



New South Wales

Legislative Assembly

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Sixth Parliament
First Session**

Thursday, 23 February 2017

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday, 23 February 2017

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

The SPEAKER read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

Documents

AUDITOR-GENERAL

Reports

The CLERK: In accordance with section 63C of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, I announce receipt of a performance audit report of the Auditor-General entitled "Building the readiness of the non-government sector for the NDIS: Department of Family and Community Services ", dated February 2017, received this day.

[Notices of motions given.]

Personal Explanation

MEMBER FOR CESSNOCK

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (10:11): By leave: Yesterday I was ordered to be removed from the Chamber under Standing Order 249. This followed an excellent response from the Minister for Health dealing with palliative care. During his time at the lectern the Minister was heard virtually in silence. At the conclusion a request was made for that time to be extended to allow the Minister to conclude his answer. I made comment to support the extension, only to be told that I had not been listening and I had no interest. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Prior to my arrival in this place I spent six years working for a cancer charity known as CanTeen supporting young people living with cancer. During that time I had the good and sad fortune to assist dozens and dozens, possibly hundreds, of young people and their families to die well, to die with dignity and to die as far as possible in peace. It is hard to imagine a member of this Chamber who might be more interested in and aware of the issues of palliative care. I had listened to the Minister in silence and with deep interest. My only interjection was to support an extension for him to conclude his answer. I did indeed disrespect the House in being removed. I offer this as context for my colleagues with regard to my removal from this Chamber yesterday.

Bills

STATE REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2017

First Reading

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Victor Dominello, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Finance, Services and Property) (10:13):
I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The State Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2017 amends the provisions of several Acts covering the functions of the Office of State Revenue relating to taxes and duties. The amendments are the latest instalment in the Government's ongoing revenue reforms to keep the tax legislation effective and up to date. This will improve equity by ensuring clients in similar circumstances have similar outcomes, combat tax avoidance practices by ensuring taxpayer liabilities are consistent with the policy intent of the legislation, reduce red tape by removing uncertainty, increase harmonisation with other States and Territories where possible, and improve administrative simplicity.

I will deal first with amendments to the Duties Act 1997. A number of the amendments improve the effectiveness of landholder duty provisions. Landholder duty is imposed on the acquisition of an interest in a company or unit trust that has landholdings in New South Wales with a value of \$2 million or more. It complements transfer duty by imposing the same duty on an indirect acquisition of land as applies to a direct

transfer of land. In 2013 the Office of State Revenue conducted a review of landholder duty legislation which identified weaknesses that could result in uncertain interpretation of administration disputes with taxpayers or avoidance of duty. The bill implements a number of recommendations of the review to improve the integrity of the provisions, and in some cases increase the level of consistency with other jurisdictions.

Because land is often held in complex company and trust structures, the legislation contains rules to trace the ownership of property through these structures. The bill amends these rules to link entities in the ownership chain where the target entity is entitled to ultimately receive a 50 per cent or more interest in landholdings. The bill also confirms the position that liabilities are not taken into account when determining the value of property of entities. To prevent avoidance of landholder duty, special provisions deal with the land the subject of an agreement for sale, and treat combined put and call options as an agreement for sale.

The bill contains two other measures to protect the review base for duties. The bill strengthens the duties general anti-avoidance provisions. The current provisions were modelled on the Commonwealth tax legislation and Federal Court decisions in recent years have reduced the effectiveness of those provisions. The amendment is based on the Commonwealth amendments and will prevent the taxpayer from escaping the anti-avoidance provisions by claiming that the transaction would not have happened if the duty were payable.

The second anti-avoidance measure relates to a duties concession for the transfer of property to the new trustee of an existing trust. A recent Supreme Court decision overturned 30 years of consistent interpretation of the concession to effectively allow a sale of property to avoid duty, which opened a significant loophole. The bill closes that loophole. The bill provides and extends a number of tax and duty exemptions. These include an exemption from duty on the vesting of land upon the merger of credit unions, building societies and mutual banks, an extension of the exemption for transfers of property as a consequence of the break-up of a marriage or a de facto relationship, and an extension of the exemption of transfers of primary production land allowing family members to include transfers from a self-managed super fund. Other duty concessions include the application of a nominal duty on transfers to custodians of self-managed superannuation funds where duty has been paid on an agreement for sale to the trustee of the fund, and exemption for transfers of fund assets arising from members moving to a MySuper fund.

Stamp duty was historically a tax on paper documents and although the liability now is imposed on transactions, the duty is still assessed and stamped on paper documents. Technological advances now see legal documents being prepared and signed digitally, including, for example, the New South Wales Law Society standard form of contract for sale of land, which can be completed, signed and exchanged digitally. The duties legislation is therefore being amended to clarify the administration arrangements for assessment of electronic documents. The bill also includes a provision to better make lessees aware of their potential land tax liabilities. Currently some lessees of Crown land who are liable for land tax fail to lodge returns with the Office of State Revenue in the first instance because they are not aware of their potential liability. In order to minimise these situations the bill requires Crown bodies and councils to make lessees aware of a potential land tax liability. If the Crown does not fulfil this obligation, the Crown body or council will be jointly and severally liable for the land tax liability.

The amendment ensures lessees are able to take into account the cost of land tax in negotiating lease payments. The bill also updates a payroll tax exemption for motor vehicle allowances to reference the recently amended Commonwealth Income Tax Assessment Act. The amended Commonwealth provisions replace a three-tiered system with one single motor vehicle exempt rate. Adopting this one rate for payroll tax purposes simplifies administration for employers and reduces red tape. Another payroll tax amendment in the bill is the exemption of wages paid to employees who participate in the Commonwealth Organ Donor Scheme to the extent that the wages are reimbursed by the Commonwealth. This amendment will remove a potential disincentive for employers to approve leave for employees participating in the scheme. The bill also includes an amendment to allow the Office of State Revenue to share relevant information with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission. The amendment will promote the red tape reduction concept of collecting information once to use often.

Many of the individual amendments in this bill could be described as minor or housekeeping amendments, and they have the effect of clarifying and fine-tuning the State's revenue legislation. They are, nevertheless, an important part of the Government's commitment to maintaining and improving the administration of the State's revenue collection. The amendments in the bill will improve the level of service provided to taxpayