill has been driven by the Minister for Sport, who has made an utter mess of the development of Parramatta Stadium. It is great that Parramatta is getting a new stadium. I am a long-time supporter of the upgrade to the stadium. A few years ago when I was a councillor I led a push, supported by both Labor and Liberal councillors, for Parramatta City Council to be involved with the State and Federal governments in supporting the upgrade. However, nobody envisaged that the stadium would be constructed by demolishing the swimming pool next door. There are major concerns about the way the swimming pool has been managed. The pool is held by Parramatta City Council under a lease from the Parramatta Park Trust Act 2001 for most of that land.

It is quite explicit in the Parramatta Park Trust Act that any transfer of the lease needs to be publicly advertised. There has been no transfer of the lease. Parramatta City Council will cease leasing the pool in March when it will be demolished. It has not been transferred to the stadia authority or elsewhere, as far as anybody is aware because it has not been advertised publicly. Clearly that is in breach of the Act. The loss of this pool in Parramatta is a major concern for the community. Everybody appreciates that Parramatta Stadium is being expanded to 30,000 seats to accommodate everybody who wants to attend the Wanderers games and to enable the Eels to play more games at home rather than at ANZ Stadium.

Mr John Sidoti: Do you follow the Eels?

Ms JULIA FINN: No, I follow the Bulldogs. So many people want to watch the Eels play that they have to play many of their games at ANZ Stadium. There are more than 21,000 Eels supporters and opponents who want to attend and for a very long time Parramatta Stadium has struggled to accommodate the big games of both summer and winter sporting codes. It would be great to be able to fit those people into the stadium, but not at the expense of a war memorial swimming pool paid for with contributions from the local community. The local RSL was not consulted about demolition of this war memorial swimming pool. It is used by many schools around the local area that also were not notified about the demolition.

Only 12 months ago my friend the member for Parramatta attended a rally at which I was present where he said it would not be demolished to make way for the stadium. It is unfortunate that the stadium is being built on the location of the pool instead of the adjoining car park where it could be built as a much larger stadium and in a way that would retain the pool. It is a real pity that the pool is being demolished next month and no funding is available for a replacement pool; no-one knows exactly where it is going to go. I turn now to issues around the Newcastle Showground and its inclusion within the venues identified under this Act. When it was first included in the Sporting Venues Authority, the intent of the legislation was that the Newcastle Showground would not be charged fees for the use of the lands.

However, through changes to the venues authority Newcastle Showground has been charged \$60,000 for use of the Entertainment Centre during the show and \$60,000 from income earned from the farmers markets. This makes the very existence of the Newcastle Agricultural Show quite precarious. Therefore, this may not result in the tremendous gain the Government has made it out to be but instead will be a huge loss for the people of Newcastle. The bill should reflect the initial intent to not charge Newcastle Showground these fees, which will reduce usage rather than encourage greater use of that facility. There are major concerns with this bill. Further amendments will be moved in the other place and I hope the Government will consider those amendments to improve this bill.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) (10:57): I support the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment Bill 2017. First, I congratulate Minister Ayres on his commitment to start the rebuild and replacement of the Western Sydney Stadium to deliver a world-class sporting centre that will host not only sporting but also many entertainment venues. It will be a great asset in the start of the stadia strategy for the whole State. I thank Minister Ayres for his commitment to Parramatta. It would be remiss of me not to mention the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, the Hon. Andrew Constance, a sensational Minister, who is listening to debate on this bill because he is intimately aware of the issues affecting Parramatta. The member for Granville referred to one of those issues and I shall quickly respond.

Each week I lobby the Minister for a resolution of the Parramatta pool relocation. Its closure is disappointing. The Minister is intimately aware of the need to confirm a site and to reach a funding agreement with the council. It is important for the Government to resolve the relocation and funding issues. No member would wish to have this occur in their electorate. It is important to start building and to deliver the new pool as quickly as possible. Whilst the process could have been better handled, I am proud to say this Government is committed to the delivery of a Parramatta central business district pool. The details will follow. Good governance requires the right beginning.

The Minister and the Government have allocated \$400,000 to the City of Parramatta Council and the Parramatta Park Trust to investigate whether the golf course site is suitable for a world-class aquatic centre that will support generations to come. The Minister for Transport and Infrastructure is in the Chamber listening to the debate, which demonstrates his commitment to the process. I encourage him to consult with Cabinet and to make that decision sooner rather than later. It is a great sign that the Minister is interested in this issue. The objective of the bill is to amend the Sporting Venues Authorities Act 2008 to give the Government full control and governance over the ANZ Stadium business. In 2016 it returned to government ownership and governance transferred to Venues NSW.

This bill will enable the Minister for Sport, by vesting orders, to transfer assets, rights and liabilities from companies that underpin the operation of ANZ Stadium to Venues NSW. This will ensure that the entry into and giving effect to any contract, arrangement or understanding in which assets, rights or liabilities are vested in accordance with vesting orders made by the Minister are exempt from the application of the Competition and Consumer Act 2010. The bill will preserve the rights of members of Stadium Australia Club Limited during the transition in ownership of ANZ Stadium and thereafter. I was disturbed by comments made by the member for Granville. I note that the member is not in the House. If it is good enough for the Minister to be here for the debate, it should be good enough for the member for Granville. It is sad.

Mr Andrew Constance: That should be in the local paper.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I acknowledge the Minister's interjection. The member for Granville's constituents should be made aware that she left the Chamber and did not want to participate in this important debate. There is no greater issue in people's minds than the replacement of the pool. The member for Granville is usually a good member and Government members like her.

Mr Andrew Constance: The member for Granville is a nice person.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Absolutely, the member for Granville is a nice person. It was disappointing to hear that the member follows the Bulldogs. I can understand her allegiances, but I was disturbed by her disingenuous comment that I was not committed to solving the issue of Parramatta pool and that I lied when I stated there were no plans to replace the pool. This is an example of the Opposition ignoring the context of a statement. I made that statement on 1 February 2015 during a public debate when I was asked about any plans to close the pool due to the heritage master plan. At that stage there were no plans. I was 100 per cent truthful: the heritage master plan did not contain plans for the pool. The North Parramatta heritage precinct had been taken out of the master plan process.

I ask that the member for Granville include the context when she next quotes me. The existing Pirtek Stadium will be replaced by a 30,000-seat stadium. As the member for Drummoyne stated, the stadium will be an international venue not only for sporting events but also for international acts. It will boost the local economy. The stadium will be a catalyst for local development. It is about more than rugby and international events; it is about the boost to the local economy. The estimate is that \$80 million to \$100 million will flow into the local economy.

Upon completion the stadium will generate between 800 to 1,000 full-time jobs in the Parramatta electorate. My priority for Parramatta is jobs for young people and small business that will give people the opportunity to achieve their dreams, pay the rent, send their kids to the schools they choose and live the lifestyle they want. The priority is the creation of jobs in Western Sydney and Parramatta. That is why I support the stadium. It will provide people with the opportunity to attend sporting events and international performances. This is good news for Parramatta. The people of Parramatta want the stadium. It is a fantastic opportunity for the local economy.

Last week the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure and the Premier visited Parramatta to announce stage one of the Parramatta light rail project. I note that it will travel from Westmead Hospital through the heritage precinct to Prince Alfred Square, and there will be a stop near the stadium. People will be able to walk a couple of hundred metres to the stadium. It will replace the Carlingford rail line. The residents and businesses in the suburbs on the Carlingford rail line such as Dundas, Rydalmere, the university or Carlingford will be excited to

see the start of construction for the Parramatta light rail. This Government has made that commitment. The Opposition did not mention the light rail in its strategy. This Government has invested \$1 billion in Restart NSW. It is full steam ahead.

Mr John Sidoti: Labor has opposed it every step of the way.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I acknowledge the interjection by the member for Drummoyne. Labor has opposed the strategy every step of the way. I thank the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure Andrew Constance for his continued investment in Western Sydney and specifically Parramatta. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (11:08): The member for Fairfield has indicated to the House the Opposition's position on this legislation, and I endorse that position, as I am bound to do.

Mr Andrew Constance: It does not mean you believe in it.

Mr RON HOENIG: I am a good, loyal member of the Opposition, and I entirely support the position of the Labor caucus, which for all its failings is far more enlightened than the combined wisdom of the Tories on the other side of the House. I thank the Minister for Sport for the courtesy of the briefing I received in my capacity as a local member. I will confine my remarks to the Sydney Cricket Ground and the impact of the Sydney Cricket and Sports Ground Trust's proposed plans on my constituents in Centennial Park, constituents I share with the Federal member for Wentworth.

The Sydney Cricket and Sports Ground Trust has been pursuing an agenda to expand well and truly beyond its current boundaries. That is particularly the case in relation to what is traditionally known as the Sydney Football Stadium, despite the advertising arrangements. The Sydney Football Stadium, the finest rectangular stadium in New South Wales, is never at capacity, so I question the demand to effect substantial investments in it. The trust's agenda has always been to expand beyond the current boundaries. Only last year the trust proposed to reconstruct its boundaries over Kippax Lake and Moore Park. Thanks to the intervention of the then Minister for the Environment and subsequent endorsement by the former Premier, the plans of the Sydney Cricket and Sports Ground Trust, supported by the Minister for Sport, were shelved and the money was reallocated to other stadiums.

I acknowledge that the Minister for Sport advised me that Treasury is not allocating funds for changes to the Sydney Football Stadium because those funds are exhausted, having been spent at Homebush and Parramatta. That should provide some short-term relief for very concerned constituents around Centennial Park. There are major problems in the Centennial Park, Moore Park and the Sydney Cricket and Sports Ground Trust precinct—beyond the fact that the Roosters call it home. The fact is that the Sydney Cricket and Sports Ground Trust continues over the years to attempt to intrude upon public open space at that location when density is increasing—although not in Wentworth—and traffic is chaotic. Residents are concerned that the problem will be exacerbated in the entertainment quarter. The problem is exacerbated while the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust are looking for other sources of income because of what I suggest is the insufficient allocation of funds by the Treasury to maintain this important precinct, a precinct that was the gift of Governor Macquarie to the people of Sydney.

Every time the sports ministry and the Sydney Cricket and Sports Ground Trust collude, the risk and the threat to public open space in that area becomes real. I am concerned that this legislation hives off the Sydney Cricket and Sports Ground Trust as a separate legal entity. The members of the trust are part of the Tory establishment in this State and they have influence. I am extremely pleased that the former Premier exercised some intestinal fortitude in that regard. The reason I raise this is not only to give the Government a bit of a tickle up but also to point out the legitimate concerns of my constituents about the medium- and long-term agenda of the Sydney Cricket and Sports Ground Trust. The concern is not that the trust will put in more urinals and pie shops at the Sydney Football Stadium but that it will construct a monstrous stadium that will intrude on public open space.

Centennial Park, Moore Park, the Sydney Cricket and Sports Ground Trust and the Entertainment Quarter need to be managed through the Government's planning legislation. This area should be managed by the Greater Sydney Commission. It needs to be managed by local commissions and it cannot be excluded from the proper town planning process. Governments have a habit—and this Government is no different—of approving new buildings on the gold members car park via provisions that are slipped into miscellaneous amendment bills, hoping nobody will notice. Whatever the future plans are, whether they include the renovation of the Sydney Football Stadium or whatever is proposed under the recent acquisition of the remainder of the lease for the Entertainment Quarter, proper planning processes under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 need to apply. There needs to be some control to bring the Sydney Cricket and Sports Ground Trust under the same lawful constraints as everybody else in this State.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Cootamundra) (11:14): The overview of the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment Bill 2017 states:

The object of this Bill is to amend the Sporting Venues Authorities Act 2008 to enable assets, rights and liabilities relating to Stadium Australia to be transferred from certain related companies and the trustee of the Stadium Australia Trust to Venues NSW. Shares in the parent company, Stadium Holdings Pty Ltd, are currently held by the State Sporting Venues Authority.

This is a short, simple bill of just five pages that will amend the existing legislation. It is important legislation that will play a significant role in bringing additional tourism to New South Wales. Tourism is a major driver of employment and growth. The bill will put in place a system that will provide for better management of the existing facilities, including venues that have been discussed in this debate: Pirtek Stadium at Parramatta, which is the new Western Sydney stadium; McDonald Jones Stadium in Newcastle; the Newcastle Entertainment Centre and Showground; WIN Stadium in Wollongong; and the WIN Sports and Entertainment Centre in Wollongong. This system will be better for everybody.

I note that in his contribution to the debate the member for Balmain mentioned world-class events. Let's face it, Sydney is a world-class city and it deserves to have appropriate venues to attract wonderful international sporting events. Whether it is soccer or any other sport, we need the facilities to attract those types of events to the greater metropolitan area. I believe this bill goes a very long way towards doing that. It is important that efficiencies are realised and that there is a management system in place to minimise unnecessary hurdles that sometimes dissuade the organisers of international events from coming to the region. I thoroughly endorse this bill. A lot of work has gone into it and I support it.

That does not stop me from saying that we in regional New South Wales also aspire to have truly great sporting venues. Projects are underway at the moment across regional New South Wales. We aspire to the spin-off effects of the great events in Sydney. People could come to Sydney for those events and then visit regional New South Wales. In June great upgrades are planned for the sporting facilities at the Laurie Daley Oval. There will be a new adventure playground and an upgraded playing surface for the oval. The cost of that will be about \$1.14 million, which includes about \$140,000 in in-kind labour hire from June Correctional Centre. That is a great institution doing wonderful work in the local community. The current amenities, despite being centrally located, would be at the bottom of the list to host any spin-off regional sporting events. We are looking forward to that upgrade. Young is another great town in regional New South Wales that could equally gain from the spin-off impacts from additional sporting events in Sydney.

Under the Government's Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme, upgraded sports lighting has been installed at Cranfield Oval, Miller Henry Oval and Keith Cullen Oval, and major earthworks are planned to rework the ground at Cranfield Oval for two parallel fields with improved drainage where there is currently just the one. That that will help with the hosting of junior carnivals. In order to upgrade our facilities in regional New South Wales to cope with additional tourism as a result of this legislation we should also look at car parks, which are important to people who travel from one regional centre to another as public transport is not available given the limited population. A new car park has just been installed at Gus Smith Oval and change rooms and toilets at Miller Henry Oval have been upgraded. New amenities and a canteen have also been installed at Alfred Oval. Those projects were highlighted by the former Young Shire's Sports Advisory Committee in the interests of attracting more regional sporting events.

Gavin Sullivan, President of the Narrandera Imperial Football Netball Club, has a plan to reinvigorate the Narrandera sportsground, which I have inspected on a couple of occasions. It is a great area that is in need of a revamp. The club has more than 400 participants in junior netball, senior netball, Auskick, senior and junior Australian Football League and touch football. The touch football competition has just restarted after about 15 years of no competition. The small town of Narrandera, which has a population of just 5,000 people, has a great participation rate in sport. When supporters, parents, siblings, committee members, volunteers, and people visiting from out of town are taken into account, this represents a large involvement in the local community. The club certainly tries to involve the significant Indigenous community in Narrandera in all its activities.

A number of other towns in New South Wales could benefit as a result of this legislation. The Harden Regional Development Corporation has some big plans for the relocation and upgrade of the tennis courts to become a major sporting precinct for its very passionate sporting community at Harden Murrumburrah. This week the Temora and District Sports Council and Temora Shire Council will hold the inaugural elite sportsmen's walk of honour for inductees, including boxer George Barnes, rugby league player Trent Barrett, barefoot water skier Brett Fritsch, equestrian Diane Jenkyn, and swimmer Mark Kerry.

Many wonderful things are happening in sporting venues in regional New South Wales, but we need more. I congratulate the Berejiklian-Barilaro Government on putting forward this important piece of legislation that will have a significant impact on sporting and tourism for this town. I also congratulate it for making sure

that venues can be upgraded and that facilities and amenities will have a system that is much more ably managed by Venues NSW. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (11:23): My colleague the member for Fairfield has articulately set out Labor's position on the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment Bill 2017, and I wholeheartedly endorse his comments. As shadow Minister for the Hunter, I will endeavour to confine my comments to the impact of this legislation on people who do not live in Sydney. Residents of the Hunter and regional New South Wales should be very concerned about this bill, which seeks to continue the Sydney-focused ideology of this Government at the expense of regional New South Wales.

This legislation seeks to amend the Sporting Venues Authorities Act and provides for the assets, rights and liabilities of Stadium Australia to be transferred into Venues NSW. An important word is "liabilities", and I will return to that point in a moment. Venues NSW currently oversees the management of Hunter Stadium, Newcastle Entertainment Centre, Newcastle Showgrounds, Wollongong Stadium, and Parramatta Stadium. With the three main events centres of the lower Hunter all managed by Venues NSW, the agency has a big impact on the cultural and sporting lives of Hunter residents, but one that we hear little about.

The Newcastle Regional Show has recently brought to light its concerns about Venues NSW, which has had a negative impact on the show's financial position; in fact, next year's show is now in jeopardy. The Newcastle Showground Trust previously controlled the management of the showground and collected revenue from parking, the farmers markets and other events held on the land. This revenue would help fund the Newcastle Regional Show and ensure that it maintained its status as an important regional event, both for Newcastle locals and communities across the Hunter. The Newcastle Regional Show was traditionally the second largest show in New South Wales after the Royal Easter Show. When Venues NSW took over the operation of the showgrounds it also started taking this revenue down the M1 to Sydney to support Sydney-based projects at the expense of the Hunter, and we see that continuing under this bill.

The show association is now charged \$60,000 for the use of what was its land, as well as losing approximately \$60,000 a year in revenue from parking and rent. The Newcastle Regional Show is the only show association whose grounds are controlled by Venues NSW. To put the impact of this decision in context, in 2006 the trust had assets of more than \$3 million. According to the association, it now has \$10,000 left in the bank. This situation was not helped by the local business chamber, which campaigned heavily against a local show day public holiday that the association estimates resulted in approximately \$130,000 in lost takings. Even when the association agreed to not apply for a local public holiday it was able to attract only an additional \$18,000 in business sponsorship this year, which is far less than the amount of lost revenue. When the show association approached Venues NSW about receiving additional sponsorship to make up for its lost revenue its request was denied. This Government clearly has no interest in supporting important regional events in the Hunter, and I will take up that issue with the Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter and the Minister.

Is it any wonder that Venues NSW does not want to contribute to the Newcastle Regional Show given that it knows it is about to take on the assets, rights and liabilities of Stadium Australia, including the estimated \$220 million of debt currently held by Stadium Australia? Again we will see revenue from the Hunter sent packing down the M1 to Sydney to subsidise Sydney-based events at the expense of the Hunter and its residents. Indeed, not only will Hunter revenue go to paying off Stadium Australia's debt but this Government is also proposing a new rectangular stadium at Parramatta with 30,000 seats, a new rectangular stadium at Moore Park with 50,000 to 55,000 seats, the redevelopment of Stadium Australia, a new indoor arena near the central business district, a new outer Western Sydney sporting venue, the completion of the Sydney Cricket Ground upgrade, and upgrades to ANZ Stadium and Allianz Stadium. I ask the Minister to tell me what is in this for the Hunter. Where is the upgrade of the Entertainment Centre? Where is the funding for a sporting precinct in Newcastle? The Minister's only thoughts are for Sydney.

Newcastle has previously hosted matches in the Asia Cup soccer competition and recently hosted the National Rugby League's Indigenous All Stars match, and it was a terrific night. The Hunter is ready to attract more sporting events to the region, but this Government is more interested in pork-barrelling Western Sydney to try to protect a failing government and squeezing regional communities for all it can get. I note the comment of the member for Cootamundra that this bill is better for everyone, but I disagree. One would think that a regional member of The Nationals would speak up for residents outside of Sydney and would try to stop this Government from squeezing regions for Sydney's gain.

It will not be only Hunter residents who pay for this plan; it will be every homeowner in New South Wales if the Government's planned sale of the Lands and Property Information office is used to fund part of this sporting pork-barrelling exercise. I am pleased that Labor will be moving an amendment in the Legislative Council to excise the Newcastle showgrounds, including the Newcastle Entertainment Centre, and return it to the care and control of a Newcastle Showground Trust, which will have five members appointed by the Minister, including

one member from the Newcastle Horticultural Agricultural and Industrial Association. This will deliver a similar model to the Royal Agricultural Show at Sydney Olympic Park, which has a 99 year lease and control of Spotless Stadium. If that amendment is not supported, again we will see one rule for Sydney and another rule for regional areas.

With the amendments Labor will move in the Legislative Council, this Government has an opportunity to show some respect for the people of the Hunter by ensuring the longstanding tradition of Newcastle Regional Show becomes sustainable once more. I proudly stand here as a granddaughter of a showie, or a carnie. I am an avid supporter of regional shows and all they do to showcase, support and promote regional communities. I worked my grandfather's clowns when I was a child—so there are many familiar faces in this place. I urge the Government to support the Opposition amendments to ensure that revenue from Hunter assets is retained in the Hunter. I know that is a novel concept for Government members. The new Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter has met with the president of the show association. She now has an opportunity to show us what she is made of by standing up for Hunter residents and supporting our amendments in the upper House. I urge the Government to support the amendments and start showing the Hunter some respect.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (11:30): I support the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment Bill 2017. The objective of the bill is to amend the Sporting Venues Authorities Act 2008 to give the New South Wales Government full control and governance over the Stadium Australia, or ANZ Stadium, business, under Venues NSW [VNSW], following its return to government ownership in July 2016. The bill will provide the Minister for Sport with vesting orders to transfer assets and liabilities from the companies that underpin the operation of Stadium Australia, or ANZ Stadium, to VNSW. It will ensure that the entry into and giving effect to any contract, arrangement or understanding in which assets, rights or liabilities are vested in accordance with vesting orders made by the Minister is exempt from application of the Competition and Consumer Act 2010. The bill will also preserve the rights of members of Stadium Australia Club Limited during the transition in ownership of Stadium Australia, or ANZ Stadium, and thereafter.

I will comment first on the difference between novation and vesting, which are the two ways in which this Government is able to become party to the ANZ Stadium contracts. Novation has many disadvantages. First, the requirement of lengthy and complex negotiations to novate all third-party contracts poses considerable commercial risk to the Government. Secondly, there is very real risk that the parties will seek to renegotiate the contracts, seek early termination or more favourable conditions. Finally, novation does not require any legislative change. Vesting requires legislation and poses considerably less risk to the Government. The amendments in this bill will help to enable the vesting of assets and the transfer of rights, liabilities, entitlements and obligations. Under vesting, all contracts, rights and liabilities of the Stadium Australia Group entities will be vested in Venues NSW, including existing hiring, sponsor and service contracts, the project agreement, stadium lease, operating sublease and operational services agreement. As such, vesting is the option of least risk for transferring the contracts to the Government.

I will comment also on the staged approach to governance reforms. Establishing a single entity will be considered after the completion and full realisation of the future benefits and management of the new Western Sydney Stadium and redeveloped ANZ Stadium. The Government was advised that implementing an expanded Venues NSW in a single stage was unnecessarily risky. A single stage has potentially lower transition costs but would create substantial delivery, financial and reputational risks. While achieving the intended benefits in a shorter time is possible, the risks of this approach would in all likelihood delay realisation of those benefits and jeopardise stakeholder confidence.

Although a two-stage transition will inevitably take longer to achieve than a single-stage approach, a two-stage process should better manage delivery risk, generate some benefits earlier, and present opportunities to refine and develop the transition. While the Government is investing significantly in the new Western Sydney Stadium and a redeveloped ANZ Stadium, this bill will assist with reducing unnecessary risk to the Government. A staged approach to governance reform is the best option. The Sporting Venues Authorities Act 2008 (NSW) allows for the further consideration of government-operated venues, should this be thought to be beneficial in the future.

The proposed improved governance arrangements that will be aided by the amendments in this bill will assist in allowing the Government to realise improvements to the stadia network. Those types of improvements could include: improved hiring agreements; better methods to match the supply and demand of sporting content and other major events, including scheduling them at the most appropriate facilities; enhancements in the ability to offer a coordinated approach to attract large events; benefits from joint catering operations; increased benefits from joint procurement of supply rights such as ticketing and pourage rights; benefits from joint sponsorship opportunities; and economies of scale in operating expenses.

These legislative amendments will provide assistance for Venues NSW to support and concentrate on the delivery of the new Western Sydney Stadium at Parramatta and the redevelopment of ANZ Stadium. Streamlined, consistent and transparent governance of ANZ Stadium alongside the venues that Venues NSW currently oversees, including the Western Sydney Stadium at Parramatta, Newcastle Stadium and Wollongong Stadium, will help to better serve the Government's return on investment and contribute positively to the visitor economy and liveability for residents.

Stadiums are important to many people across New South Wales. Many residents make and share important memories and milestones at them, usually with the people closest to them—their families and friends. Through this bill the Government is ensuring the future viability of stadiums across New South Wales and enhancing the governance models already present within them. This legislation will allow many future generations of people to use these facilities to see their first game of professional footy or their favourite band play live. I thank the Minister for Sport, his staff and the department for their work in bringing this bill to this House. The bill will help to provide better future planning and governance of our stadiums, and I commend it to the House.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (11:36): Many of my colleagues have stated why the Opposition will not support the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment Bill 2017 and will move amendments in the other place relating particularly to the treatment of Newcastle Showground. From my reading and from talking to my Hunter colleagues, it seems clear that the Newcastle Show is getting a bad deal by being charged a significant amount for the use of grounds it was promised it would have for free. The Newcastle Show is subject to a substantially different deal than the Royal Agricultural Show at Sydney Olympic Park. Immediately it seems that two sets of standards are developing. In future it could lead to the long-running Newcastle Show becoming unviable and ceasing to operate.

I draw the attention of the Minister for Sport and members not to what is but rather what is not in the legislation. The member for Terrigal, who is in the chair, and I have a responsibility on behalf of our Central Coast constituents to raise the fact that Central Coast Stadium is being left out once again. It seems not even to appear on the Government's stadia policy radar. Central Coast Stadium was constructed in 1999 with grants of about \$12.5 million each from the State and Federal governments and \$4 million from Gosford City Council, as it then was. The stadium was opened in 2000 to coincide with the bicentenary and had a capacity of just over 20,000. Since then, not a cent has been spent on it. The stadium is not a bad size, but it is becoming tired and dated.

I frequent the stadium, as I am sure the member for Terrigal does, not only to watch the Central Coast Mariners play but also to see rugby league games. I have also attended quite a few rugby union games there over the years. The stadium is a nice size for national or State teams to play some of the smaller nations in competitions. However, as the Central Coast population grows there is a clear need to upgrade the stadium to facilitate more events. Currently the stadium does not make a profit. It is a cost for ratepayers and a substantial cost on stadium users. I will talk more about that in a moment.

The former Gosford City Council made a submission to government before the last election to obtain \$30 million to upgrade the stadium to facilitate more activities, particularly conference-type activities. We all know now that stadiums sit empty for most of the week between sporting events and that for a stadium to be viable it needs to be used far more often. It is important to have facilities that can hold conferences, expos and other events. It seems that the Government's current policy is to rip down perfectly good stadiums and build new ones in their place, Parramatta Stadium being a case in point. I have been to Parramatta Stadium on many occasions.

Mrs Leslie Williams: Tell us when you went there.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: Every time Manly plays Parramatta—and I assure the House that I am not there watching Parramatta. I also used to go there in the old National Soccer League days when Parramatta Power played out of the stadium. In its current form—and before they started ripping it down—Parramatta Stadium is far better than Central Coast Stadium. When the Government was looking at how it would spread money across the State to improve facilities, Central Coast Stadium was not even on the radar. Recently the owner of the Central Coast Mariners, Mike Charlesworth, has launched a campaign to take over management rights of the stadium and sink his own money into upgrading its facilities—more wet weather cover, more seating and conference facilities. He has even flagged building a hotel on the site. I know that he met with former Premier Mike Baird before he stepped down and put a case for government assistance with those plans.

This legislation is a reorganisation of how stadiums are managed and basically forms two groups: the eastern suburbs bloc versus everybody else. Newcastle and the Illawarra are looked after. The bill refers to giving them a greater competitive advantage and involving Venues NSW. That again downgrades the status of Central Coast Stadium. It means we cannot compete for events—we did not get a single game in the upcoming Rugby League World Cup. That is a bit of a kick in the guts for people on the Central Coast. Apart from that, one would

think Gosford's location—it is halfway between Newcastle and Sydney—is a good reason for the Government to invest in improving the stadium so that it can reach a market greater than the 350,000-odd local residents.

Whilst I understand there may be operational reasons that the legislation has been drafted the way it has, I point out again that the Central Coast has been left out. The issue comes up quite regularly on the coast—the old "NSW": Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong. This is another example of the Government overlooking what could be one of the best venues in the country—a boutique stadium that, with a small number of additional seats, could fill a niche in the market and create a lot more income for the local economy. I am sure the member for Terrigal, and the members for The Entrance and for Swansea, and whoever the next member for Gosford will be, will support us in asking the Minister and the Government please to consider the many people who live on the Central Coast. The stadium is in a great spot but it is always overlooked. It has been 17 years since major funding was allocated to improve the stadium.

This has meant we have missed out on events. When the Asian Football Confederation Asian Cup was held we were not even considered because the minimum seating capacity was 30,000. If the stadium had had an additional 10,000 seats, it could have hosted one of the smaller country pool games. Some world-class facilities are being developed at the Central Coast Mariners Centre of Excellence at Tuggerah, where a team could have been based and played its games, thereby including the Central Coast in the event. Instead, local sports fans must get on buses to Newcastle or Sydney. Most people on the Central Coast already commute for work so on the weekends we like to stay a little closer to home—which we cannot do.

Ms Eleni Petinos: No-one commutes for work! Heaven forbid!

Mr DAVID HARRIS: The way the M1 is these days it is a pretty slow old trip—and that is if you manage to get through without a truck crash or a car accident, which can block the entire road for 10 to 12 hours. The Government must understand that there is life outside Newcastle, Wollongong and the Illawarra. The Central Coast is one of the fastest-growing areas in the State. In my electorate alone there are 4,000 new housing blocks. But if residents want to watch first-class sport, they have to travel out of the region to do so. Please remember that there are other venues outside the major centres. The coast is perfectly located. Mike Charlesworth, the owner of the Central Coast Mariners, has a fantastic plan that should be supported.

Mr Mark Coure: For the last five minutes you have not mentioned the Sporting Venues Authority.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: I have; I said you have left us out of it—that is the issue. Whilst we know that the world revolves around Sydney, a lot of people work and live on the Central Coast and the Government needs to recognise that.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): Order! Before I call the member for Camden, I remind members of Standing Order 52: Members with the call will be heard in silence.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) (11:47): As many members have said before me, the objective of the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment Bill 2017 is to amend the Sporting Venues Authorities Act 2008 to give the Government full control and governance over Stadium Australia, ANZ Stadium's business under Venues NSW following its return to New South Wales Government ownership in July 2016. I acknowledge the Minister for Sport for introducing this good, commonsense bill that ensures venues such as Pirtek Stadium, McDonald Jones Stadium, Newcastle Entertainment Centre and Showground, WIN Stadium and WIN Sports and Entertainment Centre are looked after.

The previous speaker referred to Parramatta Stadium. I am an avid Parramatta supporter and I remember as a 10-year-old living in Port Macquarie flying to Sydney in 1981 to see Parramatta beat the "Bluebags", the Newtown Jets. We knocked them off. Tommy Raudonikis was the captain, and it was our first premiership. Cumberland Oval was our home ground then. The next year, 1982, we knocked off Manly Warringah. The fans were so excited—this is quite historical—that they ended up back at Cumberland Oval for a few celebratory drinks and burnt down the grandstand. The decision had been made to build the new Parramatta Stadium, but that was the prelude to it. From memory, I think it opened in 1986, which was another great year in Parramatta's history because we won the premiership. Before I return to the bill—because I know I will be directed to do so—I mention something that a lot of people might not know. Parramatta has won four premierships. In 1981, 1982 and 1983 Brett Kenny scored two tries. In the 4-2 tryless grand final in 1986 he had two tries disallowed.

As a very proud Parramatta supporter I look forward to the investment in Parramatta Stadium, and I thank the Minister. The Minister is making a trip out to Camden, which I will speak about shortly. I spoke to the Minister last night and he told me, "Chris, I'm so proud of the staff in my office; they do a wonderful job." I said, "Do you know, Minister, I've worked with your office, and they do." I acknowledge Marc Landrigan, who is here today; Anna Hindson; Jane Little; Jo Ryan, who is fantastic and has the patience of a saint; Michael Haynes; Amanda Choularton, who is with us today and does an outstanding job as parliamentary liaison officer; and

Chris Hall and Marie Scoutas, who have left us. I thank them for their wonderful efforts and wish them well. The Minister is the first to acknowledge people who do a good job—so well done, guys.

Mr David Harris: Is Campbelltown getting any money?

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: What is happening with Campbelltown Stadium? I will have to find out. The Minister is visiting my electorate next Wednesday—I hope that is not a secret—and I will be taking him on a tour of Ferguson Lane land, which is the site of a sporting centre of excellence.

Mr Mark Coure: There goes the announcement.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: Can I embargo that? The Camden Cricket Club is on Ferguson Lane land. At the end of last year the council put aside the land and \$3 million for the Camden Cricket Club to work with Cricket NSW to build a sporting centre of excellence. That is the sort of thing this Government understands and supports. This legislation is not only about the Sporting Venues Authorities Act but also about how we can support grassroots sports across the electorates. Camden is a great example: The council has given a commitment to transform a cow paddock into a sporting centre of excellence. Next week I will show the Minister what a fantastic facility it will be, and I will try to garner support from the New South Wales Government.

I seek the indulgence of the Chair. I mentioned the Camden Cricket Club and I would like to have a proud father moment. On Saturday I watched my son and the mighty under-10 Reds win the premiership for the cricket club. It was a fantastic display. We knocked off Cobbitty-Narellan, who did a great job—it was a good game. I acknowledge coach Dave Stewart and manager Greg Franklin for their efforts. I was so proud of Matthew and all the boys, and of Megan, a young lady who plays for the team. On Sunday I had the privilege of backing up for my other son, Tom, who won the under-14 competition with Camden's undefeated premiers. They went through the season undefeated and knocked off the Campbelltown Magpies in the final. Both Tom and Matt are wicketkeepers and both had good games, as did each and every player in both finals; it was a fantastic achievement. I also acknowledge John Mills and manager Simon Hardy for their efforts.

Before I return to the bill, I must mention Tom's twin sister, Sophie, who ran in a regional relay at Bankstown and came second. Her team is now reserve for the State in the 100 metres. While Tom—who did not do too well with the bat on Sunday—helped his team, Sophie was running. I am extremely proud of their achievements and that of their teams. I thank the House for its indulgence. I return to the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment Bill 2017. As I have said, it is a good bill and with many obvious merits. The bill is about ensuring the good governance and good management of sporting facilities.

I pick up on the point made by the member for Wyong. Yesterday there was bipartisan support for the Newcastle Motor Racing Legislation Amendment (Newcastle 500) Bill 2017. I am a great supporter of the Newcastle 500 being moved from Sydney. I think we should support all our fantastic venues, but I agree with the member for Wyong in that we must not lose sight of the fact that it is not only about the venues. We support the venues because they offer so much to our State, but let us also be cognisant of our grassroots sports and other smaller venues. I am sure that the member for Wyong will have an opportunity to put his case forward in the future. This bill is well thought out, and I commend the Minister. I look forward to his visiting Camden next week and to showing him a future sporting facility that I would like the Government to support. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (11:55): I follow that outstanding contribution from the Government Whip to debate on the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment Bill 2017. Before I turn to the bill, I extend my congratulations to the Government Whip's two young boys who won their respective games on the weekend. The main objective of the bill is to amend the Sporting Venues Authorities Act 2008 to give the Government full control and governance over the Stadium Australia business under Venues NSW. Venues NSW was established as a statutory authority many years ago by this Government and it manages government-owned sporting and entertainment venues throughout New South Wales. Some of those venues include Pirtek Stadium at Parramatta; McDonald Jones Stadium at Newcastle; the Newcastle Entertainment Centre and Showground; WIN Stadium at Wollongong, where the mighty St George plays—I note the member for Wollondilly has just walked into the Chamber wearing a red-and-white tie—and WIN Sports and Entertainment Centre at Wollongong.

The amendments to the Sporting Venues Authorities Act 2008 will permit full governance of ANZ Stadium and support the realisation of the benefits of the State-owned network of stadiums. The amendments to the Act will give the Government vesting powers through Venues NSW to become a party to ANZ Stadium contracts and will facilitate the efficient transfer of the ANZ Stadium assets and liabilities to full government control. The amendments give greater emphasis to the Act. As has been highlighted by members on both sides of the House, the bill will enable the Minister for Sport to make vesting orders to transfer assets, rights and liabilities of the companies that underpin the operation of Stadium Australia—ANZ Stadium—to Venues NSW; will ensure

that the entry and giving effect to any contract, arrangement or understanding in which assets, rights or liabilities are vested in accordance with the vesting orders made by the Minister is exempt from the application of the Competition and Consumer Act 2010; and will preserve the rights of members of Stadium Australia Club Limited during the transition in ownership of Stadium Australia and thereafter. This gives the Minister and Venues NSW greater control over that asset.

This has been many years in the making. The Minister and the Government have taken charge of it and it is important on many fronts. As previous speakers have said, tourism is very important for both our local economy and our statewide economy. Ensuring that our stadiums are governed in a proper way, with accountability, is very important. We see the importance of strengthening the business case of these stadiums—not just ANZ, for example, but many others across the State. My local council is in the middle of negotiating contracts with St George Illawarra Dragons at WIN Stadium at Kogarah to ensure that accountability continues and that the stadium is used efficiently and effectively, not just for football but for other sporting codes as well.

We want to make sure that the business case for ANZ Stadium is strengthened so that it is more efficient and more effective. That is why the Government is making these amendments to the Sporting Venues Authorities Act 2008. It gives the Government full control and governance over Stadium Australia and ANZ Stadium business under Venues NSW. As I have mentioned, there are six venues across Sydney and New South Wales that Venues NSW governs. It does an effective job and ensures the efficient and effective running of those stadiums.

This bill tidies up the Act, which is very important and I support the measure. The member for Wollondilly and perhaps the member for Ku-ring-gai will be shortly speaking on this bill. In the time remaining to me I shall make a couple more points. This is an expansion of Venues NSW across the State. It ensures that the Government is undertaking significant investment in a new Western Sydney Stadium and a redevelopment of ANZ Stadium. The Minister is seeking to reduce unnecessary risk to the Government and a staged approach to governance reform is the best option. The Sporting Venues Authorities Act 2008 also allows for further consolidation of government-operated venues. Should this be considered beneficial in the future I can see the direction of this bill heading towards including other venues across the State to ensure that they are run more efficiently and more effectively. Therefore, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (12:09): I am very enthusiastic to speak about the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment Bill 2017 because it is about good governance. Government members love good governance. I notice that not too many Opposition members are big supporters of it but I know that the member for Summer Hill is excited about it; we welcome her back to the Chamber. The objective of the bill is to amend the Sporting Venues Authorities Act to give the Government full control and governance over the Stadium Australia or ANZ Stadium business under Venues NSW following its return to New South Wales Government ownership in July of last year.

The bill will enable the Minister for Sport, by vesting orders, to transfer assets, rights and liabilities from the companies that underpin the operation of Stadium Australia or ANZ Stadium, to Venues NSW. It will also ensure that the entry into and giving effect to any contract, arrangement or understanding in which assets, rights or liabilities are vested in accordance with vesting orders made by the Minister is exempt from the application of the Competition and Consumer Act. It will also preserve the rights of members of Stadium Australia Club Limited during the transition in ownership of Stadium Australia, ANZ Stadium, and thereafter.

Both McDonald Jones Stadium in Newcastle and WIN Stadium in Wollongong are important economic drivers for the regions that support jobs and local businesses and they are important contributors to vibrant and liveable communities. Both stadiums are important venues in the New South Wales stadia network and this is evident from their inclusion in the New South Wales Government's Stadia Strategy that was released in 2012. Some of the major events at McDonald Jones Stadium in recent years have included Rugby League All Stars; Nitro Circus; the fantastic Special Olympics Opening Ceremony; four 2015 Asian Football Confederation Asian Cup matches, including the Socceroos; and the Trans-Tasman Test matches, including the Jillaroos. It is also the long-term home to the region's two flagship sporting franchises—the Newcastle Knights National Rugby League [NRL] team and the Newcastle Jets A-League team.

Before I turn to some of the fantastic things happening at WIN Stadium, as I said in this place yesterday these events are very important to the people of Newcastle. The member for Newcastle yesterday talked down a tourism opportunity for his electorate. It took the member for Charlestown to come down and correct the record. The Newcastle 500 event will see at least 270 jobs created, tens of millions of dollars invested and economic capture for that region. Unfortunately some members opposite were very concerned about having such a great event. I said at the time to the Minister that if the member for Newcastle did not want that event in his electorate, I would take it, as would many other members because they know that good governance and good planning will create more jobs in those areas. Those who come from a regional and rural electorate like I do crave such initiatives. I could not even imagine why anyone would talk down having an event such as that in their electorate.

However, that is a prerogative of the member for Newcastle. He will be judged by his community at the appropriate time.

I digress and will now return to the leave of the bill. Some of the major events at WIN Stadium in recent years include international football with the Matildas, the Nitro Circus and the NRL Charity Shield. It is also the long-term home for the St George Illawarra Dragons that the member for Oatley is so keen about. I am a Wests Tigers supporter, but each to their own. The people of New South Wales will have a stadia network that can deliver commercial outcomes, boost the visitor economy and meet national and international trends in venue design and operation by providing innovative product offerings, customer-centric design and vigorous effort to attract major events; in short, a stadia network the people of New South Wales deserve and can be proud of.

These types of events are very important. My region has Campbelltown Sports Stadium, which was formerly known as Orana Park. Over the years that has been upgraded and only last night it hosted the Wanderers' Asian League match—a fantastic coup for Campbelltown City Council, which owns and operates that facility. West Tigers and the Rabbitohs have played some trial games there. It is not just the big sports clubs and codes that play there; Little Athletics and thousands upon thousands of events from across the Campbelltown and Wollondilly region are held at this largest stadium in the region.

Today I have seen here the General Manager of Campbelltown Council, Lindy Deitz, advocating for the people of Campbelltown, along with the Mayor of Campbelltown, George Bricevic. I thank him and his council, a council I have served on previously, for their leadership in attracting more sports events into the region. It is a great council. George Bricevic is from the Labor Party but obviously we also have fantastic councillors led by the Liberal leader Councillor George Greiss; my father, Ted Rowell; and Ralph George. They are fantastic councillors who are all working together in that region to promote more tourist events. It is paying off. This bill is about good governance. This Government will get on with the job. I commend hardworking Minister Stuart Ayres. If there is one person who knows about sport, it is the Minister. I acknowledge his staff. The member for Camden has mentioned their names and I will not repeat them. The members know who they are and they know who they are. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (12:10): The history of law and sport is a long and chequered one. In the 1970s an infamous defamation case was brought by Clive Lloyd against David Syme and Co and there was litigation during the establishment of World Series Cricket when there was an attempt to exclude players from the county competition in England. That led to litigation brought by Tony Greig and others. In more recent times there was a case regarding the competition that led to the creation of ANZ Stadium. It was *Zhu v The Treasurer of the State of New South Wales*. In that case Chief Justice Gleeson and Justices Gummow, Kirby, Callinan and Heydon started the judgement with these words:

It is a truth almost universally acknowledged—a truth unpatriotic to question—that the period from 15 September 2000 to 1 October 2000, when the Olympic Games were held in Sydney, was one of the happiest in the history of that city. The evidence in this case, however, reveals that the preparations for that event had a darker side.

The judgement described certain contractual disputes between Mr Zhu and the Sydney Olympic Authority. The major object of the bill concerns the stadium built and known as ANZ Stadium that housed the Olympic Games. Many of us were privileged to sit in the stadium and witness the Olympic Games. The original configuration of the stadium seated more than 100,000 people. Until recently the stadium was not under full government control. In July 2016 full control of the stadium returned to government. The Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment Bill 2017 formalises full government control and governance of the stadium.

It places control and governance under the umbrella of Venues NSW. That achieves a broad and important objective. In July 2016 the leasehold rights over Stadium Australia returned to government control. The Government has reached the point where all major stadia are government owned and controlled. I am referring to ANZ Stadium, Allianz Stadium, Sydney Cricket Ground, Western Sydney Stadium at Parramatta, the McDonald Jones Stadium in Newcastle and WIN Stadium in Wollongong. The consolidation of these stadia provides the Government with the unprecedented ability to bid for and coordinate the bidding for important sporting events. It can attract desirable international and national events to this State.

The bill will facilitate that process. It will benefit the sports-loving public of New South Wales and have spin-off benefits for the State. It will enhance the visitor economy in and around the sporting events. It will have community and social benefits through amenity enhancement in the areas surrounding the venues. It will prompt and promote small business in the area surrounding the venues. For the people of New South Wales it will enhance liveability and improve pathways to professional sport for elite athletes. In order to produce and develop world-class athletes there must be world-class facilities for the athletes and fans.

Each member will recall a great sporting moment that has occurred at these stadia. With the exception of Allianz Stadium and the Sydney Cricket Ground they are now under the governance of Venues NSW. Bledisloe

Cup games, rugby league grand finals, cricket games and Australian Football League matches have been played at these venues. Those events will continue in the future. I began this speech discussing the intersection of law and sport. The bill allows the vesting powers through Venues NSW to apply to ANZ Stadium contracts and facilitates the efficient transfer of ANZ Stadium's assets and liabilities to full government control.

It will ensure that Venues NSW's compliance with the vesting orders is exempt from the application of section 45 of the Commonwealth Competition and Consumer Act. Sections 45 and 46 gave rise to the protracted Super League litigation involving the Murdoch and Packer interests and their control of rugby league. It more recently involved the South Sydney Rabbitohs using the provisions of that Act to prevent their expulsion from the world's leading rugby league competition situated on the eastern seaboard of Australia. The member for Tamworth is present in the Chamber. The member is a passionate supporter of rugby league. When State of Origin is played the member has a regrettable habit of wearing red in and around this place.

Sport is important to the lives of many people. It gives enjoyment and provides a sense of community. Hosting sporting events and facilitating the attraction of new and existing sporting events to New South Wales shows its important role as a procedural bill but there is also a remarkable social consequence and benefit to the people of New South Wales. I commend Minister Ayres for bringing the bill to the House. I commend Minister Ayres for the great work he is doing to attract major sporting events to New South Wales. I commend the Government for ensuring that there is no unnecessary legal action under section 45 of the Competition and Consumer Act relating to his attempts to attract the best possible events to this great State.

Ms Eleni Petinos: The people of Ku-ring-gai want it.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: The member for Miranda makes a very good point. The people of Ku-ring-gai are strong supporters of the Wallabies in particular. Many a time I have jumped on the express bus at Telegraph Road and travelled along Mona Vale Road to ANZ Stadium, where I have seen people from my electorate adorned in Wallabies regalia, enjoying the great sporting events at ANZ Stadium, which will now be put under government control.

Visitors

VISITORS

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): I take this opportunity to welcome guests to the gallery this afternoon. I acknowledge in particular Loraine Adams and Ann McKay, guests of the member for Terrigal and Temporary Speaker, who have travelled from the Central Coast today. I hope they enjoy their afternoon in Parliament House. I wish Ann's grandson Matthew the best of luck. He will be competing in Abu Dhabi in the next few weeks, on behalf of the country. He is a triathlete and one of my constituents.

Bills

SPORTING VENUES AUTHORITIES AMENDMENT BILL 2017

Second Reading

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (12:21): I speak in support of the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment Bill 2017. The objective of the bill is to amend the Sporting Venues Authorities Act 2008 to give the Government full control and governance over Stadium Australia, or ANZ Stadium, business, under Venues NSW, following its return to New South Wales Government ownership in July 2016. I too express my best wishes to the member for Terrigal's constituent who is competing in triathlon in Abu Dhabi. Triathlon is a demanding sport. It is three sports rolled into one. With football, soccer, table tennis, swimming, cycling or running there is a focus on the individual sport. Triathlon combines three sports: swimming, cycling and running. There is a glamour associated with triathlon events. People recognise the hours, days and months of training that get competitors to the starting line and ultimately to the finish line.

I speak with some authority on that. In my younger days, when my knees were better than they are today, I did a little running and played football. I started marathon running. In my marathon running days I managed to complete a marathon in under three hours, with a time of two hours and 56 minutes. My good mate Steve Moneghetti also ran under three hours. He was a little quicker than two hours and 56 minutes—he ran at the two hours and 15 minutes or two hours and 18 minutes mark. That was when he represented Australia in the Commonwealth Games and at other great events. I went from marathons to triathlons. Training for that event is draining. On behalf of the New South Wales Parliament, I wish Matthew all the very best. We hope he does well in Abu Dhabi.

Sport is important for individuals, groups and communities. Sporting venues and stadiums are very important in the Tamworth electorate. It is also important to invest in infrastructure. There is an old but true

saying: "Build it and they will come." Recently, under the ClubGRANTS category 3 scheme, \$500,000 was allocated to Tamworth's Scully Park Oval to develop it into a high-quality sporting precinct. I was joined by then Deputy Premier Troy Grant and West Tamworth Leagues Club Chief Executive Officer Rod Laing to announce the funding for that venue.

The Scully Park regional sporting precinct project involves the construction of a new state-of-the-art undercover grandstand to accommodate about 740 spectators, a new laser-levelled playing field and light-emitting diode [LED] towers, the refurbishment of existing amenities and the formation of a spectators' hill. The facility will showcase a number of sports, including rugby league, rugby union and soccer. There will be new change rooms, offices, a bar and kiosk, as well as media rooms and corporate suites. The facility will be built to a standard that can be used by the A-League, the National Rugby League and Super Rugby.

We caught up with Paddy Ryan, captain of our very own Country Eagles, last night at the Waratahs launch here at Parliament House. They are doing a magnificent job. We give our full support to the Waratahs. Hopefully, Paddy Ryan and his teammates, including captain Michael Hooper and coach Daryl Gibson, will have a great 2017. Paddy Ryan is a Tamworth fellow. When I spoke to him last night, he said that the surface of Scully Park in Tamworth is equal to any surface that he has played on. He has been fortunate to run on with the Wallabies, as well as the Country Eagles and the Waratahs. That goes to show that if you build it they will come. We need to continue to invest in regional sporting infrastructure so that we can give regional people the opportunity to play at, train on and enjoy first-class facilities and give spectators the opportunity to witness the very best. We want A-level competition in regional New South Wales. I know that the guests of Temporary Speaker Crouch are from the Central Coast, and there are magnificent stadiums on the Central Coast. We want to attract A-level, five-star sporting events to regional New South Wales.

On 28 January this year I welcomed to Tamworth Premier Gladys Berejiklian—on her first regional tour after being elected Premier—along with Deputy Premier John Barilaro, where we announced \$4.25 million as part of our contribution to a \$17 million Northern Inland Sporting Centre of Excellence. That centre will become a reality. It will be situated next door to the Australian Equine and Livestock Events Centre, which is a magnificent facility in Tamworth that hosts international equine events. This will be a massive boost for regional sport, from the grassroots to the elite level. The centre will host a range of sports. I congratulate Tamworth Regional Council and, in particular, John Sommerlad, who is the director of the unit that is driving the development of the facility. The centre will also be able to host and accommodate the administration of many sports.

We have a magnificent and very strong hockey fraternity in Tamworth. We will be able to host hockey, soccer—which is now called football—Australian rules, rugby league, rugby union or cycling. Our very own Sam Spokes from Tamworth has recently been signed up as a member of a European cycling team and will compete on the world stage in Europe. We have a very strong cycling club in Tamworth, which will be able to be accommodated at the Sporting Centre of Excellence, which has a velodrome and a criterium track around which cyclists will be able to ride safely. We must now block off a section of road in our industrial estate, which involves police and prevents motorists using it. It is very time consuming and traffic management is problematic. A velodrome and a criterium track at the centre will be fantastic.

I have referred to athletic tracks, cycling and equestrian facilities. We need to stay ahead of the game and provide facilities that foster the talents of young people coming through who want to train in facilities that are as good as those in metropolitan New South Wales. We want to nurture our young athletes and enable them to train, to play and to compete in the best facilities so that when they participate in primary school sports and State, national and international events we can attribute their success as great Australian sporting champions to this Government's investment in regional sporting facilities. I am sure that Matthew, the constituent of the member for Terrigal, will do us proud when he competes in a few weeks' time. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) (12:31): It is a pleasure for me to support the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment Bill 2017, the object of which is to amend the New South Wales Sporting Venues Authorities Act 2008 to give the Government full control and governance over Stadium Australia or the ANZ Stadium business under Venues NSW following its return to government ownership in 2016. Venues NSW now owns Pirtek Stadium, about which we have heard a lot, the McDonald Jones Stadium in Newcastle, and the Newcastle Entertainment Centre and Showground. Much has been said about the Newcastle venues. As the member for Upper Hunter, I can attest to the importance of having invested in such major venues in the Hunter and Newcastle that literally hundreds of thousands of people have visited over the years.

Without government support there would not be sponsor naming rights; for example, McDonald Jones Homes would not have been able to put its name on and make a commitment to the wonderful Newcastle Stadium, which is a fantastic sporting venue. The member for Wallsend well remembers the Asia Cup games held in Newcastle in January 2015. Under the Labor Government, it was intended that all Asia Cup 2015 games would be played in Sydney. When this Liberal-Nationals Government came to office in 2011 it negotiated for games to

be played in Newcastle. Members of the Opposition have said in this debate that there is little or no investment in or attention paid by this Government to Newcastle, which is completely and utterly false.

As mayor of Upper Hunter shire I attended the opening ceremony of the Asia Cup and the first game on 12 January 2015, which were very well attended. I note that members who have commented on that investment were either at the opening ceremony and/or attended games at the Newcastle Stadium, something which they could not have done without this Government. It is ludicrous for them to cry foul, but people will see them for what they are. They do not care for Newcastle and the Hunter region. I remember from my time as mayor the amount of work done by the organising committee for a couple of years to engage communities throughout the Hunter region. I know the shire councils of Upper Hunter, Muswellbrook, Singleton, Cessnock, Maitland, Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens and all the surrounding areas were well and truly engaged by the organising committee.

The committee could see from the interest in the Asia Cup in the Hunter region that significant benefits would flow. It was a wise New South Wales Government that negotiated for Asia Cup games to be played outside of Sydney. It was a wonderful event. Later this year Newcastle will hold the Newcastle 500 Supercar race. The Government is investing in sporting and cultural events and infrastructure in Newcastle and the Hunter region. Members opposite believe that the Government does not have a commitment to their areas, but the proof of the pudding is in the eating. We know it is all a load of codswallop. The people on the ground can see this Government's investment and focus in Newcastle and the Hunter region. The McDonald Jones Stadium and the Newcastle Entertainment Centre and Showground are a demonstration of the Government's focus on Newcastle and the Hunter region. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (12:38): I am delighted to make a small contribution to debate on the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment Bill 2017. On the face of it, this is a simple and pragmatic bill. It is required because the Government now has control of Stadium Australia, and the bill rolls the management of that venue into the same structure that it has in place for a number of other venues under government control. It is an efficiency measure to use the same structure rather than reinvent the wheel and have a competing structure manage yet another venue. More than that, it gives the combined entity significant economies of scale and market opportunities to leverage the best results for taxpayers on the basis of its combined assets. That seems fairly straightforward and simple. It makes good sense.

Why members opposite have chosen to make an issue of this is very difficult to understand. They are arguing for more fragmentation, a more disjointed approach to managing facilities and assets and more competition between our entities to the net detriment of the Government and taxpayers. It makes perfect sense to do what the Government is doing. The steps we are taking in this bill to make a relatively small change to a bill passed in 2008 will achieve the best value for taxpayers. I have heard some discussion about Newcastle Showground, including concerning land it formerly occupied and whether the show is expected to pay for the use of it.

Whatever has been happening since 2008 in that precinct has been happening according to legislation members opposite passed when they were in power. If they are drawing attention to shortcomings in those arrangements, they have nowhere else to point the finger but at themselves. Their Government legislated for those arrangements in 2008 and at the time it presumably desired the practices that ensued. Members opposite are either making misrepresentations or demonstrating a clear case of incompetence from which they are now running away. As I began by saying, this bill presents a sensible and efficient way of managing government assets in the best interests of taxpayers and the people of New South Wales. Therefore, the House should support the bill.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Western Sydney, Minister for WestConnex, and Minister for Sport) (12:41): In reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Fairfield, Terrigal, Drummoyne, Parramatta, Newcastle, Cootamundra, Port Stephens, Holsworthy, Wyong, Camden, Oatley, Wollondilly, Ku-ring-gai, Granville, Heffron, Tamworth, Upper Hunter and Riverstone for their contributions to this debate. I must say that is many more speakers than I thought there would be in this debate. I am glad to know there is so much enthusiasm for the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment Bill 2017 and this Government's stadia policy and investment strategy.

The objective of the bill is to amend the Sporting Venues Authority Act 2008, often referred to as the SVA Act, to give the Government full control and governance over the Stadium Australia business under Venues NSW following its return to government ownership in July 2016. The proposed amendments to the Act will give the Government vesting powers through Venues NSW to become party to ANZ Stadium contracts and to facilitate the efficient transfer of ANZ Stadium assets and liabilities to full government control. The amendments will also ensure that the compliance of Venues NSW with the vesting orders is exempt from the application of section 45 of the Commonwealth Competition and Consumer Act. Section 45 of that Act prohibits entering into or giving effect to a contract which has the purpose of or is likely to have the effect of substantially lessening competition

in the market. Section 51 of the Commonwealth Competition and Consumer Act provides that the State can exclude certain activities from the operation of section 45 by way of a legislative provision such as is contained in this bill.

I will respond to some of the issues that members raised in this debate. It would be useful for me to explain the Government's Stadia Strategy and to respond to questions raised about ANZ Stadium. The Government has made a clear commitment to return New South Wales to the top of tree with regard to stadia and sporting assets. As the member for Drummoyne said, following the 2000 Olympics our competitor cities and States made significant investments in their stadia networks. In Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth, major new stadiums have been opened or are under construction. The simple fact of the matter is that in stadia we fell to the back of the pack, which happened in most things during the 16 years of the Labor Government. It fell to this Government to correct that.

Through our asset renewal strategy we are investing in roads, rail, schools and hospitals. Sport is also a beneficiary of the strategy. Our Stadia Strategy is about taking full advantage of those funds and ensuring that we prepare our State for the future. It clearly outlines our priority investments. They include a new build at Parramatta, which is currently under way, and upgrades to ANZ Stadium, Alliance Stadium and the Sydney Cricket Ground. We have also identified the future need for an indoor facility in the broader central business district precinct, particularly after the demolition of the Sydney Entertainment Centre and the construction of its replacement, the International Convention Centre. That is a fantastic venue for events, but it does not have the sporting configuration abilities of the previous facility.

We have also committed to ensuring that people across outer Western Sydney are not left behind in the long term by futureproofing outer Western Sydney through planning for another stadium there. As I said earlier, we have started demolition and early stage construction of Parramatta Stadium. We are currently taking the steps any government should take when investing taxpayer funds by undertaking the business case for ANZ Stadium. After we have completed that business case we will look at the other phases of the Stadia Strategy. It is also worth noting that the feasibility work for the indoor venue has just begun.

Another key component members spoke about was the ANZ Stadium transaction. In layman's terms, ANZ Stadium is and always was owned by the people of New South Wales. We did not own the leasehold business position, which was leased until 2031. The Government made a decision to buy out that lease position so the Stadium Australia business or the business that was ANZ Stadium came back to the people of New South Wales. There were a couple of very good reasons for doing that. It meant that our overall \$1.6 billion investment in stadiums could be delivered appropriately across a mix of stadiums to ensure that we stayed competitive in the events landscape. Money was reinvested in facilities that we knew our hirers—that is, our sporting codes—needed most. That allowed us to remove a contractual position the previous Government put in place, which was the material adverse effects clause that dampened any opportunity for the Government to invest in other facilities around Sydney.

Although stated by many members on the other side of this debate, it is categorically incorrect that this transaction will somehow take money away from other parts of Venues NSW. The basic premise of this bill is to bring ANZ Stadium into Venues NSW. It is not much more complicated than that. It brings back an asset and business that we have purchased and puts it into an existing governance entity known as Venues NSW. Venues NSW will now manage ANZ Stadium and Parramatta Stadium. It continues to manage Wollongong Stadium and the Wollongong Entertainment Centre as well as Hunter Stadium or what is known as McDonald Jones Stadium.

Nothing in this transaction asks Wollongong or Newcastle to contribute funding to Parramatta or ANZ stadiums. In fact, I would argue it is the opposite. The strengthening of the asset base for Venues NSW and the improvement of cash flow through better quality assets such as ANZ and Parramatta stadiums give us an opportunity to continue our long-term investment in Wollongong and Newcastle. I for one am absolutely committed to ensuring that our sporting assets are not Sydney-centric, and it is this strengthening of Venues NSW that gives it, its board members and its management the opportunity to continue to support what happens in both Wollongong and Newcastle.

I note also that the member for Granville and the member for Fairfield spoke about the development of Parramatta Stadium. Whilst it is not specifically relevant to this bill, I am more than happy to inform them that two sites have already been identified for further exploration with regard to the relocation of the Parramatta War Memorial Swimming Pool. There is a memorandum of understanding between the New South Wales Government via the Parramatta Park Trust and the City of Parramatta Council. We have already committed \$400,000 to the investigation of those two sites. There is a clear commitment from this Government to work with the City of Parramatta Council to ensure that the Parramatta community has a pool in the broader central business district. We have made that commitment and we will stick by it, but we will not slow down developing the sporting

facilities which this community has demanded and which it has not had, and in the case of Parramatta, it has been waiting since the last stadium opened in 1986.

I will address some things that have already happened in regional locations. McDonald Jones Stadium already has seating for 33,000. When the Coalition came into government we had to fix up the western grandstand, which was plagued by cost overruns. The original budget announced by Labor was \$60 million, but it ended up being \$80 million. The WIN Stadium in Wollongong had major upgrades in 2002, including the additional northern grandstand, and in 2012 a \$31 million replacement of the western grandstand. It is worth acknowledging that we had to fix some of what the Labor Government did there. The stadium was designed incorrectly and serious damage was suffered during storms. I find it particularly interesting that members opposite have lectured the Government about using Australian steel. During that reconstruction they did not use any Australian steel in Wollongong, whereas this Government has required the use of Australian fabricated and sourced steel at Parramatta.

Ms Anna Watson: Why do you not do something about the steel industry?

Mr STUART AYRES: That is what we are doing. This Government has ensured that significant events have gone to Newcastle and Wollongong, and it will continue to do so. Members opposite are suggesting that Venues NSW is somehow diminishing what is happening in Newcastle and Wollongong. The exact opposite has occurred since the establishment of Venues NSW. We have seen things like the Rugby League All Stars event leave the Gold Coast and come to Newcastle. We have seen special Olympics held in Newcastle. We have seen Asia Cup matches being held in Newcastle and at other regional venues. Interestingly, the Labor Government's bid for the Asia Cup did not include games to be held in Newcastle. It was not even mentioned in its bid. It was only the establishment of Venues NSW and the coming to government of the Coalition that meant Newcastle hosted games during the competition, which, as we all know, was a raging success.

Mention was made of the Newcastle Regional Show and the arrangements for the association to use the showgrounds. AEG Ogden operates the showgrounds on behalf of Venues NSW. However, and importantly, prior to Venues NSW being established by this Government, the Labor Government put AEG Ogden in charge of managing the site at Newcastle. If members of the Opposition want to talk about the management arrangements at the showgrounds not being suitable for that community, they should look at themselves and not this Government. The Labor Government put the AEG Ogden arrangements in place. All that this Government has done has been to continue those arrangements under stronger governance by Venues NSW.

I have seen and heard about the faux east-west fight. There seems to be an idea that if we are investing money in the Sydney Cricket Ground Trust, in the Sydney Cricket Ground [SCG] itself, or at Allianz Stadium that is somehow robbing the residents of Western Sydney. The priority investments for the Government in this regard are Parramatta Stadium and the current business case at ANZ Stadium. They are both included under the Venues NSW arrangement. I have made it clear that until we invest more in the SCG venues we should not merge those governance entities. They should not be merged until we have managed all of the delivery arrangements across the venues. It does not matter where the mums and dads who take their kids to the cricket at the SCG come from in New South Wales, the SCG belongs to everyone. The SCG is not some eastern suburbs exclusive facility. Kids from Penrith have been going to watch one day cricket and test cricket at the SCG for as long as any of us can remember. It is not some eastern suburbs institution; it is an institution that belongs to everyone in New South Wales. It is a facility that this Government will continue to support. In my opinion, it is still the spiritual home of cricket in this country.

I am a little astounded that such a simple bill, which amends an existing governance entity, which reduces red tape and the number of government boards, which brings the ANZ Stadium back into public hands, which will allow it to be placed alongside the newly built stadium at Parramatta, and which helps support those crucial regional facilities in Newcastle and Wollongong would be opposed by members opposite. The only reason they would oppose this bill is that they are either grandstanding for no apparent reason whatsoever, because this bill actually strengthens Venues NSW, or they simply do not understand business or economics and that the value of that asset is better on our balance sheet than on someone else's because of the unique competitive position that we have against other States. Unlike other markets, we are competing against private sector operators. Stadiums in other States are overwhelmingly managed or owned by their governments, and that is what the Government is doing with this State's stadium assets.

This simple process of consolidating the governance of ANZ Stadium into Venues NSW should be supported by the House. The bill should also be supported by our friends and colleagues in the other place when it is debated there. There is nothing in it that takes away from the existing powers covering what happens in Newcastle or Wollongong. In fact, bringing ANZ Stadium into this business provides a better opportunity for those stadiums to work off a stronger balance sheet. Clearly, the ideas of strong economic management and the principles that underpin them are foreign to members opposite. If they supported this bill and got on with allowing

sports fans to go to the best possible facilities, the Government would enable the people who work in those stadiums to retain their jobs and this State would get back to where it deserves to be; that is, at the top of the tree when it comes to providing sporting assets in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

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

The House divided.

Ayes51
Noes36
Majority..... 15

AYES

Anderson, Mr K
Barilaro, Mr J
Brookes, Mr G
Coure, Mr M
Dominello, Mr V
Fraser, Mr A
Goward, Ms P
Gulaptis, Mr C
Hodgkinson, Ms K
Kean, Mr M
Marshall, Mr A
Patterson, Mr C (teller)
Petinos, Ms E
Provost, Mr G
Sidoti, Mr J
Taylor, Mr M
Upton, Ms G

Aplin, Mr G
Berejiklian, Ms G
Conolly, Mr K
Crouch, Mr A
Donato, Mr P
George, Mr T
Grant, Mr T
Hazzard, Mr B
Humphries, Mr K
Lee, Dr G
Notley-Smith, Mr B
Pavey, Mrs M
Piccoli, Mr A
Roberts, Mr A
Speakman, Mr M
Toole, Mr P
Williams, Mr R

Ayres, Mr S
Bromhead, Mr S (teller)
Constance, Mr A
Davies, Ms T
Elliott, Mr D
Gibbons, Ms M
Greenwich, Mr A
Henskens, Mr A
Johnsen, Mr M
Maguire, Mr D
O'Dea, Mr J
Perrottet, Mr D
Piper, Mr G
Rowell, Mr J
Stokes, Mr R
Tudehope, Mr D
Williams, Mrs L

NOES

Aitchison, Ms J
Car, Ms P
Cotsis, Ms S
Dib, Mr J
Foley, Mr L
Haylen, Ms J
Kamper, Mr S
Lynch, Mr P
Mehan, Mr D
Park, Mr R
Scully, Mr P
Washington, Ms K

Atalla, Mr E
Catley, Ms Y
Crakanthorp, Mr T
Doyle, Ms T
Harris, Mr D
Hoenig, Mr R
Lalich, Mr N (teller)
McDermott, Dr H
Mihailuk, Ms T
Parker, Mr J
Smith, Ms T F
Watson, Ms A (teller)

Barr, Mr C
Chanthivong, Mr A
Daley, Mr M
Finn, Ms J
Harrison, Ms J
Hornery, Ms S
Leong, Ms J
McKay, Ms J
Minns, Mr C
Robertson, Mr J
Warren, Mr G
Zangari, Mr G

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr STUART AYRES: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Members

INAUGURAL SPEECH

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (13:04): It is a great privilege and honour for me to stand in this Chamber today to deliver my speech to this House as the newly elected member for Orange. I welcome back all members from the Christmas break and look forward to a productive, healthy and no doubt challenging year ahead. I extend my congratulations to the newly appointed Premier, the Deputy Premier and Ministers. I also

acknowledge my predecessor, Mr Andrew Gee, MP, for his valuable contribution to this place during his time representing the people of Orange. I wish him well for his future in Federal Parliament. I extend special congratulations also to both Mr Scully and Ms Cotsis on their respective victories. Whilst in no way diminishing the significance of their campaigns, I think they will agree that most of the focus was on Orange on the weekend of 12 November.

In 1995 the Shooters Party, as it was then, elected its first-ever parliamentarian, the Hon. John Tingle, to the Legislative Council. Today, I stand in this Chamber as the first representative of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party in the Legislative Assembly. To be honest, this is not a speech I thought I would have the privilege of delivering. I had never dreamed of being in the position in which I now stand. An unexpected opportunity presented itself and I embraced it, welcoming a new challenge with great enthusiasm and optimism. I embarked upon an old-fashioned bootlace campaign. The campaign was heavily reported on, inviting significant media commentary.

To quote radio broadcaster Ray Hadley from an interview in which I participated with him when my campaign was first announced, he stated regarding my chances of winning the by-election, "It would be a herculean task to win this by-election." It is now well-documented that our party's victory is historically significant and record breaking. This is the first time since World War II that the Country-National Party had not retained the seat of Orange, a period spanning almost 70 years, back to 1947—a seat that was one of the longest held National Party seats in this State. Our party obtained unprecedented, history-making and record-breaking swings—swings of up to 60 per cent in some booths, especially in and around the Cabonne local government area. It has been reported that this win was the biggest swing in New South Wales political history, and has been referred to as the "The Donato swing".

My story, which led me here, begins with my grandfather who, like most humble migrants from Italy, came here nearly a century ago in the early 1920s with nothing but a suitcase of clothing and a dream for a new beginning for his family in what was then, and still is, the best country in the world. My parents, Luciano and Maria, who in a couple of months' time will celebrate their fifty-second wedding anniversary, co-owned a fruit shop, Donato's Fruit Market, in partnership with my Uncle Frank and Auntie Grace in Chester Hill for 35 years. My family all worked hard in the fruit shop. It was long and tiring work, but I look back on it with fondness, as it was there that I learnt to appreciate the value and ethic of hard work and family unity.

Following high school I commenced university studies but I quickly realised that university was not the right fit for me. I eventually dropped out of my course and undertook an apprenticeship. Trying to offset the low apprentice wages, I worked behind bars and in restaurants to get me through each week. A fortunate conversation with a close friend a few years later saw me joining the NSW Police Force. This was a career that spanned half my life. I thoroughly enjoyed my time in the "cops", which I will turn to later. I met and worked with some great people, some of whom are in the public gallery today, and one who sits in this Chamber, the member for Seven Hills. In fact, it is in the NSW Police Force that I also met my beautiful wife, Nadia.

As many tree-changers do, my wife Nadia and I yearned for a move to rural New South Wales for a better upbringing for our young family, to downsize our mortgage and to pursue a rural community lifestyle. I have been based in Orange for the past 12 years, after successfully obtaining a transfer in early 2005. In this time, my family and I have been actively involved in the local community. I have coached hundreds of kids over the years through our family's involvement in cricket, soccer, AFL and rugby union. Nadia and I have been married for 20 years and together we have five sons: twins Daniel and James, 19; Peter, who will be 18 in two days; Mathew, 16; and Sean, 13. Nadia and I are incredibly proud of all of them. They have grown up into fine young men and I guess one could say I wanted to make sure the Donato name lived on. Like all parents we committed ourselves to giving our children the best education and possibilities in life, often involving personal sacrifices. I am proud to be able to share this moment with them here today, to show my children that with hard work, self-belief and loyalty anything is possible.

As I stated before, for half my life I have worked in the NSW Police Force, a great and honourable organisation. My policing career began in the mid-90s working general duties across Liverpool, Macquarie Fields and later Wollongong. In 1997 I was seconded as part of Operation Puccini to Cabramatta which was, at the time, the heroin capital of Australia after the assassination of local MP, Mr John Newman. Alongside many brave police men and women I was tasked with combating the vicious gangs in the area. I observe firsthand the fear these gangs instilled in local businesses and communities through their violent robberies, home invasions, illicit drug supply and extortion.

I was fortunate enough to be awarded the Commissioner's Citation for my work at Cabramatta during those months. This concept of community-based policing was embraced by the locals. The assistance provided was invaluable. The whole experience had a profound impact on my life and it went a great way towards making inroads into crushing the illicit drug trade in Cabramatta. As any experienced street cop will tell you, there are

many times of desperation and despair on the front line, on a daily basis responding to traumatic and devastating events, including domestic violence assaults, grieving parents and fatal motor vehicle accidents. These were some of the hardest days in the force and I thank every officer for their duty to the State because I understand how tough it can get sometimes. After six years on the front line and with a young family it was time for a change.

One of the luxuries of the NSW Police Force is the flexibility of the role. My interest in law and victim protection led me to the Police Prosecutions Branch in 2001. Over the past 16 years I have prosecuted thousands of criminal cases across metropolitan and regional New South Wales. The highlight of my prosecuting career was in early 2016 whilst acting as the Senior Prosecutor at Orange, along with Senior Constable Riley—Canobolas Local Area Command achieved the highest Local Court successful prosecution rate in the State, testament to Superintendent Cribb and his hardworking staff.

I turn now to the beautiful electorate which I call home. A city of rich geological history, Orange is a picturesque town nestled in the foothills of Mount Canobolas, a prehistoric volcano, which is what makes our area such fertile agricultural land. It is a vibrant and energetic regional city. It has become a hub for agriculture, education, health, mining and an ever-increasingly popular food and wine industry. North of Orange lies the community of Molong and surrounding villages that make up the Cabonne Council area. The people of Cabonne, many of whom I met during my campaign, are salt of the earth, loyal, tough, hardworking, fair-minded people that one would expect from such a proud regional community.

Then there is the town of Parkes, famous for its Elvis Festival held each January that celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary this year and that I attended. It is a great event that brings thousands of tourists and millions of dollars to the local community. There is also the Parkes Observatory and the logistics hub. To the north of Parkes lies Peak Hill and to the west Bogan Gate, Trundle and Tullamore—all great agricultural towns. To the south of Parkes lies Forbes, a town rich in primary production and bushranger history on the fertile banks of the Lachlan River, and Jemalong irrigation country.

As great as our electorate is, there are many areas where we have fallen behind that I will prosecute in my time in this Chamber. These issues go to the heart of what our electorate expects from government: accessible health care, better education outcomes and protecting and growing jobs whilst improving roads and infrastructure. It should not be forgotten that people do live beyond the Great Dividing Range. In Orange there is not enough parking at our hospital and we do not have a dedicated palliative care ward. The closure of Myer and Electrolux and a mining downturn have meant that our whole community has suffered through job losses.

Recently Forbes was hit with some of the most devastating floods in its history, which caused the closure of the Newell Highway for more than six weeks—a highway that is yet to be flood-proofed. The inland rail solution has remained somewhat in limbo and is a project that I would like to see completed before my time is up here. With a renewed focus on major capital works projects and infrastructure building, I am confident this would reduce unemployment in our area. Our education and early childhood indicators are generally below the State average and we need more funding delivered into the schools to lift these benchmarks. I would like to see expansion of the Charles Sturt University School of Medicine, encouraging local medical students to train and remain in the Central West to provide additional professional health care to a growing and ageing population.

The state of some of our roads is embarrassing, something I got to experience during my campaign, touring the 17,000 square kilometre electorate. This will be a key area that I will seek to address. Sadly, 2016 also saw a rise in fatal motor vehicle accidents in our area in what has become a stain on New South Wales statistics. Anyone who has been affected or who has had the misfortune of witnessing such a tragedy will understand the trauma it causes families and loved ones. As such, I will campaign for the introduction of a mandatory driver education program, similar to that of a traffic offenders program, as a component of a person's learner's licence. I have witnessed this program work and its impact on attendees has been significant and long lasting. We should be harnessing the collective wisdom of police, ambulance officers, solicitors, injured persons and even offenders to impart their experiences on those learning how to drive. If this helps to save one life, it has to be a success.

We need to make it as easy as possible to be employed and encourage people to better their own communities. We need to provide the best possible and accessible health care, education and transport. Most importantly, we need to remember that NSW does not just stand for Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong. Regional New South Wales needs and demands its fair share. Collectively, we need to develop options to encourage the relocation and decentralisation of people and government agencies. The equation is simple: people will flock to areas with work, transport and entertainment.

There is no reason why Sydneysiders, particularly young families, would not move to regional cities and towns if there are good jobs, good transport, affordable housing and a great lifestyle. I think my own family's situation is a classic example. If the same were occurring in Sydney, there would be riots in the streets. But the people of Orange have rioted. They have elected me! My campaign slogan, "Orange deserves better", is as relevant

now as it was then. During the course of the campaign Orange did, in fact, get better. More than \$300 million in Federal and State government funding was announced in what I later learnt was colloquially referred to as "pork-barrelling". I will be cynical enough to go on the record and state that if The Nationals did not think they would retain the seat, some of these funding announcements would still be in the trays of the Ministers' printers. Now, as the member for Orange, I will hold this Government to account for every last cent of its promises.

I am not so naive as to not recognise that my election to this place was largely affected by two key policy decisions of this Government: the greyhound ban and forced council amalgamations. In and of themselves, these decisions are poor, particularly as they hurt regional communities. But it is not just the decisions themselves that are significant; it is what they represent—an arrogant and out of touch Government. They were a reflection on poor government decision-making. To think that the people of New South Wales would just roll over and cop something like that is as ignorant as it is dangerous. Now I, like the majority of members, had no vested interest in greyhound racing when the decision was announced to shut down the industry via Facebook by former Premier Mike Baird. I distinctly remember listening to the *Big Sports Breakfast* program early one morning when the ban was announced and thinking: Why?

The vast majority of greyhound owners are law-abiding, responsible citizens. I asked myself: Why was the Government punishing the collective majority for the actions of a few? It did not seem just, fair or reasonable. In fact, quite the opposite. It smacked of an inner city decision made by elitist, out-of-touch politicians at the expense of regional communities and jobs. I was then reliably updated on the context of the decision. Instead of intervening to right wrongs and inject some fairness into the inequitable inter-code agreement, including adopting the recommendations of an upper House inquiry chaired by the Hon. Robert Borsak, the Government shut down this significant and established industry. Thankfully, the industry is saved from extinction, for now, and I will work to ensure that the reversal is effected as soon as possible.

The same can be said for council amalgamations. While the Coalition Government was promising regional communities and towns that there would be no forced amalgamations, it was doing the exact opposite in Macquarie Street. For many regional areas, local government is often the largest employer and provider of services. Many councils that were facing the prospect of amalgamation had passed the Government's Fit for the Future test. So we had the position of government setting a benchmark and then refusing to acknowledge that the benchmark had been reached. As with the greyhound decision, I will ensure that the Government's abandonment of this policy is not just hot air. I will fight for the independence of Orange, Cabonne and Blayney shire councils, as well as all those councils that do not want to be amalgamated.

I will continue to represent and advocate for the interests of all shooters, fishers and farmers, as do my upper House colleagues, the Hon. Robert Brown and the Hon. Robert Borsak. It will come as no surprise that I own and use firearms for sport shooting and hunting. I was fortunate enough to be brought up in a family that hunted and fished. I learnt from family elders valuable lifelong skills and a deep respect for the environment. Apprehension seems to exist among some members in this Chamber that the election of a Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party representative will usher in a new era of dangerous and lawless weaponry in our State. Nothing could be further from the truth and there is no reason for such apprehension.

Nothing in the party's policy suggests it supports the criminal misuse of firearms. It is a fact that target shooting and hunting remain some of the safest recreational activities in this State. Reasonable firearms policy, based on fact and sound logic rather than vicious propaganda, is a sign of a mature government. Unfortunately, in that respect, this Government has been very immature. As a former prosecutor, I am experienced in dealing with facts and evidence. I know firsthand that the vast majority of firearms crimes are not committed by licensed firearms owners. Logic dictates then that the Government should focus the vast majority of its finite time and resources on curbing the illegal firearms trade and tougher sentencing measures. Instead, successive governments have spent more than a billion dollars on targeting law-abiding firearms owners.

I also thoroughly enjoy fishing, and I support the advancement and sustainability of fishing in New South Wales. Fishers, as with hunters, have become victims of green bureaucracy gone mad. The facts and statistics are ignored with the ever-expanding creation of marine parks and the extension of sanctuary zones without proper scientific study. Best practice fishing management recognises the importance of reciprocal communication between fishers, scientists and governments for managing and detecting declines in vulnerable species and appreciating the economic benefit of fishing. I find this to be the sad state of affairs in government policy. It is indicative of the approach this place has taken to issues that those at the top of power do not like or understand: the response is to ban or restrict it until it becomes someone else's problem.

One of my concerns is what happens to farmers and the agricultural industry when this sort of politics is practised on them. Farmers deserve a government that supports them fully in policy and principle. They, too, have felt increasingly misrepresented, unheard and maligned by the Government. The Orange electorate is considered a food basket both nationally and internationally. It grows and exports food, vegetables, raw material and meat

through world's best practice agriculture and primary production. Farmers already have enough to deal with during their day, so it is critical that we recognise the issues they face early and address them as a matter of priority. Farming has been at the forefront of this nation's economic and cultural development, and it should be at the forefront of this Government's agenda for regional New South Wales. This Parliament must redress policies that hurt farmers.

Government must develop processes to help farmers manage their properties that will ensure they can get on with the job they do best for many generations to come. Farmers must be protected from unreasonable and impracticable government decision-making, including limiting green and red tape. The rise of extreme green groups and animal liberationists threatens the future of farming as we know it. There has been no consistent response from government. These groups cannot be dismissed. A protective framework must be developed in practice and in principle against this vocal minority. I acknowledge the work of the current Minister for Primary Industries and the inroads he has made in these areas thus far. After all, farmers feed us and put clothes on our back.

I conclude by thanking the people that helped get me here today in an amazing team effort. First, the Hon. Robert Brown and the Hon. Robert Borsak provided and continue to provide support to an otherwise inexperienced politician. You mentored me, providing expert advice and guidance throughout this journey. For this, I am so very grateful. To Filip Despotoski, State Director of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party, who unfortunately cannot be here today, I thank you for the guidance, knowledge, support and expertise you have exhibited—far greater than your age would suggest. I thank the party executive for the level of support and trust placed in me. I will not let you down. To John Townsend, thank you for your invaluable media and information technology advice and support. I thank Robert Despotoski, Stephen and Christine Bowler, Stephen Larsson, Senada Bjelic, Peter Chambers, Carl Smith, Emma Bradford, and John Preston for their support and assistance.

I thank Brett Cooke for his unwavering friendship, support and loyalty and Philippa Walker, Tina Skrtic, Don Mahoney and Rebecca Hawkins for their assistance. I thank Ray Hawkins and Matt Shearim of Bullets and Bits gun shop in Orange for their encouragement. I am grateful to the greyhound owners and industry representatives who travelled from far and wide to help man pre-poll and polling booths on election day. To Jon Russell and his fellow members of the Volunteer Fire Fighters Association, I extend my sincere appreciation for your invaluable contribution.

I thank Will Tuck, Phil Jenkyn and the many other passionate supporters from Save Our Councils. I thank and make special mention of Jessica and Andrew Coombs, Mick Madden, Graeme Kelly and Stephen Hughes from the United Services Union, Mark Buttegieg from the Electrical Trades Union, Brock Skelton from the Australian Workers' Union, Mark Morey and Salim Barber from Unions NSW, Kaila Murnain, Rose Jackson, Jay Suvaal, Oliver Plunkett and everyone else who assisted with scrutineering every ballot paper eight times.

Special mention must be made of Mr Ray Hadley and Mr Alan Jones for the public support they showed, not only to me but also to the regions of New South Wales in giving a voice to those who otherwise would not be heard, or that the Government refused to hear. I am truly grateful and appreciative. To the party members across the country who donated their time and money to help me win the election: You are the backbone of our great party and without you it would be nothing.

To my lifelong friends of over three decades—Damien Benson, Michael Coorey and Arturo Alibrandi—I thank you for your support, loyalty, encouragement, humour and advice over these years. I thank my parents, Maria and Lou, for their steadfast support and unconditional love all my life. I do not think they ever imagined I would one day deliver this speech in this place. Thank you to my sister, Josie, and brother-in-law, Gary Sanders, for their love, support and sage advice.

To the people of the Orange electorate who placed their trust in me, I am truly humbled and thankful. Rest assured I will do my best each and every day to represent, fight and advocate for you all. To my sons, Peter, Mathew and Sean, thank you for your patience and understanding during the recent periods of lengthy absence. I thank Daniel and James, who answered the call to help out their old man by manning booths at Yeoval, and for bringing their teammates from Easts Rugby Club with them. Thank you.

Lastly, to my beautiful wife, Nadia: You have been by my side for the past 20 years. The love, support, and encouragement you have given me is more than I could ever have asked for. For this, I am truly grateful. I finish on the following note. The Government of the day has the mandate to run this State. I will not obstruct it in exercising this mandate. However, as my upper House colleagues have demonstrated in the other place, I will obstruct, I will protest and, as members can probably already tell, I will not hold back any punches if the people of Orange are getting a raw deal from this Government.

Despite the sentiment that may exist opposite, it is a mature party, with goals and policies equal in maturity. I will learn the ropes pretty quickly, and the newness of the job will not deter me in my commitment to put the interests of my constituents above all else. Last week I walked into this Chamber alone as the sole member of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party in the Legislative Assembly. In two years' time I plan on having the honour of ushering others in with me. Thank you.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): I congratulate the member for Orange. I also acknowledge in the gallery the Mayor of Campbelltown, George Petrovich, and Campbelltown Council General Manager Lindy Deitz.

Community Recognition Statements

ST IOANNIS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH, PARRAMATTA

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) (13:30): I congratulate St John's Church in Parramatta. I was honoured to join the Greek community to celebrate the official opening of St Ioannis Greek Orthodox Church learning centre and community space. His Grace Bishop Seraphim blessed the new facilities and held mass with the community and with hundreds of parishioners who in attendance. The new facility will provide the faith community with a great place to meet, socialise, hold events and educate young minds. I place on record my congratulations and thanks to Mr Kos Dimitriou, president of St Ioannis, and Father Dimitri Kokkinos, parish priest of St Ioannis, who are pillars of faith in the local area and always do a wonderful job bringing the community together.

WALLSEND ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) (13:30): At the commencement of the 2017 school year, devoted staff and excited students are getting back into the swing of things across Wallsend with the addition of many fresh faces. I welcome new principal Nathan Forbes to our electorate and to his new school, Glendale East Public School. At Maryland Public School, Annette Van Egmond has taken the reins. Khalil Khay has taken over at Glendore Public School. New Lambton Public School welcomes Megan Avery as its new principal. Kelly O'Shea is now the principal at Tarro Public School. Jesmond Public School has a new acting principal in Brad Bannister. I look forward to working with all of you and welcoming you to Wallsend.

MANNING RIVER TIMES MIDCOAST COUNCIL SPORTSTAR OF THE YEAR

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (13:31): I inform the House that Wingham golfer Reid Brown has been named the *Manning River Times* MidCoast Council Sportstar of the Year. Reid was one of six finalists recognised at MidCoast Council's Australia Day celebrations held at the Manning Entertainment Centre. Reid's being named in the Australian All Schools golf team, following the Australian All Schools Golf Championships played in Adelaide, where he was a member of the New South Wales side, helped him win the Australia Day prize.

The championship was a combination of stroke play and match play conducted on three courses. Reid was fourth in the 36-hole stroke event and unbeaten in the match play until the last game. He was one of three New South Welshmen named in the Australian squad—his effort in making the State side was meritorious enough. Reid was selected in the State squad following the New South Wales championships, when he recovered from a bad start to finish third overall and book a flight to Adelaide. He enjoyed a busy year on courses throughout Australia. He is the youngest winner of the Wingham Golf Club championship and he also played under 21 pennants in Sydney with Pymble Golf Club. I congratulate Reid Brown.

SOUTHERN DISTRICTS SOCCER FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (13:32): As patron of the Southern Districts Soccer Football Association, it fills me with great pride to acknowledge and commend its first ever women's technical director, Ms Catherine Cannuli. Catherine has a decorated career in football, having played 55 games in the W-League and made four appearances for the Matildas. Catherine is an incredibly passionate young woman who wants to make sure that Southern Districts has the best women's football program in the State and one of the best programs in Australia. Her passion comes from her own upbringing and her desire to give all young women in south-western Sydney the best opportunities and support services possible to develop and hone their skills. In her role Catherine will look after all the grassroots and skill acquisition programs, as well as the Women's State League program, which is more competition based. This program is run for those as young as under 12. I wish Catherine all the very best with Southern Districts and commend her for her passion for training and for mentoring the young stars of tomorrow.

ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER BENJAMIN NETANYAHU OFFICIAL VISIT

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Local Government, and Minister for Heritage) (13:33): Today I celebrate and welcome the first ever official visit to Australia of a sitting Prime Minister of Israel. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is a great friend of Australia and of the eastern suburbs of Sydney. We are celebrating the strong bonds and ongoing friendship between Australia and Israel. This visit demonstrates the strength and depth of our relationship, plus its importance to both countries. Sydney's Jewish community is one of the most thriving and dynamic in Australia. This historic visit is a special occasion for my local area, in particular. I look forward to meeting Prime Minister Netanyahu and working together to strengthen the many ties between our great city and Israel.

MARIST COLLEGE KOGARAH

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (13:34): Two weeks ago I had the pleasure of attending the presentation day for Marist College Kogarah students who had completed their Higher School Certificate. It was a great pleasure to see the outstanding results that the boys of the college achieved in 2016. The college ranked 122 out of nearly 600 schools in the State and placed second among the systemic Catholic boys schools of Sydney. There were 87 band 6 results. A special mention must go to Michael Panovski, the college dux, who achieved an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank of 98.3 and was ranked first in Extension Maths. The outstanding results achieved by the boys at the school are a tribute to the hard work and dedication of the parents of the students who attend and the staff, including college principal John Riordan. As an old boy of the school, I was asked to address the assembly. While doing so, I was reminded of the words of Pope Francis, who said:

God never gives someone a gift they are not capable of receiving.

The students, through their hard work and the attention of their parents and teachers, are being given the gift of higher education. I wish them the best in their endeavours.

SEVEN HILLS ELECTORATE STRONGER COMMUNITIES FUND GRANTS

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (13:35): This afternoon I pay tribute to the outstanding local community organisations to which I was able to award grants at the Stronger Communities Fund presentation ceremony in Parramatta a few weeks ago. I was joined by my colleagues the members for Epping and for Parramatta, as well as by the strong advocate for the Parramatta area, Andrew Jefferies, who represented the Minister for Counter Terrorism, Minister for Corrections, and Minister for Veterans Affairs. The event was hosted by the Administrator for the City of Parramatta Council, Amanda Chadwick.

We were fortunate to hear from the recently appointed Minister for Local Government about the importance of the work done by local community organisations. In my electorate of Seven Hills the recipients of the grants were Boronia Multiculturalism Services, Dharma Karta, Northmead Primary School Parents and Citizens Association, Sunnyfield for Life Foundation, TAD Disability Services and The Northcott Society. I commend these fantastic community organisations for their hard work and look forward to visiting many of them in the near future to discuss the development of their projects.

LAKE MACQUARIE SPORTS AWARDS

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (13:36): I commend Lake Macquarie City Council for recognising athletes, their families, sports administrators and the role of sport in contributing to a healthy community through holding the Lake Macquarie Sports Awards. Once again the awards, which were held last Saturday, were a highlight of the Lake Macquarie calendar. I congratulate Erin Cleaver, whom I was honoured to recognise with the Sports Scholarship for Athletes with a Disability. I have spoken about Erin in this place in the past, and in particular about her involvement in the IPC Athletics World Championships in 2015 and in Rio de Janeiro last year, when her dream of representing her country by competing in the Paralympics came true. Erin competed in the T38 long jump event in Rio and placed fifth. She also competed in the T35-38 4x100 metres relay team and the team placed third—an outstanding achievement. I congratulate all the Lake Macquarie Sports Awards finalists, in particular those from my electorate: Imogen Petrie, Blake Carr, John Domandl and Alexia Hicks.

TRIBUTE TO ERIC TURNER

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) (13:37): "I have lived, I have laughed and I have loved, but did I make a difference?" This question was posed by the man whose life we celebrated recently. The Albury-Wodonga community certainly thinks Eric Turner did make a difference. Chairman of the Albury Wodonga Cancer Foundation for 15 years, Albury Citizen of the Year in 1995 and 2012, and a driving force in the establishment of the Albury Wodonga Regional Cancer Centre, Eric Turner was a well-known identity in the Albury region. Eric joined the army at 17 and served in Korea and Japan before his discharge in 1966. He moved to Albury in the

1970s, working in various roles before becoming secretary of a cancer support group and then joining Age Concern. Sadly, Eric lost his own battle with cancer on 3 February but not before seeing his vision come to life when he attended the official opening of the Albury Wodonga Regional Cancer Centre in November 2016. Vale Eric Turner.

PORT STEPHENS WOODWORKERS CLUB

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (13:38): When I visited the Port Stephens Woodworkers Club recently I was amazed by the energy, talent, creativity and supportive culture of the club. Many of the woodworks I saw were beautiful works of art—the result of much patience, passion and skill. The club was established to bring together those interested in woodcrafts as a social and educational outlet for like-minded people. The club arose from an advertisement placed in the local newspaper 22 years ago, in 1995, by Mr John Goodwin. Now the club has almost 80 members.

The club engages in regular "show and tells" and runs the successful Schools Project, where they take their toolbox kits and encourage the children to take part in hands-on exercises. The club also generously gives back to the community through donations and sponsorship of prizes, including the James Crombie Award for Tomaree High School's top woodworking student. I congratulate president John Jeffress, secretary Col Bridgeman, treasurer Bob Grant, workshop manager Geoff McClelland, and all the men and women of this creative community group for honing and sharing their skills across our community.

ST IVES FOOTBALL CLUB FUNDRAISING EVENT

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (13:39): I congratulate the St Ives Football Club on its fundraiser being held this Saturday afternoon in aid of providing defibrillators for its adult teams. In addition to a raffle and a barbecue, there will be a tribute match in memory of Emin Rufati, who suffered a fatal heart attack on field in 2015. He was only 46 years old at the time and a father of two young children. The club has already raised \$20,000 to purchase eight portable defibrillator units. After raising enough money for one or two further units, the St Ives Football Club aims to then help other clubs within its association that may not have the same fundraising capacity. Well done to all concerned. I look forward to joining a number of other members of the community and the St Ives Football Club fraternity this Saturday.

MS MAITLAND SHOWGIRL

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (13:40): Two weeks ago I met some wonderful, inspiring young women who are participating in the 2017 Ms Maitland Showgirl movement. In Maitland this proud rural tradition has embraced the twenty-first century with "Ms", not "Miss", Maitland also becoming the city's youth ambassador. The nominees are: Macia Boroweic, Phoebe Ferguson, Sarah Graham, Blair Harvey, Georgia Holt, Miranda O'Brien and Brittany Wile. They all showed intelligence, passion and commitment to community service—the values that rural women around our nation have displayed for generations. These seven young women are passionate about the community of Maitland and what makes our city unique. Like me, they wish to ensure that Maitland continues to thrive as a regional destination. These young women will go on to perform community service and represent their community throughout their lives. I wish them well in their endeavours. I congratulate Miranda, Blair and Macia, who came first in this group of showgirls.

THE HILLS STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Counter Terrorism, Minister for Corrections, and Minister for Veterans Affairs) (13:41): During my tenure as Minister for Emergency Services, I was able to see firsthand just how hard our State Emergency Service [SES] works to keep New South Wales safe. Unfortunately, last week catastrophic storms devastated New South Wales. We were hit very badly in my electorate of Baulkham Hills, with suburbs pummelled by hailstones the size of tennis balls. On behalf of the people of Baulkham Hills, I sincerely thank our SES volunteers for their continued dedication and their quick response to crises. I especially express my gratitude for the 15 years of devoted service by The Hills SES Local Controller Evelyn Lester. The Hills SES had received 840 calls for assistance as of last Monday. I know from the many people who have contacted me that the community is very grateful for the support of the SES volunteers. I congratulate The Hills SES volunteers, commend them for their vital work and thank them for their dedication.

STRATHFIELD WOMAN OF THE YEAR SUE ADVANI

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (13:42): I bring to the attention of the House the wonderful work of Sue Advani, the 2017 Strathfield Woman of the Year. Sue is an active and much admired ambassador for the Australian subcontinental community and a steadfast champion and advocate for women's issues. She has had many community roles and responsibilities in organisations such as the United Indian Association [UIA] and as

a member of the Federal Government's Multicultural Consultative Committee, the Ethnic Communities Council of NSW and BreastScreen NSW.

Sue's role as the chair of the UIA Women's Steering Committee has been especially inspiring as she raises awareness of domestic and family violence, breast cancer research and gender equality. Sue also dedicates much of her time to raising funds for charities including the National Breast Cancer Foundation, White Ribbon Day and Pink Ribbon Day. Sue is a community leader for all women. On behalf of our community, I thank Sue for her many years of dedicated service.

OUR LADY OF MERCY COLLEGE, PARRAMATTA

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) (13:42): I was honoured to join the Sisters of Mercy, community leaders, parents, teachers, students and staff of Our Lady of Mercy College [OLMC], Parramatta, to celebrate the official opening of the Alisa Mackinnon Community Centre. Most Reverend Vincent Long Van Nguyen, Bishop of Parramatta, conducted the official blessing of the new multipurpose sports and community centre, which is an exciting new facility for the OLMC community. OLMC, Parramatta, has continued to go from strength to strength and has become one of the leading Catholic girls' schools in the State. Last year's Higher School Certificate results reflect this. I congratulate Alisha Panambalana, 2016 dux, who received an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank of 99.75. Huge congratulations also go to Casey Carpenter, Talia La Delfa, Josephine Warnant and Julia Wehbe. Their amazing results saw them make the all-round achievers honours list. I congratulate principal Stephen Walsh, the Sisters of Mercy and the entire team of teachers and staff.

SYDNEY GAY AND LESBIAN MARDI GRAS

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (13:44): Last year this House offered an historic apology to the "78ers" who participated in the first ever mardi gras. This past weekend saw the kick-off of the thirty-ninth Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras festival with the flag-raising at Sydney Town Hall and Mardi Gras Fair Day held at Camperdown Memorial Rest Park. Mardi gras has a rich history as a protest organisation, playing a vital role in delivering equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and questioning [LGBTIQ] people in New South Wales. This year's theme, "Creating Equality", continues in that vein. The LGBTIQ community in New South Wales continues to fight for marriage equality, for the promotion of safe and accepting schools, and for the removal of barriers and discrimination for transgender and gender diverse people in our community. I stand with them in their fight for equality. Happy mardi gras!

IFIX PLUMBING

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (13:44): Mrs Janelle Nercessian, 62, is a pensioner who has a problematic heart with three leaking valves. Only 25 per cent of her heart functions and she requires a defibrillator to keep her heart alive. She had just moved back into Kincumber Nautical Village on a disability pension when her hot water heater blew just before Christmas. Her stove was leaking gas and part of her floor was falling in. Mrs Nercessian's neighbour, Leni Conway, asked her how she was going, only to find out that she had been getting by without hot water for six weeks. Not one to complain, Mrs Nercessian was using boiling water from a kettle to wash herself and figured she would just have to scrimp and save until she could afford to fix it.

Ms Conway put up a post on the Coasties Bag a Bargain Facebook page to see whether anyone could help. Clayton O'Keefe, a local Central Coast plumber from iFix Plumbing, came to her rescue. He said that he would fit a new water heater at no cost and would see whether he could get a heater from Reece Plumbing. Clayton is an absolute star and should be acknowledged for his compassion and generosity towards Mrs Nercessian. I say well done to Clayton O'Keefe at iFix Plumbing. He is the greatest.

THIRROUL RAILWAY INSTITUTE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (13:46): I acknowledge the work of the Thirroul Railway Institute Preservation Society, which recently celebrated its anniversary. The Thirroul Railway Institute is not only the spiritual home of the Labor Party in the northern suburbs but also the home of many other community groups. It is a heritage building, and I know Mr Temporary Speaker, the member for Heathcote, will be very familiar with the institute as he served that part of the community before the most recent electoral redistribution. The work that goes into preserving these old buildings is simply outstanding. I put on record my congratulations to the Tuckerman family, in particular John and Paul, who have worked so hard over many years with many members of the society to make sure that the Thirroul Railway Institute remains an historic and very important part of our great community in the northern suburbs.

TAREE BLOOD CENTRE AUSTRALIA DAY DRIVE

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (13:46): I congratulate the Taree Blood Centre on its recent Australia Day drive. It set an original target of 55 donations between 16 and 26 January. Some 72 locals

rolled up their sleeves to help save more than 216 Australian lives. It takes but an hour of one's time to donate blood, and I encourage everyone to consider donating. That hour of one's time could save someone else's life. The Taree Blood Centre was prompted to find more local legends because of local need. I congratulate the centre on the work it does in our community. Once again, I encourage everyone in the Manning-Great Lakes area to donate blood.

RUGBY LEAGUE INDIGENOUS ALL STARS VERSUS WORLD ALL STARS MATCH

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (13:47): On 10 February I had the pleasure of attending the Rugby League Indigenous All Stars versus the World All Stars match in Newcastle. Watching the Indigenous players, along with local Aboriginal people, perform the war dance before the game was spine-tinglingly powerful. The final score of 34-8 was a massive win for the Indigenous team. The women's game, held earlier in the afternoon, also resulted in a win for the Indigenous women, with a 14-4 victory over the favoured World All Stars. I am particularly proud to congratulate my constituent, Joe Gordon, who played in the under-16s Awabakal All Stars Interstate Challenge. Joe's team was successful in claiming the shield from the Queenslanders. Joe is a junior player at Central Newcastle Rugby League Football Club. They are affectionately known as the "Butcher Boys", and a team that I am very proud to sponsor. Go the Butcher Boys in 2017! I commend the work of the National Rugby League in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and equality.

TOONGABBIE PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (13:48): This afternoon I pay tribute to the great work occurring at a school in the heart of my electorate of Seven Hills—Toongabbie Public School. The school is led by a wonderful principal, Mr Craig Brown, and the student leaders for 2017. Appointed as school captains were Nathan Abou-Touma and Cait-Lien Bui. Appointed as vice captains were Madhavaram Sriranganathaiyer and Lily Kessler. The school was founded in 1886 and has been an integral part of the rapidly growing local community ever since. Today the 670 students at Toongabbie Public School are supported by a strong and effective parents and citizens association that ensures the school's founding values of inclusiveness, accessibility and quality are upheld. The school is currently a recipient of the Quality Teaching, Successful Students program, which provides additional staffing resources to implement strategies focused on improving the quality of classroom teaching. I also note that the teachers at Toongabbie do a fantastic job. I wish them and the students all the best for 2017.

SARATOGA SAILING CLUB CHAMPIONS

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (13:49): Saratoga Sailing Club president Stephen Roberts admits he was a little shocked to scoop second place at the Hartley TS16 Championships. Roberts and fellow club member Brett Sims, who took the helm of their boat, outraced strong vessels from Largs Bay in South Australia—my home town where I was a member of the sailing club—to claim the unexpected honour of runners-up. I am glad that Saratoga took out the championship. The pair proved that the neighbourly bond is as strong as blood and quick on the water, having never teamed up despite years of living side by side. Despite having never sailed together in normal club races, they were paired for the championship after the club had trouble putting a crew together. They both admit that, although they are good mates, they usually sail with different people and that is unlikely to change even after their success. Once again, congratulations to Stephen and Brett.

COMMUNITY BUILDING PARTNERSHIP GRANTS

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (13:50): Late last year I was pleased to give 13 local groups an early Christmas present by letting them know that they had been successful in their application for funding under the Community Building Partnership program. I invited all the successful applicants to a morning tea at which they discussed the projects and the impact those projects will have in making Charlestown an even better place to live and to visit. Some of the successful projects include a new shed for the Glenrock Scout Camp, a new classroom at the Birrallee Long Day Care Centre, an irrigation system at Lisle Carr Oval at Whitebridge, community toilet facilities at Nine Mile Beach, fitness equipment on the Fernleigh Track, disability access at the Dudley Redhead junior soccer club, perimeter fencing at Kahibah football fields, and resurfacing of fields at the Cardiff Junior Soccer Club. I commend all those local groups for their positive impact in the Charlestown community.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.15 p.m.

*Visitors***VISITORS**

The SPEAKER: I extend a very warm welcome to the High Commissioner of Botswana, His Excellency Mr Lapologang Lekoa, accompanied by First Secretary to the High Commission Mr Lovemore Tafa, guests of the Speaker and member for South Coast. It was lovely to meet you earlier today.

I also welcome to the Chamber Ms Lesley Bowmar from Nottingham, England, guest of the Leader of the Government in the other place, Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts. I acknowledge and welcome Tweed Shire Council Mayor Katie Milne, General Manager Troy Green and Senior Program Leader Scott Hetherington, guests of the member for Tweed.

I welcome Maitland City Councillor Robert Aitchison, husband and guest of the member for Maitland. I welcome guests of the member for Lakemba: Leila and Feyeze Hamoui, his aunt and uncle, who are visiting from Ghana, accompanied by Ali Dib, his father. I also acknowledge in the gallery members of the Valley Walkers Club, some of whom I met earlier today. Welcome to the Chamber. I hope you enjoy question time.

*Question Time***POLITICAL DONATIONS**

Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (14:21): My question is directed to the Premier. The Millennium Forum, the Free Enterprise Foundation, Eight by Five and now the Hawkesbury club—how many front organisations does the Liberal Party operate to launder its dirty money?

The SPEAKER: Order! There is a clear imputation in that question. I caution the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:22): This question gives me an opportunity to put on the record a response in relation to this morning's media reports. I want to be extremely clear that any wrongdoing by any member of my party, or any member of this place, will not be tolerated. In response to media reports, I contacted very early this morning the State Director of the Liberal Party and asked him to provide me with a report on the matters that were raised publicly. Prior to question time I was provided with the following response which I will read in full:

The party is still looking carefully at the donors and donations raised by the media as it is not clear whether the donors are considered to be property developers as defined under NSW election funding legislation.

The donations in question were made to the Liberal Party and were processed and recorded by the Liberal Party. They were disclosed by the party in full to the NSW Electoral Commission, regardless of their value. As part of the party's compliance processes, potential donors are provided with detailed information and advice regarding their obligations under NSW election funding laws, including warnings about prohibited donations.

I have written today to the NSW Electoral Commissioner and indicated that the NSW division will fully assist the commission in relation to any inquiries it makes regarding this matter. This includes, but is not limited to, providing further documents or information beyond that already provided as part of the party's annual returns and in response to the commission during its audit processes.

Today I was assured by the Minister in question that he has acted appropriately at all times. I expect all members of Parliament, and all political parties, to fully comply with campaign finance laws. If anyone—I stress anyone—has any allegations to make I urge them to provide that information to the NSW Electoral Commission. Make no mistake about that, I will not tolerate any wrongdoing. If the Electoral Commission determines there is a case to answer I will act.

PARAMEDICS WELLBEING PROGRAM

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) (14:25): My question is addressed to the Premier. What is the Government doing to support the State's paramedics?

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order. The member for Keira will come to order. I remind the member for Bankstown that she was called to order yesterday. I will not tolerate any interjections from her today.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:25): I note the strong advocacy of the member for Wagga Wagga because our Government is about to open a new ambulance station in Wagga Wagga. I thank him for my recent successful visit to Wagga Wagga, and I hope to do it again in the near future. I am sure all members of this place would agree that we are fortunate to have thousands of hardworking paramedics who rescue us from danger every day. Paramedics literally save and protect lives, and ensure the community feels safe at all times. They are men and women who at times put their own safety and wellbeing at risk to support the lives

of others. It is no surprise that paramedics are regarded by the community as some of the most trusted members amongst us. This morning at Sydney ambulance station, together with the Minister for Health, NSW Ambulance Chief Executive Dominic Morgan and the Secretary of the Health Services Union, I announced significant reforms to improve death and disability cover for our paramedics.

[*Interruption*]

You could never afford to do it. You could never do this. You never managed to do this but we have acted.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members who do not wish to listen to the Premier's answer may leave the Chamber.

Ms Yasmin Catley: I am congratulating her. It is about time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I accept those congratulations. Under these important reforms paramedics will have access to specialised health services to prevent on-the-job injuries and their incomes will be protected for at least five years in the unfortunate event they are injured at work.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bankstown will come to order. She is not funny; nor was the joke of the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I do not think paramedics find this funny either. The package I announced this morning is a \$48 million investment. As we know, it is not just about the dollars; it is also about the outcomes this will deliver. These reforms will deliver healthier and better protected paramedics. The Government will invest \$20 million over 2½ years and then \$5 million every year for a paramedic wellbeing program. This will provide our frontline medical staff with dedicated psychological, physiotherapy and other health services aimed at ensuring paramedics stay safe and well. These medical professionals will provide advice for paramedics on training and education, liaise with practitioners regarding best-practice management and develop strategies to prevent injuries from occurring, as well as best-practice treatment options. The funding package also provides increased income protection for at least five years—something for which the paramedics have been arguing for a considerable time.

This is a good outcome for paramedics and the people of New South Wales. This Government will work with all stakeholders to achieve positive outcomes for our community. As Premier, I will listen to anyone with reasonable concerns. That is exactly what happened in this case. Our frontline paramedics need our support and I am proud we have been able to provide it. Today's announcement will have a positive impact in the suburbs of Sydney, regional centres and remote communities. Paramedics do an incredible job in assisting all of us, particularly the most vulnerable in our community. They are the first responders to what is often the most traumatic time in someone's life.

This morning when the Minister for Health and I visited the Sydney Control Centre at Eveleigh I was fortunate enough to meet some of our hardworking ambulance staff and paramedics. It was a stark reminder of what they do for us day in and day out. I met someone who had been on the job for eight days. I also met someone who had been on the job for nearly 40 years. That level of dedication and service is truly outstanding. Whether they had been there for eight days or 40 years, they knew the importance of their role and the amount of community service they provide. On behalf of all us I say we are proud of the work they do and we will continue to support them. I am pleased to note that New South Wales ambulance response times have improved in the past five years. There is always more work to do, but I am pleased that they have improved. In 2015-16 for the fiftieth percentile priority 1A—the highest priority category—response times were just under eight minutes. [*Extension of time*]

As part of the last budget I was pleased to announce funding for an additional 85 frontline ambulance staff. We are also improving ambulance stations across the State. I am very pleased that Kempsey will get a new ambulance station and that the Wagga Wagga station will open later this year. Construction has commenced on stations at Harden, Ardlethan and Coolamon. I am also pleased that planning is underway for Berry, Molong and Griffith ambulance stations. The construction of seven new superstations is underway at Blacktown, Bankstown, Kogarah, Liverpool, Northmead, Artarmon and Penrith.

The Government has also delivered seven new multipurpose ambulance vehicles, which are equipped with mechanical aids to ensure paramedics have the support they need to reduce health and safety risks when transporting patients. Our Government is delivering for paramedics' health and wellbeing. We are delivering for the community by increasing the number of paramedics and also providing them with the support they need. I thank the paramedics for their amazing work. I am proud to be part of a government that has the resources, the will and the compassion to support our frontline workers.

POLITICAL DONATIONS

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) (14:32): My question is directed to the Premier. I refer the Premier to her earlier answer to a question by the Leader of the Opposition. Why is Mike Gallacher not one of her Ministers but the member for Castle Hill is?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:32): Why is the member for Maroubra no longer the shadow Treasurer?

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will come to order. The Premier has the call and will be heard in silence.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I have to make an admission. Last week the Leader of the Opposition demonstrated he was unable to read a balance sheet for the construction cost of a project.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The member for Maroubra asked me about who is in Cabinet. It is only appropriate that I respond by talking about who is in shadow Cabinet or otherwise. I say on that basis it was evident to me that the Leader of the Opposition has no economic credentials and the shadow Treasurer has no economic credentials.

Ms Kate Washington: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. The Premier is not being remotely relevant to the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Port Stephens will resume her seat. There is no point of order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: My point is that the only person with experience in finance in government was sacked from that role by the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition has a lot of questions to answer.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra will be heard in silence. What is the member's point of order?

Mr Michael Daley: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. Mike Baird stood Mike Gallacher down in an instant but the Premier will not stand down the member for Castle Hill.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the first time. If the member for Maroubra is called to order three times he will be removed from the Chamber.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The only person with economic credentials was sacked as shadow Treasurer and since his arrival the member for Kogarah has been demoted right down the front bench. On that basis members opposite have no credibility on this issue.

REGIONAL SERVICES

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore) (14:36): My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. How is the Government delivering quality frontline services to the people of regional New South Wales?

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional New South Wales, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business) (14:36): I thank the member for Lismore for his sensible question on the important topic of delivering frontline services in regional New South Wales. Only last month the member welcomed 14 new medical interns and 28 new nurses and midwives to the fantastic \$240 million redeveloped Lismore Base Hospital. I congratulate him. The sheer scale of regional New South Wales means that State-funded frontline services in the bush are often the glue that holds our communities together. In some cases they are the reason that some of our towns exist.

Of course, ensuring the delivery of frontline services in regional New South Wales has been our focus since the day we were elected in 2011. What frontline services are our regional communities talking about? Health is the first. We have allocated \$2 billion to building hospitals across regional New South Wales such as those at Wagga Wagga, Lismore, Dubbo, Tamworth, Bega, Armidale, Port Macquarie, Byron, Kempsey, Parkes and Forbes. We have allocated \$120 million for new upgraded ambulance stations in 15 rural areas. We also recognise that investment in health services is not just about bricks and mortar; it is about the fantastic people within our hospitals who are serving our communities. Since 2012 the health workforce has increased by 3,600 full-time equivalent staff as a result of this Government investing in frontline services.

The SPEAKER: Order! If the member for Cessnock wishes to have a private conversation he will do so outside the Chamber.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: It is also important to make sure that we are creating the workforce of the future. I am proud to say that the Government is funding 300 training places for diploma of nursing students each year for three years and funding the cost of their clinical placement to ensure we will have the workforce to support and care for our communities. Robyn Johnstone, who is 47, recently completed a diploma of nursing at the Hunter TAFE Kurri Kurri campus. Ms Johnstone said she had her doubts before undertaking the diploma. "I didn't have much confidence as a stay-at-home mum," she said. She also said, "If you had told me that I would be where I am now, I wouldn't have believed you." Ms Johnstone, who had previously worked in aged care, said that there was support available to help her through her studies.

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO: She said, "There was always help out here—there was the TAFE library, extra tutorials available and I was in a learning community, where there were about eight of us who were very similar and helped each other along." She continued, "Even though it was hard I never thought of giving up." These are the differences we are making, investing in training and investing in the workforce that will support our communities in the future.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: We know that in regional New South Wales police and emergency services are important. We have seen record investment addressing domestic violence and community safety funds for regional towns to improve street lighting and closed-circuit television along with police citizen youth club upgrades to provide young people with places to meet and engage with local role models. It is about the people on the ground helping our communities. Again, police numbers are at a record high; authorised strength is currently 16,730. When it comes to education in regional New South Wales and right across New South Wales members have seen our investment in the Rural and Remote Education Program, the Connecting Country Schools Program, and of course the significant investment in our schools to create great teaching and learning environments.

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO: We are seeing an additional 800 teachers across New South Wales, part of the commitment by our Government in making sure our communities are well placed. It is also an important time to take note of those opposite and their focus on regional New South Wales. I thought I would jump on the Labor website and of course the famous Country Labor website.

The SPEAKER: Order! If the member for Port Stephens continues to interject she will be placed on three calls to order and removed from the Chamber.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: There is an impressive photograph on Country Labor's front page. There is the former leader of the Labor Party. There is a picture of the future leader of the Labor Party, the member for Maroubra, but the Leader of the Opposition was not part of the photograph taken of Country Labor. [*Extension of time*]

The current leader of the Labor Party and Leader of the Opposition has no focus on or care about regional New South Wales. But it does not end there.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. I am interested in regional New South Wales too. The Minister has a lot more to do than troll our website

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Strathfield will resume her seat. She will stop yelling. I call the member for Strathfield to order for the first time.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: The last time I checked Strathfield was not part of regional New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting. I call the member for Londonderry to order for the second time.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: On that famous Country Labor website is its dialogue for regional New South Wales, and there has been no activity since March 2016.

The SPEAKER: Order! If the member for Strathfield argues into the microphone and across the table again she will be placed on three calls to order and removed from the Chamber.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: My point of order is the same as I raised before. It is about relevance and trolling our website.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have heard the member's point of order. I caution the Minister and ask him to return to the leave of the question.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: It is relevant. It is relevant in relation to those opposite who claim to be the alternative government and it is about their focus on regional New South Wales and delivering frontline services. I went to their media printout section—blank page. Nothing to say about regional New South Wales. I went to "Events". No events yet for regional New South Wales.

Ms Yasmin Catley: Point of order: Madam Speaker, you asked the Minister to return to the question and he is not adhering to the ruling. I am very disappointed about that.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am surprised the member for Swansea is disappointed—Opposition members do that every day. I caution the Minister to return to the leave of the question.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: That is a message for the Opposition.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Lakemba and the member for Maroubra will cease shouting across the Chamber. It is disrespectful.

POLITICAL DONATIONS

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (14:43): My question is directed to the Premier. Why does the Premier have the Liberal Party, which invented the Millennium Forum and the Free Enterprise Foundation, investigating the Liberal Party, given its serial evasion of the State's electoral laws?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:44): I assume the member was in the Chamber when I answered the first question. I find it very curious, given those opposite think it is a very serious issue, why a senior member of the Opposition front bench is not asking me that question. I refer the member for Londonderry to my first answer in this place earlier in question time where I indicated the action that—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is answering the question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: —the Liberal Party had taken in relation to the Electoral Commission and I urge her and anybody else who has any allegations to send them to the Electoral Commission.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will not go into very much detail, unless members opposite want me to, because they have not exactly covered themselves in glory on this issue.

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

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier remains relevant to the question she was asked. The member for Strathfield will resume her seat.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I again refer those opposite to my first answer and urge them to follow process. If they have any allegations they should make them to the relevant authorities.

STATE BUSHFIRES

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES (Barwon) (14:46): My question is addressed to the Minister for Police, and the Minister for Emergency Services. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is supporting our emergency services and those communities affected by the recent fires?

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Minister for Police, and Minister for Emergency Services) (14:46): I thank the member for Barwon for his question. I am pleased to be able to update the House, not only on the conditions and the assessments that occurred from that horrible weekend we faced with catastrophic fire conditions but also the following weekend when other communities were savagely affected by unbelievable fire conditions and we had an unbelievable volunteer effort. I also apologise for my late arrival at question time yesterday as I was returning from the fireground in Coonabarabran where I went to check on the recovery efforts.

The harsh weather conditions that this State faced were extraordinary and unprecedented. In just eight days, from 11 February and after I informed this House through to last weekend on 18 February, we have had 600 fires across the State and many of these were devastating. When I last addressed the House a number of fires were still not contained. The assessment and full damage was not known at that time but I can update the House since the assessment teams have been on the ground. We have lost a total of 56 homes and 200 other buildings have been destroyed. A further 26 homes and 85 other buildings have been damaged across six separate fires. As

I was briefing the shadow Minister for this portfolio, and will continue to do so, some of those most recent fires occurred in the Deputy Premier's electorate.

The Carwoola fire near Queanbeyan last Friday destroyed 11 homes and 45 other structures. The Sir Ivan fire near Dunedoo, in the electorate of the member for Barwon, destroyed 35 homes and 133 other structures, which included a church and community hall. In the Dondingalong fire near Kempsey we lost two homes and seven other structures. In the Pappinbarra fire near Wauchope, six homes were lost with 11 other structures destroyed. In the Binalong Road fire at Boggabri, one home and two other structures were destroyed, and the White Cedars Road fire in my own electorate near Mudgee destroyed one home and two other structures. I inform the House that some 5,700 kilometres of fencing has been destroyed in these fires, an extraordinary amount. Whilst it has not been possible to complete the count, Local Land Services has informed me that 3,400 head of stock have been lost in these fires, with the figures potentially reaching the 10,000 mark once the assessments have been completed.

It is hard to fathom the extent of the damage caused by these fires. To bring it into stark reality—and I know this is appreciated by every member in this place—56 houses have been lost. That is 56 families who have lost just about everything, 56 families who no longer have a home and their beloved possessions, who now walk around their former home sites, which I did yesterday with a couple of those people affected, and see them lying in ruins amongst twisted metal. The extent of the damage is hard to comprehend. As I said, the fires burnt through several hundred sheds, and within those sheds were the very tools that these primary producers need—their tractors and tools and all the equipment to farm and produce an income have been destroyed. The recovery effort from these fires will be an immense journey for each of these communities. I heard stories from those on the ground of the devastating power of these destructive fires that Mother Nature threw at these communities.

I spent 20-odd years working alongside emergency services and I have always been a great admirer of what they do in our communities. Having seen their latest efforts, that admiration has not diminished as I proudly serve them as their Minister. We should be mindful that a number of our firefighters who have been engaged in these six fires have lost their own homes while they were defending the homes of others. I met two of them, Murray Coe and Captain Graham Goodman, whom I have known for a couple of years. They are proud men, they are community men, and their commitment to their communities and their service above self is extraordinary. I am sure they would not be embarrassed if I were to tell the House that they are shaken by the events. As I walked around the twisted wreck of Graham's home, the only thing he could talk to me about was his concern that everyone else around him—his neighbours—was being looked after. That was probably one of the most powerful conversations I have had with an individual for some time. *[Extension of time]*

Despite all this, I am optimistic. I am sure the House will agree that the nature of Australia has been on show and has been demonstrated in extraordinary ways in response to the devastating impacts of these fires. When I was at Dunedoo Showground I saw that the Country Women's Association has taken over a hall where it is collecting donated food, clothes, goods and supplies. The donations are up to the roof and are filling up sheds. The generosity of the Australian community has been unparalleled. The member for Barwon would know that 70 road trains rolled into the area carrying fodder for those farmers—an extraordinary act of generosity. The volunteers have also been supported.

Yesterday I had breakfast with a number of champions—700 volunteers who are not from that area but who had left their homes, their families and their work to go up there to give relief to the local firefighters. I met many of them from the North Coast where they had their own fires which are now contained. Bellingen firefighters were at Coonabarabran helping out around Dunedoo. From Ulladulla and from every member's communities firefighters and volunteers have been there in great numbers. Members should go back to their electorates and, on behalf of all of us, give them a vote of thanks and send the message that the community up there is extraordinarily appreciative of their efforts.

The recovery arrangements are well and truly in train; the declarations have been made that trigger the assistance that the State and Federal governments can provide, but a bigger effort will be required over the course of many months and years ahead. These people need to rebuild their lives and their incomes and they need to be reassured on behalf of everyone who sits in this place that we are all with them and that our arms are wrapped around them as they undergo a difficult journey.

POLITICAL DONATIONS

Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (14:53): My question is directed to the Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Disability Services. Was property developer Jack Iori telling the truth when he told the *Daily Telegraph* "I get on very well with Ray. I give him \$990 every year"?

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Disability Services) (14:54): I fully support the statement made previously by the Premier. Allegations made today regarding me are completely false and I refute them entirely. All donations made on behalf of a conference I have represented have been made directly to the Liberal Party of Australia, NSW Division, as is required by law. I welcome this immediate investigation into these allegations. I will continue to engage with my electorate and the people of New South Wales on issues relating to my portfolios. I look forward to my good name being cleared.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (14:55): My question is addressed to the Minister for Family and Community Services, Minister for Social Housing, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. How is the Government delivering better services to the most vulnerable in our community?

Ms PRU GOWARD (Goulburn—Minister for Family and Community Services, Minister for Social Housing, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (14:55): I thank the member for Seven Hills for his question. I know that he is determined to support the most vulnerable in his community and that he takes a passionate interest in ensuring that the services provided to them are the best they can be. This Government is strongly committed to supporting the most disadvantaged and vulnerable across the State. Whether it is in domestic violence, child protection or social housing, this Government continues to improve our services. Our strong economic performance, driven by the leadership of our Premier when she was Treasurer, means that we are able to provide better services right across my portfolios. Our economic management has meant that we have been able to completely transform our response to domestic violence through better and record investment. I remind the House where we started after 16 years of the failed Labor Government.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: In 2011 the Auditor-General said that Labor's "response to domestic and family violence remains fragmented ... Organisations do not have a strategy for working together ... there is no shared understanding between organisations of each other's roles". That was after 16 years. In contrast this Government is creating a domestic and family violence system that responds consistently and effectively.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: I am delighted that Safer Pathway, the integrated multi-agency response to high-risk domestic violence victims, is now operating in 18 sites, and that a further nine sites will commence next month, which will help victims in communities including Campbelltown, Griffith, the northern beaches, Lismore, Tamworth, Bourke, Queanbeyan, the Hunter Valley and St George. I have been to communities around the State where Safer Pathway sites have been rolled out. I have met with local police, the local Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service [WDVCAS] workers and specialist domestic violence services and they have told me about the difference Safer Pathway is making for domestic violence victims.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: No longer are victims having to retell their story to a multitude of government agencies, one after another and no longer are individual agencies offering support in isolation.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Ms PRU GOWARD: This year's budget allocates \$53 million over four years to take Safer Pathway sites across the entire State. One can imagine my surprise when Opposition members claimed last month that the Government had been sitting on its hands, not rolling out Safer Pathways. That is what they said. I would hardly call rolling out 21 sites this financial year sitting on our hands. Sitting on its hands is exactly what Labor did for 16 years. Labor members do not like it but that is what they did; they hate admitting it but they did.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: We are also delivering better services to our most vulnerable through improvements to the child protection system. New South Wales is the first State in Australian history to gain accreditation for its government-run out-of-home-care service. This is a great achievement for Family and Community Services and our wonderful frontline caseworkers. It certainly was not achieved under Labor. Through accreditation we are creating a safer and healthier future for children and young people, their families and carers. Accreditation was gained through consistent and purposeful home visiting, improved follow-up casework, better record management and improved structure and long-term planning in casework. [*Extension of time*]

That means that children and young people in out-of-home care have an allocated caseworker, have a case plan, receive regular purposeful home visiting that builds relationship-based practice to ensure child safety and wellbeing having carers who are authorised and supported in their role, annual carer reviews, more comprehensive five-year carer reviews as well as ongoing training and support.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: In addition, caseworkers on the front line are seeing more children who are at risk of significant harm through face-to-face assessments than ever before. I am advised that under those opposite caseworkers were seeing around one in five children at risk of significant harm. They are now seeing almost one in three. We are also providing better services to our social housing tenants. We are committed to a large-scale building program under Future Directions to deliver new social, affordable and private housing. Future Directions will increase the supply of social and affordable housing, create a more diversified continuum of housing where people are supported to avoid or to leave social housing where they have the capacity.

It will mean our system is more flexible, more innovative, more contestable and, more importantly, it will provide more opportunities and support for social housing tenants so that we can break that cycle of intergenerational disadvantage. Just on Monday I went with the member for Parramatta to Telopea to discuss our Future Directions program and see how it will transform Telopea with better housing and services. As part of that, we have also established tradie pop-ups where residents are able to meet their contractors and have maintenance work carried out. We will continue to be a government that delivers for the vulnerable. We will continue to be the champions of social reform in New South Wales. That is all possible because of the strong economic management of this Government.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (15:02): My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Given that the desirable ratio of palliative care physicians is one per 100,000 people and that home-based palliative care is known to reduce the burden on our stretched health system, what is the Government doing to fund the current shortfall, particularly in regional areas?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research) (15:03): I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for the question. It is great to have a question that addresses such a pertinent issue for the entire Australian community. It is always great when I go to the member's area to see his association with his community. Whether we are visiting Aboriginal communities or other groups, he has a connection and I am sure that is where this question comes from. This is a challenging area. The health budget right across the country, let alone in New South Wales, sits at around \$100 billion. Of that \$100 billion, \$5 billion, one-twentieth, is spent on people in their last year of life and, of that, just \$100 million right across the country is spent on the sorts of services that members in this place know we need, that is, good end-of-life support. That in itself indicates that across the country we have an issue. I will say in a few minutes what good work we are doing in New South Wales. It is not enough; obviously we have to do more, but we are doing some good work here.

I strongly suggest to all members who have an interest in this that they should look at this report. In 2014 the Grattan Institute put together an excellent report called "Dying well". The concept that it sets out is fascinating because it talks about the fact that 100 years ago the majority of people died in their own homes. But we have now institutionalised it, hospitalised it and sterilised it, and that is an issue. If I asked any one of us here—and we would be a fairly typical group—about 70 per cent of us would say that we want to die at home. That makes sense because people want to be with their family, friends and support network and want to die in that environment knowing they have love and care. In reality only about 14 per cent of people currently die at home so we have a lot to do because the entire medical area has become so institutionalised. I have an interesting quote from that report, which said:

The concept of a good death has been superseded by the concept of a managed death, one that requires support and knowledge ... and takes place in a hospital, or more rarely a hospice, resulting in modern death becoming 'cellular, private, curtailed, individualised and obscured'.

I met in the last couple of weeks with the Cancer Institute and the Cancer Council—both in the same room—to talk about these sorts of issues. Professor David Currow made the point that one of the great challenges we have is that while we focus on trying to bring a much more community-based capacity to die well, we are still very short of trained nurses and doctors in this palliative care area. We have some control over this issue but not a lot because much of it is in the Federal sphere through the universities. I say to members in this place and to the universities that they need to think about this because unfortunately what they are doing is training people for yesterday and not for our future. In the next 25 years, with the baby boomers coming through, the number of people who will die will double. It is a serious issue.

When the Coalition came to government—and I direct this to the member for Lake Macquarie particularly—in that first year, 2012, we put in \$86 million plus. We then loaded on another \$32 million and another \$35 million in subsequent years. That is aimed at working with community care, trying to make sure that we get that connection through the community. In fact, a review was done which led to a blueprint being published. That blueprint was through one of the clinical study groups and that identified the sorts of focuses we needed to make through the local health districts right across New South Wales. I remind members of what I said at the outset: \$100 million right across the country. In the first year of the Liberal-Nationals Government coming to office we allocated \$86 million, followed by another \$32 million and another \$35 million. We are doing better than probably any other State or Territory but we are not doing enough. That is an issue I will certainly be discussing—*[Time expired.]*

Mr Greg Piper: I was so absorbed in the answer, Madam Speaker, that I neglected to ask for an extension.

The SPEAKER: The member for Lake Macquarie was clearly listening to and was interested in the answer.

Mr Greg Piper: Very much so. It is unusual for this House to have such an interesting—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister's time has expired. I cannot grant an extension.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I will raise the issue at the Council of Australian Governments and I am happy to talk to the member as well.

Mr Clayton Barr: Suspend standing orders.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Cessnock was not listening. Why is he talking about suspending standing orders?

Mr Clayton Barr: I absolutely was. I have a long history—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Cessnock will not argue with me.

Mr Clayton Barr: I have a long history with palliative care and the cancer industry. I was listening with deep interest.

The SPEAKER: Do not argue with me.

Mr Clayton Barr: I am not arguing with you; I am correcting you.

The SPEAKER: The member for Cessnock will leave the Chamber.

[Interruption]

Mr Clayton Barr: You have no idea of the work that I did with people who needed palliative care prior to my time in here and you disrespect me by saying what you just said. It is disgusting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I direct the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms to remove the member for Cessnock from the Chamber under Standing Order 249. The member may return to the Chamber in 24 hours.

[The member for Cessnock left the Chamber at 3.09 p.m. accompanied by the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms.]

STATE FINANCES

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) (15:09): I address my question to the Treasurer, and the Minister for Industrial Relations. Will the Minister inform the House of the importance of the triple-A credit rating to the New South Wales Government and its service delivery strategy?

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Hawkesbury—Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations) (15:10): I thank the member for his question and for his interest in strong financial management. As the member and the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure know, a triple-A credit rating provides a number of tangible benefits for the people of New South Wales. It allows the State to raise funds at the lowest possible cost. When interest costs are low it means that the Government can spend more on vital services while keeping the debt ratio down. The triple-A credit rating is an important indicator of the State's robust fiscal performance, the transparency and effectiveness of the institutions and a sound economic position. Thanks to the Government's hard work, the State has a budget in surplus, the economy is leading the nation and there is near zero debt. Unlike those opposite, members on this side of the House will manage the State's finances responsibly in line with the Fiscal Responsibility Act and consistent with the triple-A credit metrics.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting or they will join the member for Cessnock outside the Chamber. The member for Rockdale will cease interjecting.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: The Government does not believe in fiscal responsibility simply because it sounds good. It believes in fiscal responsibility because of what it achieves. It is only with strong financial management that the Government can deliver the services and infrastructure that this State needs. There is a direct link between strong budgets and strong service delivery. There is a reason that there are budget surpluses at the same time as this Government is building record infrastructure across the State.

Labor sees government as a giant press release and useful only for what it can promise and spin. Labor puts words before actions, spin before substance and politics before people. Every step of the way on the journey to this strong financial position Labor has opposed the Government. When the Government made tough decisions on public service wage reform, the Labor Party said "No." When the Government started the asset recycling campaign to fund more services and productive infrastructure, the Labor Party said "No." When the Coalition consolidated government services into the world-leading Service NSW, the Labor Party said "No."

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: As the Government built WestConnex for the mums and dads across Western Sydney, the Labor Party said "No." For every project, reform and initiative that the Government presents the Labor Party says "No." That is the difference between Liberal and Labor governments: Labor governments talk about projects that they will never deliver.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bankstown will cease interjecting.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: Labor does not do the hard work to improve our finances. The Coalition's role is not only to deliver record infrastructure and services, but also to protect every family, community and business in the State from the economic vandalism of members opposite. One of the first things the Government did in 2011 was to introduce the Fiscal Responsibility Act, also known as the "Labor protection Act". This Act serves as an iron dome protecting the taxpayers of New South Wales against Labor's financial irresponsibility; it is an insurance policy for the good people of this State. They know that when Labor finally wins an election in 2096 it will do what Labor does every time it comes to office. [*Extension of time*]

It was visible with Wayne Swan and Kevin Rudd, who plunged the country into deficit after inheriting surpluses and billions of dollars in the bank. There are some things that Labor will always deliver: debt, deficit and destruction.

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: The Minister for Transport and Infrastructure knows, the Minister for Planning knows and the Special Minister of State knows what Labor will never learn: that is, that strong financial management and strong service delivery are two sides of the same coin.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Rockdale to order for the second time. The member for Shellharbour will come to order. I call the member for Londonderry to order for the third time. I call the member for Kogarah to order for the first time. I call the member for Maitland to order for the first time. I call the member for Shellharbour to order for the first time.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: We cannot have one without the other. As the Government's strong financial commitment to this State continues, the Berejiklian-Barilaro Government will continue to deliver the best services to the people of this great State.

Members

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL VACANCY

The SPEAKER: I report a message from His Excellency the Governor:

DAVID HURLEY
Governor

Government House
Sydney, 22 February 2017

I, General The Honourable DAVID HURLEY, AC, DSC (Ret'd), in pursuance of the power and authority vested in me as Governor of the State of New South Wales, do hereby convene a joint sitting of the Members of the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly for the purpose of the election of a person to fill the seat in the Legislative Council vacated by Ms Jan Barham, and I do hereby announce and declare that such Members shall assemble for such purpose on Wednesday the 22nd day of February 2017 at 3:45 pm in the building known as the Legislative Council Chamber situated in Macquarie Street in the City of Sydney; and the Members of the Legislative Council and the Members of the Legislative Assembly are hereby required to give their attendance at the said time and place accordingly.

In order that the Members of both Houses of Parliament may be duly informed of the convening of the joint sitting, I have this day addressed a like message to the President of the Legislative Council.

I direct that the joint sitting with the Legislative Council for an election of a member of the Legislative Council be set down as an order of the day for 3.45 p.m. today, as appointed in His Excellency's message.

Business of the House

SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: AUSLAN INTERPRETER

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended at this sitting to permit an accredited AUSLAN interpreter to be present on the floor of the House for the purpose of translating the inaugural speech of the member for Canterbury.

Motion agreed to.

Petitions

PETITIONS

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

Pet Shops

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

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**.

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**.

Air Quality

Petition requesting the establishment of a real time air quality monitoring system, with a monitor to be positioned at Boggabri, received from **Mr Kevin Humphries**.

The CLERK: I announce that the following petition signed by more than 500 persons has been lodged for presentation:

Daylight Saving

Petition requesting the reduction of daylight saving by one month to conclude on the first Sunday in March each year, received from **Mr Adam Marshall**.

Business of the House

ROD STOWE, FAIR TRADING COMMISSIONER

Reordering

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (15:19): I move:

That the General Business Notice of Motion (General Motion) given by me this day [Commissioner for Fair Trading] have precedence on Thursday 23 February 2017.

I will explain to the House why this motion should be reordered. The motion acknowledges and congratulates the Fair Trading Commissioner, Mr Rod Stowe, PSM, on his 40 years of continuous service to the people of

New South Wales. This motion is timely. Commissioner Stowe's significant and rare anniversary took place last week, on Tuesday 14 February.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. The member for Holsworthy has the call and will be heard in silence.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: I am sure I speak for many of us in this House and in the wider community in commending the commissioner for his tireless service, his commitment to consumer protection and his professionalism. Commissioner Stowe has displayed these qualities every day of his 40 years of service to the people of New South Wales. Commissioner Stowe has served Ministers from both sides of politics with equal loyalty and vigour and has earned widespread professional respect and personal friendship across party lines. Commissioner Stowe is a consummate public servant and in many ways a role model for others to emulate. I am told that there would be few bureaucrats with whom Ministers would find it easier to work.

Commissioner Stowe started his 40-year career as a Clean Water Act licensing clerk in the State Pollution Control Commission. Side trips through the Department of Education and the State Superannuation Board eventually landed him in the Consumer and Business Affairs portfolio, which he has made his professional home for much of the past 30 years. He has notched up many achievements in that time, including being appointed Fair Trading Commissioner in July 2011. Most recently Commissioner Stowe successfully established Australia's first consumer complaints register, in August last year, empowering consumers and giving traders a strong incentive to improve their customer service and compliance with consumer law.

From 2009 he played an integral role in the development of the Australian Consumer Law, a landmark in consumer protection and interjurisdictional cooperation. As the regulator of several key sectors of the community, Commissioner Stowe is also widely respected in the business community and as a public servant whose door is always open. It was for those and many other reasons that he was deservedly awarded the Public Service Medal following the commencement of the Australian Consumer Law in 2011. I am sure I speak for many of us in the House and in the wider community in commending him for his tireless service and his commitment to consumer protection and professionalism. These are qualities that Commissioner Stowe has displayed every day of his 40 years of service to the people of New South Wales. There are many people who have the opportunity to serve, but not many who have the opportunity to do it for 40 years. With the anniversary last week, it is fitting that this motion be reordered to honour this milestone.

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (15:22): Everybody in this House wishes the Fair Trading Commissioner well. It is important that a motion is moved in this House to recognise his work. However, it is also important that a motion is moved to recognise that we have a Minister for WestConnex and Minister for Western Sydney, the member for Penrith, who is failing to stand up for his community. A toll will be introduced on the M4 sometime this year, and this Minister has every opportunity to stop that happening.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Drummoyne will cease interjecting.

Ms JODI McKAY: The toll will be up \$4.21 each way for people travelling from the Minister's electorate. I am happy to give the Minister the figures if he does not have them. It is important that this Minister knows that about \$2,000 a year—

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

Ms JODI McKAY: Constituents in his electorate will pay about \$2,000 a year in tolls. What makes it even worse is that the toll will rise above the consumer price index [CPI], at about 4 per cent a quarter. This toll will exist for 43 years. Both of us will be long gone by then, quite possibly. It will last 43 years, until 2060. This is the first time in this House that the Minister has been given the opportunity to speak on WestConnex and to say what he is going to do. Labor has a policy on tolls that it would like the Government to adopt. I am happy to tell the House about it. It involves the Auditor-General and the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] making sure that tolls do not rise above CPI.

Whichever way we look, we will see tolls in this city. There will be tolls on the M4, the M4 East, the M5 and the M4-M5 Link. We will see tolls on NorthConnex, on the M6 and on the Northern Beaches tunnel. We want the Minister for WestConnex and Minister for Western Sydney to tell the people of Western Sydney what he is going to do. Right now he is silent. He is refusing to talk about the tax that he is going to impose on the people of Western Sydney. Labor's motion is critical. Labor has a clear and transparent policy on tolls. We do not want the secretive Sydney Motorway Corporation to be in charge. We want to see the involvement of IPART and the Auditor-General, and we do not want tolls to rise above CPI.

Mr John Sidoti: What is your policy?

Ms JODI McKAY: The member for Drummoyne would know it if he paid attention.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Drummoyne will cease interjecting.

Ms JODI McKAY: The situation at the moment, which the Government is a party to, is that the secretive Sydney Motorway Corporation is working with the toll companies and there is no transparency whatsoever. The freedom of information laws do not appear to apply to the Sydney Motorway Corporation. There is no transparency. The involvement of IPART and the Auditor-General will ensure transparency.

Mr Anthony Roberts: Point of order: Let me make this quite clear—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Strathfield will resume her seat.

Mr Anthony Roberts: There is an arrangement between both sides of the House about debate on priority motions. If the Opposition does not stick to the arrangement, the Government will have a very close look at it.

Ms JODI McKAY: It is a debate about reordering.

Mr Anthony Roberts: We will have a close look at that too.

Ms JODI McKAY: The Leader of the House has no idea what he is doing.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Strathfield will resume her seat.

Ms JODI McKAY: I am happy to take those extra 15 seconds to talk about tolls. [*Time expired.*]

The SPEAKER: The question is that the notice of motion standing in the name of the member for Holsworthy have precedence on Thursday 23 February.

The House divided.

Ayes50

Noes36

Majority.....14

AYES

Anderson, Mr K
Barilaro, Mr J
Brookes, Mr G
Coure, Mr M
Dominello, Mr V
Fraser, Mr A
Goward, Ms P
Hazzard, Mr B
Humphries, Mr 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
Elliott, Mr D
George, Mr T
Grant, Mr T
Henskens, Mr A
Johnsen, Mr M
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
Evans, Mr L
Gibbons, Ms M
Gulaptis, Mr C
Hodgkinson, Ms K
Kean, 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
Catley, Ms Y
Crakanthorp, Mr T
Donato, Mr P
Foley, Mr L
Harrison, Ms J
Kamper, Mr S
Lynch, Mr P
Mehan, Mr D
Park, Mr R

Atalla, Mr E
Chanthivong, Mr A
Daley, Mr M
Doyle, Ms T
Greenwich, Mr A
Haylen, Ms J
Lalich, Mr N (teller)
McDermott, Dr H
Mihailuk, Ms T
Parker, Mr J

Car, Ms P
Cotsis, Ms S
Dib, Mr J
Finn, Ms J
Harris, Mr D
Hornery, Ms S
Leong, Ms J
McKay, Ms J
Minns, Mr C
Piper, Mr G

NOES

Robertson, Mr J
Washington, Ms KScully, Mr P
Watson, Ms A (teller)Warren, Mr G
Zangari, Mr G**Motion agreed to.***Motions Accorded Priority***REGIONAL SERVICES****Consideration**

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (15:31): My motion should be accorded priority because all day this House has heard good news stories about regional growth, economic development and infrastructure to deliver frontline services and this Government having the means to do that. This State has a triple-A credit rating as a result of the Treasurer's fiscal management, which enables this Government to provide those frontline services. The Deputy Premier spoke about regional infrastructure and economic growth. The Minister for Police spoke about the great work done by our Rural Fire Service and its volunteers. The Government must have the money to provide those services so that they can protect our properties and lands. A number of members on the front bench have spoken about the services that are needed in health, and the record number of nurses in our hospitals.

I note that the member for Strathfield said she was interested in regional New South Wales. It is nice to wake up with a new thought each morning. We have heard about the upgrade of our police stations and the employment of more police, the upgrade of our hospitals and the provision of frontline services, but how do we deliver that to the people of New South Wales? This Government's record investment of \$73.3 billion over four years is building New South Wales to provide services for those who need them. Members on this side of the House care for the people of New South Wales. Wake up and smell the roses.

POLITICAL LOBBYING**Consideration**

Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (15:35): My motion deserves priority because today's revelations of the Premier allowing every lobbyist and lurk merchant in the Liberal Party to get their grubby hands over the selection of the new Cabinet has consequences. No-one ever thought a cabinet, even one with 23 members, would include the Minister for Multiculturalism, the member for Castle Hill. No-one ever thought he was ministerial material. The poor old member for Drummoyne was in the Cabinet for four hours until the Premier was told by the faction bosses to dump him, take him off the list, and put the member for Castle Hill on it because of a stitch up on the North Shore preselection to knock over the candidate of the Leader of the House and put this bloke in.

Mr John Sidoti: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! Points of order during statements to establish priority are inappropriate. Opposition members will not interject when the Leader of the Opposition is speaking.

Mr LUKE FOLEY: That is sage advice Madam Speaker. The member for Kiama interjects, but he was never on anyone's list for the Cabinet. The Cabinet has gone from 20 when this mob were elected to 23. There are 17 parliamentary secretaries. Members of the Government should put up their hand if they have not got a job from this Premier. There is one, the member for Wollondilly. We all know he is unemployable. Every boy and girl gets a prize and this Minister was appointed by the powerbrokers, lobbyists and lurk merchants who run the show, and he has disgraced himself and his government within three weeks. Members should understand what this is about today. This hit did not come from the Opposition; it came from members opposite, such are the hatreds in their show.

This Premier is incapable of uniting the Liberal Party. This Premier is incapable of uniting her Government. This is a rabble falling apart in front of our eyes. That is what is going on and today, adding to the roll of dishonour; that is, the 11 who lost their jobs under O'Farrell and Baird when there were at least some standards. We have this collection, this roll of dishonour of 11 morons, misfits, miscreants and criminals who have lost their jobs, and today we add the member for Castle Hill. I say to the Premier, if you nurse a mug he will die in your arms. Do not nurse this mug, mark my words. He is finished because your colleagues will ensure it.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the motion moved by the member for Tamworth be accorded priority.

Motion agreed to.*Members***LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL VACANCY**

At 3.39 p.m. the House proceeded to the Legislative Council Chamber to attend a joint sitting to elect a member to fill a seat in the Legislative Council vacated by Ms Jan Barham, resigned.

At 3.55 p.m. the House reassembled.

The SPEAKER: I report that the House met with the Legislative Council in the Legislative Council Chamber this day for the purpose of electing a member to fill the seat in the Legislative Council rendered vacant by the resignation of Ms Jan Barham and that Dawn Elizabeth Walker was duly elected. I table the "Minutes of the Proceedings of the Joint Sitting of the Houses of Parliament of the State of New South Wales held on Wednesday 22 February 2017 to choose a person to fill the vacancy in the Legislative Council caused by the resignation of Ms Jan Barham." I order that the minutes of proceedings of the joint sitting be printed.

*Motions Accorded Priority***REGIONAL SERVICES****Priority**

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (15:56): I move—

Ms Jodi McKay: Madam Speaker, you have to put the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! I put the question earlier and Opposition members did not call for a division. The member for Maroubra knows what is going on.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that only with a strong economy can vital services be delivered across New South Wales.
- (2) Recognises the Government's record investment in frontline services, including a record number of nurses, teachers and police.

The record infrastructure investment of \$73.3 billion in New South Wales over the next four years did not happen by accident. This Government is boosting consumer and business confidence and making New South Wales the number one destination to live, work and do business. To achieve economic growth and development we need responsible fiscal management in order to build infrastructure and ultimately provide frontline services. Let us start by discussing health services in Tamworth. We received 16 new medical interns in 2017 and 18 the year before.

Since 2011 our police force has increased by 24 officers, we have a new police dog unit and we have eight more paramedics on the ground. Today Premier Gladys Berejiklian and Minister for Health Brad Hazzard announced that through responsible fiscal management we can provide funding for a better service for paramedics, who are among the most trusted and most called upon workers in the health sector, by improving their death and disability entitlements including income protection for the next five years. Again, that sort of thing does not happen by accident. It is because of the good management by this Government that we are able to provide such a service.

Over the past four years we have funded the completion of new and refurbished police stations in Belmont, Coffs Harbour, Moree, Morisset, Parkes and Walgett. We are continuing building works at Deniliquin, Southern Highlands, Toronto and Tweed Heads police stations. We have also committed to new major works at Gunnedah in the Tamworth electorate, Queanbeyan, and the Bay and Basin. The Queanbeyan police station has been allocated capital funding of \$17 million. Gunnedah and the Bay and Basin police stations have been allotted capital funding of \$5.5 million and \$5 million respectively. As for frontline services, we have boosted the State's nursing workforce by 3,600 full-time equivalents since June 2012. In 2015 we committed \$8 million over four years to increase the number of rural generalist training positions by 20, and in 2016, 35 full-time rural generalist training positions were available.

But why do we need a strong economy? We must continue to provide for our ageing population. People are living longer and health and age care costs are rising. The cost of living affects everything from education services to employing more teachers and investing capital to improve our schools. The decisions we make today and in the future will influence the long-term prosperity of New South Wales and the opportunities available to its people. We must continue to invest because it motivates communities to be active and employed. In that

environment there is less demand for services. We must strike a balance between driving economic growth and regional development and allocating funding to provide frontline services.

That is what is happening across New South Wales. The cranes we see in the sky are not there by accident. Great work is being done in the education sector under the new Minister, the Hon. Rob Stokes, on the back of the great work of the former Minister for Education. The Minister for Police, the Hon. Troy Grant, who is a decorated ex-policeman, is also doing wonderful work, as is the Hon. Brad Hazzard in the health sector. The Government is investing in frontline services. We are not only supporting those services but also ensuring they have first-class facilities. We are improving New South Wales.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (16:01): Here we are again on self-congratulation Wednesday. Every sitting week Government members get to their feet and give the same list of the same achievements over and over, reading the speeches that the Ministers' offices send down to them. I noticed today that the new Ministers read their speeches, which shows that the former Ministers had better command of their portfolios. I have an amendment to the motion. I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out paragraph (2) with a view to inserting instead:

"(2) Recognises that families across regional New South Wales are doing it increasingly tough with non-government organisations having to step in because of the Government's indifference."

Soon there will be a by-election in Gosford so I thought it would be good to focus on the Gosford region and the Government's efforts there since 2015. At the outset, I should mention that the former Liberal member for Gosford, Chris Holstein, was so disgusted with the Government that he resigned from the Liberal Party.

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 76, relevance. I do not see what relevance a former member of Parliament has to issues currently before the House, particularly rural and regional New South Wales, which is what we are debating today. I ask that the member for Wyong be brought back to the leave of the motion.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: I am talking about the Government's performance, which is what the motion is about.

Mr Gareth Ward: He is not in government; he is not here anymore.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: The motion is about the Government's performance. Sit down and be quiet.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I have not ruled on the point of order.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: Stop the clock. I do not have much time left to speak.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kiama and the member for Wyong will respect the Chair. The member for Wyong has the call.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: Since the last election the Government has closed the Roads and Maritime Services office in Woy Woy and closed the Fair Trading office in Gosford. It has moved more than 200 WorkCover jobs from Gosford back to Sydney. I talked recently to staff about the redevelopment of Gosford Hospital and they are very worried that the services promised in that redevelopment will not materialise. People in the Gosford electorate are seeing firsthand what good management from this Government is all about: cutting services and putting people last. We know the national unemployment figures but Morgan, which looks more realistically at unemployment, has reported that the area's unemployment rate is around 11 per cent. We know that people are unemployed or underemployed and there is a big push for part-time employment. The number of full-time jobs has gone through the floor in regional New South Wales while the rise in part-time jobs is making life harder and more uncertain.

We know that because great organisations like Coast Shelter, which cares for homeless and disadvantaged people on the Central Coast and in Gosford, tells us that demand for its services is going through the roof. More and more people are made homeless every day. More people are declaring bankruptcy. The latest figures for the December quarter show that Gosford has one of the highest bankruptcy rates in the State, both in business and personal insolvency because people cannot pay their bills. But that is no surprise because since 2011 weekly train fares for commuters have increased by 17.2 per cent and weekly bus fares by 17.7 per cent. People's annual electricity bills have increased by 48 per cent. Christine Burge, project coordinator for Mary Macs, a Woy Woy organisation that offers a wonderful service, recently said:

People ask me how business is and I say good. But it isn't good that the need for assistance is increasing in such a dramatic way.

More than 60 people come through its doors every day. Those people turn up to get food and have a shower—basic needs. Government members boast about their good work and how much they are spending but the truth is

that people are being left behind. This Government does not understand that; it does not understand the real pressure on families.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (16:06): That was a wonderful sad sack performance from the member for Wyong. Opposition members always think the glass is half empty. The fact is it is a pleasure to support the member for Tamworth and his priority motion because there is no doubt that only a strong economy can deliver the services we need. What has the Government done in New South Wales? We have delivered the strongest economy in the country. We have gone from last to first. Are we seeing the benefits of that in regional New South Wales? Yes, we are. Regional New South Wales is benefiting because in its first term the Government committed more than \$13 billion to revitalising important infrastructure and improving services in regional communities. Those services were left languishing for 16 years when Labor was in government. We are spending now because there is a huge backlog of work.

During our second term we have continued the momentum and committed a further \$6 billion from the long-term lease of 49 per cent of the State's electricity assets, \$3.7 billion for regional roads, \$1 billion for water security, \$600 million for schools and hospitals, \$400 million for rail freight and \$300 million for regional tourism and the environment. I see the benefits of regional infrastructure investment in my electorate. Some \$4.3 billion was spent on the Pacific Highway, 20 per cent of which was funded by the New South Wales Government. That is \$4.3 billion in my electorate alone. Some \$200 million is being spent on the second crossing of the Clarence River at Grafton. Bob Carr made that promise in 2007—he gave an ironclad guarantee—and the people of the Clarence Valley and Grafton are still waiting for Bob Carr to come good on that commitment.

We know that Labor, whether under Bob Carr or Luke Foley, will never deliver for regional communities because Labor has never done it in the past; it has a poor track record and we cannot expect it to deliver in the future. In 2015 an additional 90 police were sent to the six local area commands on the North Coast. That is, on average, an additional 15 police per local area command. Those areas needed those officers because Labor never looked after us during the 16 years it was in government. We have 24/7 policing in Casino. We have additional schoolteachers under the Gonski funding model. [*Time expired.*]

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (16:10): I object to the proposition contained in the first paragraph of the motion. It is not only when there is a strong economy that vital services should be delivered by government; the role of government should be to deliver services in good times and in bad. It is the duty of the State to deliver services in good times and in bad. In fact, it is fundamental to the party of which I am a member that services are delivered by the State whether the economic times are good or bad. We will have a debate about the Central Coast in the weeks leading up to the Gosford by-election and we will put under the microscope the Government's record with respect to service delivery on the Central Coast.

Teacher numbers may have increased to keep up with population growth, as has the number of nurses. But population growth has outstripped police numbers on the Central Coast and a whole bunch of other government services have been downgraded and cut by this Government since 2011. Let us start with hospitals. Hospitals on the Central Coast are looking down the barrel of privatisation, which will mean that instead of providing services to everyone they will provide services only to those who can afford to pay. In relation to motor registry services, we had five access points when the Coalition came to power; we now have four access points through Service NSW.

Mr Christopher Gulaptis: You've got Service NSW delivering 98 per cent customer satisfaction.

Mr DAVID MEHAN: No, we have no motor registry in my electorate. The Central Coast has the highest number of people aged over 65 in New South Wales so what did the mob opposite do? They closed the office of the NSW Trustee and Guardian. Elderly people need access to services to help them with wills and testaments and the Government closed the office. The Government has sent them to Service NSW, where there are no specialists on hand to assist them. The Office of Fair Trading on the Central Coast was closed last year, creating 10 redundancies. The NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal office on the Central Coast also closed last year.

The Central Coast has one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the State but young people can no longer do their Higher School Certificate at TAFE. That is a vital service but it is no longer provided on the Central Coast. People cannot buy a paper ticket at any Central Coast train station any more. That is a vital service. People cannot buy a CountryLink ticket at Gosford railway station, which has the most service users in New South Wales. I could go on. With the privatisation of electricity, the number of electricity workers on the Central Coast has decreased. [*Time expired.*]

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (16:13): In reply: I note the contributions of the member for Wyong, the member for Clarence and the member for The Entrance. I will deal first with the contribution of the

member for Wyong. He spoke about health infrastructure, health spending and nurses. In relation to health capital and the work that we are doing to support the State's nursing workforce by building hospitals, since 2011-12 more than \$2 billion has been allocated to develop rural and regional hospitals, and that includes in and around Gosford and on the Central Coast. Morisset and Toronto have been supported through infrastructure development. Investment is going into the Central Coast and right across regional New South Wales.

When the doomsayers opposite complain about the services they do not have, the message is clear: Maybe those members should work a little harder; maybe they should go doorknocking and listen to their constituents. The member for The Entrance spoke about the motor registry. The motor registry is now part of Service NSW. I suggest that the member for The Entrance contact the new Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight and have a little chat about that. The member also spoke about rail tickets. I do not recall tickets being issued on the rail network. Has the member heard about the Opal card? The member for The Entrance spoke about the Higher School Certificate not being available at TAFE. I would like to address that point as well: It is called year 12. The member will note that there is a requirement that unless students have a job to go to or an apprenticeship, traineeship or vocational education and training, they are required to stay at school until year 12.

I suggest that the member for The Entrance and the member for Wyong have a look at their electorates and come back to us when they find out how we can fix the problems they highlighted in relation to non-government organisations and the increased demand for services. Continued growth raises more people out of poverty and increases our standard of living. We need growth and strong financial management to generate the money to deliver services for the good people of New South Wales. [*Time expired.*]

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the amendment of the member for Wyong be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes36
Noes49
Majority.....13

AYES

Aitchison, Ms J
Catley, Ms Y
Crakanthorp, Mr T
Doyle, Ms T
Greenwich, Mr A
Haylen, Ms J
Lalich, Mr N (teller)
McDermott, Dr H
Mihailuk, Ms T
Parker, Mr J
Scully, Mr P
Washington, Ms K

Atalla, Mr E
Chanthivong, Mr A
Daley, Mr M
Finn, Ms J
Harris, Mr D
Hornery, Ms S
Leong, Ms J
McKay, Ms J
Minns, Mr C
Piper, Mr G
Smith, Ms T F
Watson, Ms A (teller)

Car, Ms P
Cotsis, Ms S
Dib, Mr J
Foley, Mr L
Harrison, Ms J
Kamper, Mr S
Lynch, Mr P
Mehan, Mr D
Park, Mr R
Robertson, Mr J
Warren, Mr G
Zangari, Mr G

NOES

Anderson, Mr K
Barilaro, Mr J
Brookes, Mr G
Coure, Mr M
Dominello, Mr V
Evans, Mr L
Goward, Ms P
Hazzard, Mr B
Johnsen, Mr M
Maguire, Mr D
O'Dea, Mr J
Perrottet, Mr D
Provest, Mr G
Sidoti, Mr J
Taylor, Mr M

Aplin, Mr G
Berejiklian, Ms G
Conolly, Mr K
Crouch, Mr A
Donato, Mr P
Fraser, Mr A
Grant, Mr T
Henskens, Mr A
Kean, Mr M
Marshall, Mr A
Patterson, Mr C (teller)
Petinos, Ms E
Roberts, Mr A
Speakman, Mr M
Toole, Mr P

Ayres, Mr S
Bromhead, Mr S (teller)
Constance, Mr A
Davies, Ms T
Elliott, Mr D
Gibbons, Ms M
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

NOES

Upton, Ms G
Williams, Mrs L

Ward, Mr G

Williams, Mr R

PAIRS

Hoenig, Mr R

Hancock, Mrs S

Amendment negatived.

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

The House divided.

Ayes51
Noes34
Majority.....17

AYES

Anderson, Mr K
Barilaro, Mr J
Brookes, Mr G
Coure, Mr M
Dominello, Mr V
Evans, Mr L
Goward, Ms P
Gulaptis, Mr C
Hodgkinson, Ms K
Lee, Dr G
Notley-Smith, Mr B
Pavey, Mrs M
Piccoli, Mr A
Roberts, Mr A
Speakman, Mr M
Toole, Mr P
Ward, Mr G

Aplin, Mr G
Berejiklian, Ms G
Conolly, Mr K
Crouch, Mr A
Donato, Mr P
Fraser, Mr A
Grant, Mr T
Hazzard, Mr B
Johnsen, Mr M
Maguire, Mr D
O'Dea, Mr J
Perrottet, Mr D
Piper, Mr G
Rowell, Mr J
Stokes, Mr R
Tudehope, Mr D
Williams, Mr R

Ayres, Mr S
Bromhead, Mr S (teller)
Constance, Mr A
Davies, Ms T
Elliott, Mr D
Gibbons, Ms M
Greenwich, Mr A
Henskens, Mr A
Kean, Mr M
Marshall, Mr A
Patterson, Mr C (teller)
Petinos, Ms E
Provest, Mr G
Sidoti, Mr J
Taylor, Mr M
Upton, Ms G
Williams, Mrs L

NOES

Aitchison, Ms J
Catley, Ms Y
Crakanthorp, Mr T
Doyle, Ms T
Harris, Mr D
Hornery, Ms S
Leong, Ms J
McKay, Ms J
Minns, Mr C
Robertson, Mr J
Warren, Mr G
Zangari, Mr G

Atalla, Mr E
Chanthivong, Mr A
Daley, Mr M
Finn, Ms J
Harrison, Ms J
Kamper, Mr S
Lynch, Mr P
Mehan, Mr D
Park, Mr R
Scully, Mr P
Washington, Ms K

Car, Ms P
Cotsis, Ms S
Dib, Mr J
Foley, Mr L
Haylen, Ms J
Lalich, Mr N (teller)
McDermott, Dr H
Mihailuk, Ms T
Parker, Mr J
Smith, Ms T F
Watson, Ms A (teller)

PAIRS

Hancock, Mrs S

Hoenig, Mr R

Motion agreed to.*Private Members' Statements***RIVERSTONE ELECTORATE OFFICE PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION**

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (16:29): In August last year I wrote to high school principals in the Riverstone electorate offering their school students the opportunity to enter the Riverstone electorate office photography competition. The aim of the competition was to provide an opportunity for young photographers to capture images which represent either natural or man-made aspects of the heritage, beauty and/or the community dynamism of the Riverstone electorate. In 2011 when I gave my inaugural speech I asserted that in Riverstone there was an unmatched combination of heritage and youthful dynamism.

Mr Gareth Ward: Which one are you?

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: I am a combination of both. It is one of the fastest growing electorates in the State. As the original food supply for Sydney it contains nineteenth century history. The meatworks are now closed.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Not that long ago.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: Indeed, not that long ago. My vision was to challenge students to capture the mix of history, natural beauty and modern energy. I believe that the entries I received accepted that challenge. I undertook that the winning entry would be wall mounted to display in the electorate office and I would announce the winner and discuss the entries in a private member's statement. For an entry to be valid in this competition a single photograph or a grouping of up to three photographs was permissible, and individual entrants were able to submit up to two entries. The competition closed on 31 October 2016 and the winner was announced shortly afterwards. I was delighted with the response I received and the quality of the entries. There were entries submitted from four high schools: Australian Christian College, The Ponds High School, St Mark's Catholic College and Norwest Christian College.

I congratulate Torrey Kelly from Norwest Christian College who submitted the winning entry titled "Rusty Treasures". It is a group of three photographs capturing rusted antique items of equipment in situ at Rouse Hill House. Rouse Hill House is a heritage home located on Windsor Road near the junction with Annangrove Road, Rouse Hill. The Rouse family gave their name to the district. This house dominated Windsor Road and was a landmark in earlier years. There are examples of agricultural equipment on the grounds. One of the photographs featured a child's toy. I ask the indulgence of members to display the winning entry, despite the rule barring props. One of the photographs featured a child's scooter.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I had one of those.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: This may be slightly older than yours, Mr Deputy Speaker. It captures the essence of the property as a working property and a home for generations of one family. The spirit of Riverstone is that people live, work and have a connection with the land. These photographs encapsulate the heritage and rich history of the region. They will be framed together as a collage and displayed in the Riverstone electorate office. There were a range of photographs entered in the competition that are noteworthy. There were nature snapshots such as "A Beautiful Rose" entered by Rose Gibb, "One Local Bee" entered by Darcy Purkiss, "Local area flora" entered by Anita Joy Pocock, "Blue Neighbourhood" entered by Kayla Mirzai, "The Light at the End of the Tunnel" entered by Tiana Couzins and "Lens Manipulation" entered by Clarence Mesina, a photograph of a tree taken with a lens effect that converts the picture into diagonal streaks as seen through a tunnel, which is quite a sophisticated artistic alteration to a photograph. I thank all the students who participated in the Riverstone electorate office photography competition. [*Time expired.*]

ST GEORGE BAPTIST CHURCH

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (16:35): The Hurstville Baptist Church was built and has stood at the corner of Dora Street and Queens Road since 1936. It is an institution in the suburb of Hurstville and it is under threat. The Georges River Council will compulsorily acquire the church's property with an order signed by the former Minister for Local Government. It has sent this local community into a tailspin as they consider that what their forebears built and nurtured could be taken from them. Except for the precinct that is owned by the Baptist Church, the Georges River Council owns all properties between Dora Street and Park Road, bordered by Queens Road and MacMahon Street, which is an area of 23,000 square metres.

For many years councils have thought of this space as a place where a giant civic precinct could be constructed to house commercial space, residential space and the administration buildings and council chambers for a greatly expanded Hurstville Council. This precinct has been the dream of many mayors and general managers

who have presided over the administration of Hurstville. The Government's forced amalgamation of Kogarah and Hurstville councils has presumably made this issue more pressing, as a single location is urgently being sought to house the combined staff of the two councils.

Over a number of years councils have entered into detailed discussions and negotiations with the Baptist Church for the plot of land on the corner. To date no agreement has been reached between the church and the council. I am not faulting previous councils for attempting good faith negotiations with the church in order to acquire the land, but the point is that they were only negotiations. Council would like the land but it does not require it. Ultimately the decision of the church to resist the entreaties of the council was its to make. For the council to end negotiations and declare that it would take the land was the wrong decision.

It is troubling that the council will compulsorily acquire the land to build office space when it owns large swathes of land to the immediate east of the block. I remain concerned that use of a compulsory acquisition order in these circumstances is the wrong decision. This is not a situation in which government requires the land to build a rail line, road, bridge or dam; it is to build council chambers. Council has rejected many applications by the church to redevelop the land in order to fully utilise the space. The church has been denied the opportunity to realise the value of the land by adding community support facilities to the Hurstville central business district. The church community has repeatedly stated to me that the rejection of the building applications is incongruous with council's support of private development applications on every plot of land in the immediate vicinity of the church's land.

I am concerned that the Government is compulsorily acquiring church land for a purpose that could include commercial and residential development. I believe that acquiring this land is unnecessary as the council owns all of the remaining plots of land between Park and Dora streets. The council has rejected applications by the church to develop the land but has happily allowed major developments on all sites immediately adjacent to the church's property. I am further concerned that council has stated its intention to rezone the land after its acquisition. This has the potential to deny the church between \$4 million and \$7 million of land value. It should be noted that this decision was executed by the administrator of Georges River Council.

I do not take this opportunity to admonish him. He says that he is simply executing the wishes of the previous democratically elected council. I put on the record that I take him at his word and thank him for his hard work and dedication to Georges River Council. However, the question lingers: What was the previous council thinking when it grabbed this piece of land? If compulsory acquisition now extends to taking land that belongs to a church in order to build a council chamber then we have gone too far. I note that on 2 September 2016 Minister Toole answered a question from the Hon. Paul Green about the circumstances surrounding the acquisition. Mr Toole said that he was not aware of the circumstances of the acquisition. However, public records subsequently indicated that he had signed the order three days earlier. Inattention to detail has placed us all in this situation. The order should be reversed and the land should be returned to Hurstville Baptist Church.

GLEN INNES AGRICULTURAL SHOW

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Tourism and Major Events, and Assistant Minister for Skills) (16:40): There are few better ways to understand the Australian way of life and get to know a community than to visit the local agricultural show. I imagine that many members in this place have attended the Royal Easter Show, which is coming up soon, whether with children or family or by themselves. The Royal Easter Show is a great event, and I do not for a moment want to take away from it, but amidst the flashing lights and SpongeBob show bags, the show's bedrock of regional pride may be forgotten by many. It is for that reason that, every year, I look forward to visiting what we call the Royal of the North—that is, the Glen Innes Agricultural Show. After chatting with the show secretary, Neale Royal, who is doing a terrific job, a couple of weeks before the show, I knew that this one, the 149th, was going to be a big one.

Over the weekend I had the honour of escorting His Excellency the Governor of New South Wales, General David Hurley, and Mrs Hurley, around the show. Those of us who have had the pleasure of spending time with His Excellency know that he is not the kind of gentleman who is content to have a tour and open the show. Governor Hurley was a participant in this year's show, entering his prized honey—sourced from bees and hives not too far from this Parliament. I am happy to report that it received a highly commended award in the light honey category at the Glen Innes Show. He resisted the urge to lodge a protest with the judges about those who finished ahead of him. I look forward to His Excellency entering more honey in next year's show.

I recognise the approximately 100 volunteers who make up the Glen Innes Agricultural Show committee. There are 95 committee members—a massive committee. When many communities are struggling to find people to be on show committees, to keep our country shows alive, I am proud to report that the Glen Innes community is strong and vibrant and its show society is a reflection of that. Each committee member contributes countless hours of thought, planning, preparation and assistance to make the show a reality and a success. While thousands

of visitors who enjoy the show each year may think that everything runs smoothly, that is only because behind the scenes those 95 individuals and their families work damned hard to make sure everything is organised to a T and runs smoothly. The society is led by show president Andrew Hancock, who does a terrific job. The vice-presidents are Brian Winter, Gail Davis, Luke Schmitzer and Greg Kerr. I would love to name all the other members of the committee, but time does not allow me to. They all deserve our congratulations, and I put on record my gratitude to them.

I had the pleasure of meeting the Glen Innes showgirl entrants: Steph Grob, Melanie Landers and Brianna Short. They are all wonderful young women who take pride in their town and their district. They have a clear vision of how they want to give back to the community and to the annual show. The winner of the competition, Mel Landers, is currently studying to be a maths teacher, and I trust that she will help to inspire and educate the next generation of Glen Innes locals. Melanie will be travelling to Walgett this weekend to compete against other showgirls in the zone finals. I wish her all the very best with that challenge.

There was a spirit of friendly competition throughout the show, and that is what drives shows. I heard little stories like that of the rivalry between Guyra brothers Brenton and Jacob Jackson, who, after months of tuning and tinkering, came first and third in the four-by-four ute category. I also heard the story of Courtney, who is the first woman ever to drift her way to a win in the circlework category. That event was enjoyed by many at the show. At the show the best produce in the region is on display—whether it is wool, assessed by the keen-eyed John Newsome, or horticulture, judged by Helen Wirth. For the entrants and judges, agriculture is not just a way to make a buck; it is a representation of who they are, the town they come from and the pride they have in their region and district. It is a mark of distinction.

If members find themselves in Glen Innes in early February next year, they should take the opportunity to visit the show. Enjoy the hospitality of the Glen Innes community and the wonderful work of the show committee. There is plenty to be proud of in country communities. Everyone in Glen Innes can be incredibly proud of their show. Their show stands alongside the Sydney Royal Easter Show. The Glen Innes Show truly is the Royal of the North.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (16:45): I thank the member for Northern Tablelands for his commentary on and commendation of the Glen Innes Show Society. I acknowledge that show societies are the essence and flavour of rural and regional communities. I was delighted to welcome the Premier of New South Wales, the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, at the Berry Show. I thank president Peter Harris for his warm welcome and all the show committee, who do such a great job. In my electorate I have the Albion Park Show Society, the Kiama Show Society, the Berry Show Society, the Kangaroo Valley Show Society and the Nowra Show Society. They provide a great opportunity for agricultural and primary producers and families to enjoy so many of the great things about rural and regional New South Wales.

Dr Geoff Lee: Have you been eating too many dagwood dogs?

Mr GARETH WARD: I acknowledge the interjection from the member for Parramatta about dagwood dogs. It looks as though he is an entrant par excellence in that category. I am sure he would win it. I congratulate the member for Northern Tablelands and thank him for acknowledging a great volunteer organisation, the Glen Innes Show Society.

PENSHURST 3BRIDGES COMMUNITY

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (16:46): Before I talk about a wonderful organisation in my electorate, 3Bridges Community, I acknowledge my good friend Labor Councillor Nick Katris, with whom I had the great honour to serve over a long period of time on the former Kogarah City Council. Nick is an outstanding member of the community. I acknowledge and bring to the attention of the House the hard work and dedication of the staff, volunteers and supporters of 3Bridges Community in Penshurst. 3Bridges has more than 40 years of experience in partnering with local communities to deliver a range of services. The organisation ensures that people in my community are connected, engaged and valued. This is particularly important for the most vulnerable groups that 3Bridges cares for, including babies and children, adults with intellectual and physical disabilities, and the elderly.

The organisation serves around 25,000 people each year. At the core of its work is the desire to make a positive difference to people's lives through engagement, integration and activation. I have lost count of the number of times I have visited 3Bridges over the years, but each time I am motivated by the enthusiasm and energy of the staff, volunteers and participants. When one enters the facility on George Street, Penshurst, one immediately feels welcomed and cared for. In today's world we are supposedly more connected than ever by devices, but the reality is that many people feel loneliness, isolation and despair at the lack of human contact. This is where organisations such as 3Bridges in Penshurst play an important role in ensuring our communities are

vibrant, inclusive and connected. They are characteristics that I know people across the St George area and New South Wales welcome and want.

To help communities reach these goals, the New South Wales Government has recognised and continues to recognise the work and importance of 3Bridges. In 2016 I was delighted to award 3Bridges more than \$50,000, under the Community Building Partnership grants, to improve disabled access and provide additional parking at the community centre in Penshurst. That funding will allow those in wheelchairs, and parents with prams, better access to the facilities and services at the community centre. Those of us who are mobile forget how isolating and challenging it can be for people with reduced mobility. Young people in particular can feel despair and left out when they cannot access services, venues and, more importantly, the 3Bridges centre. More often than not, this leads to increased rates of depression and isolationism.

Furthermore, I was delighted to read in today's local *St George and Sutherland Leader*, that 3Bridges, in partnership with the Intellectual Disability Foundation St George, Sunnyhaven and Civic, has been awarded \$50,000 through the New South Wales Government's Stronger Communities Program. The funding will be used to develop a program for people with a disability who want to volunteer in our local area. Once again, 3Bridges, which is at the forefront of this program, has debunked the idea that people with a disability are limited in what they can offer. Instead, the program will provide opportunities for people to volunteer regardless of their disability. Not only is the community being served by those volunteering but the people involved will no doubt also get a lot out of it, including experience, job skills and a connection with those they are assisting and their community.

Earlier this month I supported a fundraiser for the 3Bridges Early Years Program. The fundraiser was held at Cafe 41 in Penshurst Street, Penshurst. For each coffee sold the cafe donated the funds to 3Bridges for its program. I thank the owners and staff at Cafe 41 for their generosity and service to our local community. They make great coffee and good food. If Mr Temporary Speaker is in the area he should drop in because he will certainly not regret it. The Early Years Support Program is led by trained volunteers—all parents or grandparents—who offer a weekly three- to four-hour home visiting service to support families with newborn babies in my local area. Becoming a parent is a wonderful experience, but together with sleep deprivation, financial stress, relationship issues and post-natal depression it can be overwhelming and frightening for some. Without proper support these families, particularly women and children, are at great risk. That is what is unique and important about this program. On behalf of all members of this House, I thank 3Bridges at Penshurst for its efforts.

BELMONT TAFE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (16:51): On Friday 10 February we celebrated a very special birthday in the electorate of Swansea—the fiftieth birthday of Belmont TAFE. For the past 50 years Belmont TAFE has been churning out outstanding alumni—people like Knights legends Paul "The Chief" Harrigan and Mark Sargent, to mention just two. Many of our local coalminers attended Belmont TAFE to undertake specialist coalmine safety and wellbeing training. I can only imagine how many of our local tradespeople got their tickets at Belmont TAFE. As members know, the Swansea electorate is most certainly a "tradies" electorate. In fact, Swansea has the third highest proportion of apprentices in New South Wales. Almost 25 per cent of people living in the Swansea electorate have trade qualifications, and many of those vital qualifications were gained at the Belmont TAFE campus.

I have met with the staff at Belmont TAFE many times and they are hardworking and caring tradespeople and teachers who know the importance of accessible education and the difference it makes to people's lives. Proudly public, Belmont TAFE has been a treasured local institution in the Swansea electorate, and I can safely say that our local community will fight to keep it public for the next 50 years and beyond. I will be standing with them shoulder to shoulder. However, while Belmont TAFE's fiftieth birthday has been a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the great legacy of the campus in our community, I could not help but reflect on some of the issues surrounding the campus, and TAFE in general, throughout these celebrations. For more than two years, I have been asking the Deputy Premier and Minister for Skills to clarify the Government's position on the future of Belmont TAFE. In September 2015, the *Sydney Morning Herald* revealed that Belmont campus was earmarked as one of 27 TAFE sites to be sold this financial year to raise \$63 million to fund a shortfall in the bungled information technology budget.

The document suggests selling off the west side of Belmont TAFE at Lake Macquarie for \$2.96 million and replacing classes with a limited "pop-up" service in a leased building. Since then I have asked the Deputy Premier about the accuracy of that report; so far he has not been able to provide any certainty to my constituents regarding this issue. Instead, we hear weasel words and political spin. The Deputy Premier had the opportunity once again to provide my community with some certainty as to the fate of Belmont campus during the most recent round of budget estimates. However, once again, he refused to rule out selling the campus. So I ask the Deputy Premier today, as we recognise the fiftieth birthday of Belmont TAFE: will he rule out, once and for all, the

closure of this much-loved campus? There is a lot on the line should the Deputy Premier choose to close Belmont TAFE.

The decision to close Belmont TAFE will mean that there will be no face-to-face TAFE courses in east Lake Macquarie and no courses available to students between Newcastle and Wyong. The results of this decision will be catastrophic for local employment and a disaster for our young people wanting to gain skills to get a good job. Let us be clear, the Government has a poor track record supporting TAFE in New South Wales. Since the Government introduced Smart and Skilled in 2015 we have seen \$1.7 billion cut from education and training, 2,500 teachers and support staff sacked, student fees dramatically increased, and 27 TAFE sites flagged for closure and sale, including the Belmont campus.

In the Hunter alone enrolments have crashed over the past four years under this Government's watch. However, the Government is now presented with a perfect opportunity to take stock and to reconsider its approach to TAFE. Our new Premier and her new Cabinet have the perfect chance to reset their policies on TAFE, to stop the cuts and to restore TAFE to the vocational education powerhouse that we deserve in New South Wales. Since 1967, Belmont TAFE has been providing local people with the skills they need to get a good job, because at the end of the day that is what my constituents want. I do not think that is too much to ask. Today, I reaffirm that I will be fighting to ensure that the only cuts we see at Belmont TAFE in 2017 are the cuts made to the beautiful birthday cake that was shared among all who gathered to celebrate its fiftieth birthday. Happy birthday, Belmont TAFE.

MANILDRA MEAT COMPANY CLOSURE

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Cootamundra) (16:56): Last Friday I received a very sad phone call from the Manildra Meat Company in Cootamundra advising that it would be closing its operations this Friday. The closure will affect 220 employees—150 full-time and 70 part-time. This is obviously a great blow for the town. The company will keep on a skeleton staff in the hope of reopening in the future. That happens with abattoir services from time to time as we have seen around the State, but it does not make it any easier. Very high stock prices have been wonderful for the farming community, but not so great for abattoir operators, who face ever-increasing costs. Those increasing costs were one of the reasons given by the general manager for the closure. However, I am pleased that the Manildra Meat Company is very good at ensuring that all of its employees are looked after in the face of this closure.

All employee entitlements and debts will be met and a raft of services have been set up onsite at the abattoir in Cootamundra to assist them. Three Centrelink staff are in attendance, and the Commonwealth Department of Employment, State training services and skills recognition officers are also onsite. Legal Aid will be there on Thursday and Friday to talk about dealing with mortgages and paying rent. A counsellor will be available all week for staff. A person from Manildra is present to help people write their resumes or to fill in job application forms. Services such as Lifeline and the Salvation Army have also been notified. I was pleased that the Junee Correctional Centre was very quick to make a phone call to Manildra Meat to say that it would like to take on some of the staff. Indeed, all of the surrounding abattoirs at Junee, Gundagai, Young, Wagga Wagga and others have also been very good with their approach to this impending loss of employment in the electorate and township of Cootamundra. This has obviously been a painful and difficult decision for the Manildra Meat Company, which it did not make lightly.

While the welfare and future employment opportunities of the employees are at the forefront of everyone's mind at this difficult time, it is also important to remember the spin-off impacts of closure on many small businesses across the region. To lose a company or organisation as big as Manildra Meats from Cootamundra has impacts on not only the employees and their families but also kids in schools, transport operators and staff at other small businesses that relied on the company. The closure will have many implications. All employees and small businesses affiliated with the Manildra Meat Company in Cootamundra have my full support. I have had a telephone conference with company representatives and the Federal Minister for Small Business and member for Riverina, Michael McCormack. We are engaging regularly so that all the i's are dotted and all the t's are crossed in ensuring that the very real needs of employees are met.

I thank the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Office of Regional Development, and the NSW Department of Industry rapid response team, which came in very quickly. As soon as I learnt of the closure I alerted the relevant Ministers and was pleased by the speed with which the bureaucracy set up demountable buildings on the site. Each group and agency has separate tables and chairs for Manildra Meat Company employees to talk one on one with agency representatives. The company will not close until this Friday, so supervisors have been very good at allowing employees whatever time they need to seek additional services. I hope members will join me in expressing sympathy for the closure of the Cootamundra abattoir.

Business interrupted.

*Members***INAUGURAL SPEECH**

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): I acknowledge in the gallery Federal member for Barton and former member for Canterbury, the Hon. Linda Burney. I also acknowledge Federal member for Dobell Ms Emma McBride and Consul General of Greece Stavros Kyrimis, guests of the member for Canterbury. Pursuant to an earlier resolution, I invite the Auslan interpreter to take their place at the left shoulder of the member for Canterbury.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (17:02): I begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, and pay tribute to their elders past and present. Last August my family and I drove to Canberra to watch the first Indigenous woman elected to the House of Representatives give her inaugural speech. Member for Barton Linda Burney, who is here today, made history that day. I pay tribute to her hard work and commitment to the people of Canterbury. It is with great humility that I am elected to the New South Wales Legislative Assembly, the oldest Parliament in the land. It is a privilege to represent the community I grew up in. I was born in Canterbury Hospital and baptised at the iconic All Saints Belmore. I thank Father Chris for 40 years of service. I was educated at Canterbury South and Kingsgrove High, attended Greek school at Earlwood and spent many Saturdays at Mitilinian House.

Canterbury has changed a lot, but the traits that make it great are more apparent than ever. We are a proud, tough, hardworking, vibrant and diverse community. Fifty per cent of all residents of our community were either born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas. We speak different languages and follow many religions. But in the Stewart Stand at Belmore Oval there is only one faith—the Bulldogs! Some would dispute that and say the Dragons. Since the end of the Second World War Canterbury has been a first point of settlement for many migrants. They were factory workers and tradies by day, helping to build modern Australia. By night and on weekends they were building their communities. Our electorate is home to strong and proud Chinese, Irish, Greek, Lebanese, Korean and Vietnamese communities. They have been joined more recently by growing communities from the Pacific Islands, Africa, Nepal, Bangladesh, India and Syria, who are weaving their stories into multicultural Australia.

This is a country of community, of hope and of progress. Within a single generation the children of migrants have achieved more than our parents ever dreamt possible. I acknowledge and pay respect to my parents and the millions of migrants who left their homes to come to Australia for a better future for themselves and their families. I have been fortunate to grow up in a country that is at its heart generous, caring and accepting. It is a country that has prospered and where so many cultures have created that prosperity. The work of elected representatives is never done. One of the most important tasks we share is to ensure that Australia extends the hand of opportunity to all, so that everyone gets a fair go. That is who we are as a nation. We do what we can so no-one is left behind simply because of where they were born, their cultural background or their disability.

My migrant story is now a familiar one in our nation's oldest Parliament. It is a story I proudly share with many from the Australian Labor Party, including figures such as Morris Iemma, Barbara Perry, Amanda Fazio, Shaoquett Moselmane and Ernest Wong. It is a story shared with some members opposite also, including the Premier. The story may no longer be new, but the message remains the same: Australia is a land of opportunity. Visionaries like Chifley, Whitlam, Wran, Hawke and Keating put important rungs on the ladder so that all Australians could continue to climb towards a better life. Their achievements include fair wages and conditions, including penalty rates for working unsocial hours, Medicare, a strong education system, nation-building infrastructure and public transport, superannuation, child care, equal opportunity for women, and the policy of multiculturalism to ensure that inclusion and diversity is at the heart of what it means to be Australian.

We are a nation that welcomes people from every faith and land. I, along with my colleagues, will work hard to keep the toxicity of extremist views from destroying what we have built together. To racism and intolerance I will not yield an inch. On 31 March, with my friends the member for Watson, Tony Burke, and the member for Lakemba, Jihad Dib, and many of our community ambassadors we will Walk for Respect in Lakemba. I call on everyone to join us. One group that has done so much for working men and women in our State is the New South Wales union movement. We are lucky to live and work in a nation that values fairness and opportunity so highly, especially in the workplace. It was not always so. That is why I pay tribute to Mark Morey from Unions NSW and his colleagues for their work and dedication on a daily basis to protect the rights of workers, to ensure fairness and to work together to advance the future of New South Wales.

When I entered the Legislative Council 6½ years ago Labor confronted defeat on a scale not seen since 1988. The Australian Labor Party faced a task of monumental proportions, but we have worked really hard. I am proud to have been part of Labor's rebuild from day one. I acknowledge John Robertson for his efforts and commitment to the task. In 2015, under Luke Foley's leadership, New South Wales heard our message again for

a decent public health system, TAFE and schools, essential public services, a strong economy that creates opportunities for everyone, the right investment in the right infrastructure, and an environment that is properly protected. Now, after a little over six years in opposition, we face a Government already on its third Premier and racked by poor decisions such as selling off assets that belong to and serve the New South Wales taxpayer. The sale of our Land and Property Information service is a short-sighted cash grab derided by experts for the higher risk of fraud and lower levels of service it would deliver.

No wonder after six years of the Coalition Government there are very much two New South Wales—one New South Wales for those on the Government benches, the New South Wales where essential public services are an optional extra or at best receive minimal funding to provide minimal services. It is a New South Wales where public assets are there only to be sold off because of an ideology that entrenches disadvantage. And there is the other New South Wales, the one where the rest of us live, the New South Wales where it gets tougher every day to make the household budget work, where families have to do more with less because of cuts and bad decisions by this Government.

This Government gloats about bulging property receipts, yet families across the State struggle to afford to own their homes. Families are concerned about the privatisation of our public health system. Our prized electricity assets have been sold, entrenching crippling household energy bills forever. It is a New South Wales where TAFE, the institution that helps our young people to learn a trade, has been gutted and slashed, local council democracy has been plunged into turmoil, our students and dedicated teachers confront an ever-growing school maintenance backlog, and where domestic violence is a scourge we know we must wipe out yet we face cuts to women's refuges and services.

A stroll through any shopping centre will tell you that for all of this Government's glossy brochures the people of New South Wales are finding it tougher to get by. If things are as rosy as this Government would have us believe, why are the people we all serve—the people of New South Wales—not reaping the rewards? The next election is just two years away. The message from this side of the Chamber could not be clearer: NSW Labor is standing firm with the people of New South Wales and is ready to govern. For my part, the continuous work of rebuilding will be where I can most make a difference. My electorate of Canterbury has been the target of Coalition cuts before. In 1993, the Coalition Government tried to close Canterbury Hospital. A grassroots campaign followed. Bob Carr pledged to save it and to invest \$180 million in its rebirth—a promise delivered to the letter.

Two decades later Canterbury Hospital is again under strain. With a growing and ageing population it needs to be ready for the future, but it is not even meeting the needs of today. During the by-election campaign we met thousands of people who made it clear what mattered, from small business owners in Earlwood to parents outside Harcourt Public School, to tradies in Belmore with Barrie Unsworth or to bus drivers at Kingsgrove depot and people waiting in general practitioner rooms. They asked us to send a message to this Government: Canterbury Hospital must always stay and it must be properly funded. The Government might not want to listen, but Labor is listening, and we have heard the people of Canterbury loud and clear. That is why Canterbury Hospital will be a priority in a Foley Labor Government.

The jewel in the crown of my electorate is the band of waterways that runs through the region like a silver thread—the Cooks River and Wolli Creek, and the parklands that enclose them. They bring joy to people from across New South Wales, only thanks to a community campaign to secure local, State and Federal Government cooperation and funding. I thank the Wolli Creek Preservation Society, whose dedicated members have worked tirelessly to secure this precious part of Sydney. The expansion of Wolli Creek Regional Park is a Labor commitment we made during the by-election because we saw first-hand just what this meant to the community and the environment. Working with the society, Labor gave notice of a bill to secure the transfer of Roads and Maritime Services land to the park. Subsequently the Government came to the table to support this transfer. But there is still much more to be done to complete the Wolli Creek Regional Park, and I will continue to work with the society to make sure the job is finished.

In our region unemployment is above the State average, but even worse is the scourge of underemployment—the defining feature of the twenty-first century labour market. In Canterbury one-quarter of all workers are stuck in insecure jobs. They do not have the full-time status that allows them to get a home loan and to provide for their kids. Our young people are also struggling. One in seven young people in Canterbury cannot find work. Last year, I held a multicultural youth roundtable. The strong message from youth leaders was, "We need jobs, jobs, jobs." And yet more barriers are being put in their way. Public sector apprenticeships, cadetships and traineeships have dried up. Good governments create opportunities for work. But this Government has the wrong priorities. It spent \$200 million on consultants last year when it could have funded more than 2,500 apprenticeships and the like. For NSW Labor government is always part of the solution when people are doing it tough, and there are many of them under this Government. We have double-digit underemployment, double-digit disability unemployment and double-digit youth unemployment. This is a crisis.

On the streets of the real New South Wales there is a vacuum where government should be showing leadership, especially when it comes to job creation and economic opportunity. We have a truly powerful weapon in our economic toolbox that should make it even easier for local businesses to compete in the global marketplace. Ours is a place where many languages are spoken, where so many skilled workers from so many countries have chosen to build their lives and raise families. In twenty-first century Australia our local businesses compete in markets around the world. Their know-how, innovation and specialist services are valued. The 8,847 small businesses in the area are the backbone of the local economy. They contribute so much but are often unseen. Hardworking local businesses like Frutex, which exports dried snacks across the world and which employs many local people. It is a real local success story.

Our cultural diversity means there are many more businesses that could be following in their footsteps by making the most of language and culture in an online economy that has overcome the tyranny of distance. That is why Labor's languages policy is so important. One of the most precious gifts my parents gave me was the Hellenic language. My husband, Arthur, and I are passing on that gift to our children, George and Cassandra. At this point, with the indulgence of the House, please allow me to honour my bilingual tradition:

Ευχαριστώ όλους και όλες που με βοήθησαν να εκλεγώ.

Ευχαριστώ την ελληνική παροικία. Υπόσχομαι ότι θα δουλεύω πάντα για το καλό του λαού.

I said, "I thank everybody that helped me get elected. I thank the Greek community. I will always work for the good of the community." Across Canterbury, in Campsie and Kingsgrove, it is clear that Sydney's many cultures and languages are our strength and part of our economic arsenal as we compete across the Asia-Pacific and an increasingly digital global economy. Under a Foley Labor Government primary school students will learn a second language. Diversity is a source of strength and economic prosperity. For Canterbury, Labor's languages policy will only strengthen local businesses and give them a competitive edge in a twenty-first century economy. But we can do even better. We can lift our vision higher.

In a part of Sydney that is feeling the strain of underemployment, of high youth unemployment, we must do better. Canterbury has always been an important part of Sydney's economic success. It was at the forefront of job-creating innovation from the first Sugar Mill of the 1800s to manufacturing in the 1960s. There was Sunbeam at Clemton Park, one of the factories where my mum worked. Giving small business better access to the professional skills our multicultural community offers is a critical next step if our area is to play its part in modern Australia. We have seen how start-up hubs have driven the digital economy, keeping Australia competitive because they foster collaboration and new ideas and couple it with harder-edged business smarts.

That is why I will advocate very strongly to see the establishment of a multicultural hub for start-ups and small businesses to make the most of what Canterbury has to offer so they can tap into the global marketplace to connect the expertise of local professionals, traders and entrepreneurs via a network that reaches across languages and cultures to drive the local economy, to harness a multicultural workforce that offers employers an unprecedented knowledge base to tap business opportunities at home and abroad, and to create ventures that will unlock jobs for our kids into the future by removing cultural and language barriers so we better understand the opportunities of overseas markets. Turning the tide of inequality is the job of every government

Before closing, I want to say a word about disability employment. I am so proud that Federal Labor set the gold standard by pioneering the National Disability Insurance Scheme, and I acknowledge the efforts of leader Bill Shorten. The next step is to stop the talents of Australians with disability going to waste—people who cannot get work of any kind because they have a disability. That is un-Australian. The unemployment rate for people with disability who are ready, willing and able to work is at 10 per cent—an absolute shame. Among developed countries our record is not great. While other countries and trading partners like China are charging ahead with effective policies, such as tax incentives for companies that exceed quotas, in New South Wales we have gone backwards. Not so long ago 4.8 per cent of State Government employees were people with disability. But in recent years that has dropped to 2.8 per cent. Jack, a young man that Helen Westwood and I met recently at Labor's Auslan Branch, told us of his struggle to find work simply because he is deaf. He said:

People dismiss you if you can't communicate in the same way they do ... just because you're a deaf person, you shouldn't be left out on the fringe.

Leaving Australians out like this tells me that we need to be kinder, but also that we have to be smarter. Inclusion is a basic human right, but it is also an economic necessity. If we matched the average for the top Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries in terms of disability inclusion, we would add \$50 billion to our economy by 2050. I want to see genuine policy reform for government agencies and the private sector to employ more people with disability. We need a bipartisan approach, and today I will commit to working with the Government, with business and with the community to ensure that not only is our public service a model employer

for Australians with disability but also other companies demonstrate what they can do in employing people with disability.

Being a member of Parliament is an immense privilege, but no-one gets to this place alone. I had a huge army—an army of amazing people, many of whom are in the gallery—and I thank them all from the bottom of my heart. I thank my amazing family, my wonderful colleagues, Labor branch members from my local area and from across New South Wales, and friends—long-time friends and friends I went to kindy with—who believed not just in me but also in my story and in the values that I represent. I could not be more grateful and humble for the people who have supported me over many, many years. I offer my profoundest thanks to the incredibly dedicated team at NSW Labor, led by our amazing and hardworking brilliant General Secretary, Kaila Murnain. I thank the next Premier of New South Wales, Luke Foley, and the next Deputy Premier of New South Wales, Michael Daley. I thank Linda Burney, Kevin Moss, and the wonderful Jean Stewart, widow of the late Kevin Stewart, whose memory we honour tonight. Thank you for being here; it means a lot to me.

I thank my good friend the amazing Tara Moriarty, whom I admire and respect. I thank the hundreds of rusted-on Labor Party members and supporters in Canterbury and across New South Wales for their support, and I thank the hard work of my State Electorate Council led by David Bailey McKay and George Bousamra. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my very good friend Tony Burke, and I thank Anthony Albanese, Morris Iemma, Kristina Keneally, Carmel Tebbutt, Robert Furolo, Kayee Griffin, Leo McLeay, Chris Bowen, Michelle Rowland and Emma McBride.

I would also like to thank the following people who have supported and stuck by me for many, many years and since the early days when we were in local Young Labor: Bill Kritharas, the Koutoulas family, the Faros family, Karl Bitar, Jim Tsolakis, Jim Bakopanos and Shane Prince. I thank our incredible campaign team led by the wonderful Jack Power—we worked so hard day in, day out because I could hear the leader's voice in my head, "We will not take Canterbury for granted." They are: John, Sravya, Vanessa, Rob, James, Jennifer, Thomas, Emma, Taylor, Bobby, Michael, Dobby, Katherine, Todd, Nikitas, Lynne and the Cox family, Di, Anne, Esta, Floris, Rod, Paul Reid, Clare Raffan, Maria Rallis, Kirsten Andrews, Annette Mastrangelo, David Dawson, David and Jane Jones, Angela Song and Ellen Hart.

I also thank the fantastic people I have met over the past 6½ years from regional New South Wales when I used to be the duty member of the Legislative Council for Maitland and Port Stephens. I thank them very much for their support. I thank many councillors: John Azarias, Eamonn Fitzpatrick, Tom Hollywood, Daniel Barbar, Dom Ofner, Deb and Michael Costa, Magda and Steve Kamper, Prue Car, Irene Anestis—Labor Life member and local stalwart—and Father Nectarios. I thank the Labor friendship groups that supported me throughout the campaign, headed by Kenrick Cheah, Louay Moustapha, Ernest Wong, Hassan Kureshi and Frank Chiment.

I am a proud unionist and I thank the many unions that have supported me and workers in New South Wales through the union movement: Mark Morey, Graeme Kelly, Bernie Smith, Bob Nanva, Alex Claasens, Gerard Hayes, Natalie Lang, Scott Weber from the NSW Police Association and Tony Sheldon. I thank my friends from the Australian Workers Union, the Electrical Trades Union, the Public Service Association, the Nurses and Midwives' Association, my good friends from the Textile Clothing and Footwear Union at Campsie, and Theo Samo and Con Tsiakoulis from the Plumbers Union.

I am a shadow Minister and I have seen so much good work from many community organisations not only in my electorate but also across New South Wales. I want to acknowledge them because they deserve an acknowledgement—and I am sorry if I miss anybody out. I thank the Chief Executive Officer of the Deaf Society, Leonie Jackson, for coming today. I thank the many disability and carer organisations for the amazing work they do. I thank the Council for Intellectual Disability; Carers NSW; our multicultural media; the Greek Orthodox Community of NSW and long-serving president Harry Danalis; and the chair of the Sydney Greek Festival, Nia Karteris, which starts this Sunday. I hope to see everyone in the next few months.

I thank Maha Abdo from the Muslim Women Association, the Chinese Australian Support Services, the Korean Society, the Korean Welfare Service, the dynamic and vibrant parents and citizens community of Canterbury, St Basils services, Co.As.It, the Canterbury State Emergency Service, Canterbury Meals on Wheels, Metro Assist, Asian Women at Work, the Rotary Club of Campsie, the local chambers of commerce, the Federation of Community Languages, ECC, Sydney women's domestic violence counselling services, the Australasian Hellenic Educational Progressive Association, the Hellenic Lyceum, the Women's Electoral Lobby, LAMP, Canterbury Bankstown Harmony Group and the wonderful parliamentary staff.

I thank very much the clubs in my local electorate that do fantastic work: Canterbury Leagues Club, Canterbury Hurlstone Park RSL and Campsie RSL. I wish a special happy ninetieth birthday to the Hellenic Club. A number of people have supported me but are no longer with us; they are here in spirit. They are: the late Mr Psomas, Emmanuel Tsardoulis, Mr Anestis and Mr Spencer.

I thank my incredible husband, Arthur—he is my soulmate and the love of my life—for his encouragement. I thank my beautiful children, George and Cassandra, who keep my feet firmly on the ground. I am very proud of them. I have spoken a lot about my mum and dad in the other place—I owe them a huge debt of gratitude. I thank my wonderful brother, Billy, my opinionated father-in-law, George, and my beautiful late mum-in-law Maria—Mikri YiaYia—who is looking down on us tonight and is very proud. I thank my extended family and friends. To all those whom I have not mentioned by name but who are deep in my heart, I say thank you. I also extend my congratulations to both the member for Orange and the member for Wollongong. November 12 will always be very special to the three of us. I will work hard to serve and represent the people of Canterbury and New South Wales. I thank the House.

Mr MARK COURE: On behalf of the Government I welcome the member for Canterbury. I congratulate her on her first speech in this House and wish her all the very best for the future.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): I thank the member for Canterbury for her inaugural speech.

Private Members' Statements

MIRANDA ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (17:31): Today I acknowledge the recipients of the Australia Day Honours across the Miranda electorate. Australia Day epitomises our values and encompasses what it means to be Australian. We come together to reflect on our past, our present and look to the future with a shared sense of national pride. It is also a day on which we acknowledge the contribution outstanding Australians have made to our local communities. I often say that the Miranda electorate has an unbounded sense of community and this is due, in no small part, to the achievements and successes of these celebrated community members.

One award recipient is Kingsley Munday of Illawong, who received the Member of the Order of Australia for his service and dedication to Vietnam veterans issues, Indigenous skills development and cultural organisations. Mr Munday has always felt an affinity with Vietnam veterans, following in his parents' footsteps by helping those who have come home from war. He is also a strong advocate for promoting skills development in Indigenous communities. Since 2009 he has served as the director of the National Aboriginal Islander Skills Development Association Foundation, which encourages Indigenous culture through dance, music and art. This interest in culture has seen Mr Munday supporting multiple museums and galleries, as well as taking on the role of director of the Australian Design Centre. His support of art and culture in our community is highly valued and has impacted many people and organisations.

Another recipient, Barbara Holden of Sylvania, received the Medal of the Order of Australia for her service and dedication to the sport of lawn bowls. Barbara has been involved in lawn bowls for more than 30 years, holding multiple positions at club, district and State level, as well as being a national umpire for many years. Her passion has supported the growing and running of the sport in the Sutherland shire. Even though Barbara is no longer playing lawn bowls she is still heavily involved as club secretary at the Taren Point Bowling Club.

Wayne Turley of Miranda has also received the Medal of the Order of Australia for his service and dedication to the sport of lawn bowls. Wayne quickly fell in love with lawn bowls as a teenager. He even started an apprenticeship as a greenkeeper at his local bowling club after school. His passion for lawn bowls has seen him achieve success in some of the highest competitions in the country. His success culminated when he won a gold medal in the men's triple event at the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne. Wayne has been heavily involved in coaching lawn bowls over the years and he is currently on the Bowls Australia Board of Directors.

Even though Wayne is no longer representing Australia at an international level, he still represents New South Wales and is heavily involved in his local bowling club at Taren Point. Sporting clubs such as lawn bowls provide an opportunity for people of all ages and abilities to join in and have a good time while staying active. Dedicated volunteers such as Barbara and Wayne foster friendly environments where friendships are formed over a mutual love of the sport and see more people become involved in lawn bowls.

Another recipient is Bob Harrison of Como, who received the Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to surveying and to professional organisations. Bob has spent the past 51 years as a surveyor, dedicating himself to the profession and to the community. He has been a member of the Institution of Surveyors NSW since 1969 where he previously served as president, secretary, treasurer and in various other leadership positions. Bob has dedicated his life to surveying, working hard as a surveyor and working tirelessly for the entire industry. He is now passionate about passing on to younger generations the knowledge he has acquired over five decades.

It is an honour to acknowledge Ralph and Joan Stilgoe of Taren Point, both of whom received the Medal of the Order of Australia for their services to sailing and hockey respectively after decades of dedication to the

two sports. Since the 1970s Joan has been heavily involved in hockey, holding multiple roles with Hockey NSW. Meanwhile, Ralph has served both the Georges River 16ft Sailing Club and the NSW 16ft Skiff Association as secretary and commodore from the 1960s to the 1990s. These two extraordinary people have collectively volunteered for six decades to sporting organisations in the Sutherland shire. They volunteered selflessly for no other reason than a pure love of the sports and community involvement. I am proud to have such dedicated and hardworking working people who constantly contribute to the local community in Miranda. Once again I congratulate all the recipients of the Australia Day Honours and wish them all the best for their future endeavours.

GRANVILLE TRAIN DISASTER FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (17:35): On 18 January this year we commemorated the fortieth anniversary of the Granville train disaster. Today I reflect on the impact of Australia's worst rail disaster and also acknowledge the fantastic tribute organised this year for the fortieth anniversary. It is important to commemorate, to keep memories alive and also to console many of those who were injured or lost loved ones. It is also important to remember and thank the emergency service workers and many local volunteers who came to the assistance of victims, many of whom were deeply traumatised by what they witnessed.

I record my personal appreciation for the enormous efforts of those who worked so hard to ensure the fortieth anniversary was commemorated appropriately: Meredith Knight, Gary Raymond, Barry Gobbe, Tina Morgan and many others from the Granville Train Disaster Association; Gerard Buchtmann and many former emergency services personnel and volunteers who acted so courageously and selflessly 40 years ago; staff at Cumberland Council who supported the proceedings; and Reverend David Wong from St Marks Anglican Church who hosted the memorial service. They are all to be commended for their efforts. It was a beautiful and poignant commemoration.

Forty years ago, an eight-car passenger train, mainly carrying commuters going to work, derailed and collided with the Bold Street Bridge in Granville at 8.10 a.m., resulting in the deaths of 83 passengers and injuries to a further 213 passengers. Rail maintenance at the time was abysmal, a legacy of years of mismanagement, and the train had a faulty wheel that was still in service long after it should have been replaced. The disaster is seared into the memory of the survivors, the emergency services workers and volunteers, and the Granville community. All of the people I know who live in Granville and who lived there before the disaster have a story to tell about that awful day. Many volunteered to assist in the rescue efforts.

One such volunteer was Father Les Campion, who rushed from Holy Trinity Parish Church. Father Campion, like many of his generation, is no longer with us, but we remember his work and the work of many others who have since passed away in the aftermath of the disaster. He was the first religious minister to arrive and provide pastoral care on the scene to the many injured victims, including those trapped in the wreckage. In following years Father Campion blessed the 83 roses laid at the scene on 18 January to remember the victims. The Granville memorial wall contains the names of everyone killed in the disaster and ensures that they are not nameless people of the past.

John Hennessey was instrumental in raising funds for the original memorial 20 years ago, with the support of the former member for Granville, Kim Yeadon. John passed away last year, but I acknowledge his contribution and also that of the organising committee and Cumberland Council in upgrading the memorial for the important fortieth anniversary. John Hennessey was also instrumental in establishing the annual commemoration of the train disaster and keeping those memories alive every year. With his passing, a new group has taken the reins, the Granville Train Disaster Association, which did an amazing job to make the fortieth anniversary commemoration a great success. It was moving and beautiful, and well attended. In addition to the Prime Minister, New South Wales Governor, Premier, transport Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, many survivors, rescuers and people who lost family members came to the commemoration for the first time this year.

It was an incredibly hot day, at over 30 degrees Celsius, before the program commenced at 8.00 a.m. That was challenging for many people, but it did not deter the large crowds. The occasion was solemnly remembered with the names of the 83 deceased read out, followed by chimes at Granville's memorial wall at 8.10 a.m., a memorial service at Granville's St Marks Church, the laying of wreaths at the memorial wall and placement of roses at the Bold Street Bridge over the main southern railway line and finally the official ceremony.

It is important to hold commemorations to ensure the wider community does not forget that tragic day. The survivors, rescuers and those who lost family members will never forget 18 January 1977. For them, the occasion brings together a strong community that was created through shared grief and trauma 40 years ago. They share a special and very close tragic bond. Many of them spoke of their experiences that day and afterwards, which gave everyone an insight into their awful experience. Some of them struggled enormously with their loss. Back then, trauma counselling was not ubiquitous as it is today. They often suffered in silence.

The Minister for Transport and Infrastructure has announced that this Parliament will formally apologise to the victims. At the time Premier Neville Wran wrote to families of victims and survivors, but this Parliament has not formally apologised. That apology will be welcomed by the families of victims and survivors. The victims were people going about their ordinary daily business. They are gone but will never be forgotten. They were people of all ages and from different backgrounds. They were from the Blue Mountains, Parramatta, the city and places in between. They will forever remain in the memories of their families, their friends, the survivors and all those who risked their lives to help others. I pay my respects to those now gone and to the families left to carry on.

Bills

MOTOR RACING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (NEWCASTLE 500) BILL 2017

TRANSPORT ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT (INDEPENDENT TRANSPORT SAFETY REGULATOR) BILL 2017

Returned

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): I report receipt of messages from the Legislative Council returning the abovementioned bills without amendment.

Matter of Public Importance

BOWEL CANCER SCREENING PROGRAMS

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) (17:42): This evening the House addresses the issue of bowel cancer and the "Don't Wait Until It's Too Late" campaign. The simple message is that screening for bowel cancer saves lives. There are several cancers for which cancer screening has been demonstrated to be a key life-saving tool. Through early detection of the cancer and its precursors, the mortality rate of breast, cervical and bowel cancers is reduced. If more people between the ages of 50 and 74 participate in bowel cancer screening by having a faecal occult blood test [FOBT] every two years, the proportion of cancers detected at the earliest, and therefore curable, stage will be dramatically increased.

A fully-fledged bowel cancer screening program will save approximately 300 lives each and every year in New South Wales. Those people will also have less invasive and shorter courses of treatment because, in general, their cancer will be less advanced. In May and June 2016 the Government funded a statewide on-air social marketing campaign using the Commonwealth Department of Health's "A gift for living" campaign. A public relations strategy was implemented to support the campaign, and included a comedian ambassador, health and medical experts, and testimonials for the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program.

Planning is underway for a repeat social marketing campaign to be on air in May and June this year, and a new social marketing campaign for 2018. A NSW Bowel Cancer Screening Marketing and Recruitment Strategy has been developed by the Cancer Institute NSW and is close to completion. It has involved extensive stakeholder consultation with charities and non-government organisations and other jurisdictions. In September 2016 the Cancer Institute NSW launched a primary care strategy for bowel, breast and cervical screening. Its advisory group includes representatives from the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, the Australian Practice Nurses Association, the Australian Association of Practice Managers, primary health networks, general practitioners, academics, the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine, and the bowel, cervical and breast cancer screening programs.

The Government, through the Cancer Institute NSW, has issued primary care grants worth more than \$700,000 to four primary health networks. These grants focus primarily on engaging and supporting general practices to participate in structured quality improvement activity aimed at increasing their practice populations' participation in the breast, bowel and cervical cancer screening programs. Grant funds are also being used to review and improve local screening and assessment pathways. Work is underway with the South West Sydney Primary Health Network on a comprehensive and collaborative plan to increase cancer screening rates in the region through a range of primary care focused strategies, including the provision of training and education to general practitioners, nurses and allied health providers, and the implementation of a clinical audit program with 10 practices and the establishment of screening pathways. This project also involves community-focused strategies, including engagement and education, the identification of community champions and the strengthening of links between communities and primary care.

Over the previous four years the Cancer Institute has worked consistently to improve access to timely colonoscopy for program participants. Grants are designed to support initiatives that improve access to colonoscopy in public hospitals for people with a positive FOBT. The grants focus on redesign of current practice and implementing strategies to streamline access and improve capacity and waiting times. Colonoscopy

improvement grants continue, with four of these grant projects reaching their completion date at the end of 2016 and a further round planned for the next financial year.

A community of practice has been established by the Cancer Institute to support work being done in local health districts to improve access to public colonoscopy services for people who return a positive FOBT. In 2016 two workshops were hosted at the Cancer Institute. Representatives from the Agency for Clinical Innovation, the Ministry of Health Surgical Access Line and various gastroenterologists, colorectal surgeons, nurses and project staff have participated in the workshops. The workshops identified opportunities to support potential projects and programs of work, which are being progressed in 2017.

The NSW Bowel Screening Program continues to contribute to the planning of the Commonwealth Indigenous Bowel Screening Pilot Project, expected to begin in July 2017 after the transition to the new National Cancer Screening Register is complete. The project aims to trial a combination of education and support for Aboriginal health workers as well as directly provide screening kits to promote awareness and encourage an increase in participation rates amongst Aboriginal peoples who have a markedly lower screening rate. People often think that bowel cancer affects only older members of our society. That is not necessarily the case. I encourage people to screen before it is too late.

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (17:46): If you could halve your risk of cancer by taking a non-invasive test, would you? For most Australians the answer would be an obvious yes. So why do so many people turn down the opportunity for a bowel cancer screening test? I join the member for Albury in recognising this matter of public importance and the need to bring greater awareness to Bowel Cancer Australia's "Don't Wait Until It's Too Late" campaign as part of Bowel Cancer Awareness month.

Bowel Cancer can affect anyone—male or female, young or old, rich or poor. More than 15,000 Australians are diagnosed with bowel cancer each year, including over 1,000 who are under the age of 50. It is a misconception to associate bowel cancer with older men. Bowel Cancer Australia reports that one in 13 Australians will be diagnosed with bowel cancer in their lifetime. This issue will have touched many families across New South Wales. If detected early, 90 per cent of cases can be treated successfully, but early detection is the key.

Despite the good news, research conducted by the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health at the Australian National University found that only 34.5 per cent of the 200,000 people eligible to be screened for bowel cancer in New South Wales had done so. Those who had been screened for bowel or colorectal cancer were 44 per cent less likely to develop the disease in the following four years compared with those who had not been tested. Researchers estimated that wider screening could save up to 500 lives each year. The National Bowel Cancer Screening Program will this year offer free screening for people aged 50, 54, 55, 58, 60, 64, 68, 70, 72 and 74.

By 2020 the program will provide every Australian aged 50 to 74 with a free screening kit every two years. Despite this, current figures show that just 34.5 per cent of people eligible to be screened for bowel cancer in New South Wales complete the test that is sent to them. An important part of improving this figure is engaging women in the discussion. Bowel cancer is the second largest cause of death by cancer for women. We have seen the success of breast screening, Pap smears and other testing focused at women, and I am hopeful that when women become aware of the risk and prevalence of bowel cancer they will take up the screening opportunities. I acknowledge the teal ribbon that I am wearing today in support of Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month. The mortality rates for ovarian cancer are extraordinarily high.

It is important that, in addition to the good work being done by Bowel Cancer Australia, we have these conversations with our families, friends and loved ones. Bowel cancer screening is quick and easy and can be done at home. Given the enormous benefits of bowel cancer screening, there is no reason to avoid the test. I thank Bowel Cancer Australia for continuing to highlight this important health issue to residents across New South Wales.

Visitors

VISITORS

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): I welcome to the gallery members of the public here for A Little Night Sitting conducted by the Department of Parliamentary Services Parliamentary Education team. The education team does a really good job.

*Matter of Public Importance***BOWEL CANCER SCREENING PROGRAMS**

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Cootamundra) (17:50): Screening for bowel cancer saves lives. The National Bowel Cancer Screening Program is a key Government initiative to improve bowel cancer outcomes in Australia. The importance of bowel cancer screening is supported by a range of community organisations, including Bowel Cancer Australia and the Rotary Bowelscan program, that focus on raising public awareness about bowel cancer and the difference that bowel cancer screening makes. It is great when one turns 50 because that extra special present arrives in the mail. Many people in this Chamber will have received it. One dutifully completes the test and sends it back. Those kits are saving lives. I reinforce the comment made by the previous speakers in this debate: when people receive that kit they should make sure to do the test and send it back. It is very important.

The leadership shown by Rotary, through the Bowelscan program, and Bowel Cancer Australia is to be commended, as is their commitment to ensuring that vital conversations continue to take place in the community. Many community organisations provide information, resources and support for people who have been diagnosed with cancer, and their loved ones. There are several cancers for which cancer screening has been demonstrated to be a key life-saving tool. Early detection of the cancer and its precursors can lead to a reduction in mortality rates. The list includes breast cancer, cervical cancer and bowel cancer. Bowel cancer is also referred to as colorectal cancer, colon cancer or rectal cancer, depending on the section of bowel where the cancer starts. The risk of a person in New South Wales being diagnosed with bowel cancer by the age of 85 is one in 12.

The rate of bowel cancer deaths in New South Wales has decreased over the past 10 years. The treatment plan for each person diagnosed with bowel cancer will depend on the stage of the cancer at the time it is diagnosed. The extent of spread from the site where it arose, the purpose of the treatment and the person's general health and other characteristics are all taken into consideration. Surgery is the mainstay of curative treatment for bowel cancer. For optimal treatment it is important that there be pre-operative oversight by a multidisciplinary cancer care team. This will ensure the patient receives the appropriate treatment before and after surgery. For people diagnosed with rectal cancer, radiotherapy before surgery is now the preferred clinical pathway. For many people with colon cancer, chemotherapy after surgery is often recommended.

The multidisciplinary cancer care team may comprise a wide range of health professionals, including general practitioners, colorectal surgeons, gastroenterologists, medical oncologists, radiation oncologists, nurses, dietitians, social workers, counsellors, physiotherapists and occupational therapists. I thank them so much for doing what they do to help people who contract this dreadful illness. Together, they take an integrated, team-based approach to developing and implementing individualised treatment plans for people who have been diagnosed with bowel cancer. They ensure that clinical care continues to reflect the best evidence available from research. I reinforce that early detection is best. I encourage everyone who receives one of those little brown packages at various stages of their life to complete the test and send it back as quickly as possible. I thank the House for its attention.

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) (17:53): In reply: I thank the member for Port Stephens and the member for Cootamundra for their contribution to this matter of public importance. It is vital that we talk about this topic. People are under the misapprehension that bowel cancer is a problem that affects older people and, as the member for Port Stephens said, often men. I want to dispel that belief as I conclude this matter of public importance discussion. As a member of Rotary I have been very pleased to contribute to spreading the message about early screening. As the member for Cootamundra did, I encourage people to react when they receive the Bowelscan package. It is through early screening that we save lives. I have personal knowledge of people in my circle of friends who have taken advantage of that screening, have been diagnosed and have been successfully treated.

There is a message here for members of Parliament as well, which is illustrated by the experience of a former member of the Victorian Parliament, a 44-year-old woman called Donna Bauer. In 2012-13 she spent most of her days fighting fatigue and, as she said, "trying to look as if I wasn't dying." First, she said, came the pain, excruciating spasms that randomly took hold, even when she was on her feet giving a speech in the Victorian Parliament. Then there was the diagnosis, the moment she learnt she had bowel cancer—which explained the pain. That was followed by seven hours of surgery to extract a tumour that had grown larger than the size of a fist. Finally, there was chemotherapy. That was horribly timed, for her, because she was a mother with four children who underwent chemotherapy in the lead-up to an election. She would often get home in the early evening and head straight to bed.

Hers was a fight between life and death. This is the important message that we all need to take away from tonight's matter of public importance: she admits that it could have been avoided if she had only acknowledged the symptoms and sought treatment sooner. She said that the pain was spasmodic—a couple of times a week—

but it was so significant that she would have to hold on to a bench at home or, when speaking in Parliament, hold on to the table. She was gripped by tenseness and the pain was excruciating. She said:

I just lost perspective, thinking that I didn't have the time to deal with it. As soon as I was told "you have bowel cancer" I was shocked. They were four words I never expected to hear because I thought it was an older person's cancer. You think you're young and you're fit so it will be all right. But I ignored the symptoms and I think that's the strong message: I made a huge mistake.

If you have early signs, seek treatment. That is the message tonight. Do not wait until it is too late. Thank you.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 17:57 until
Thursday 23 February 2017 at 10:00.**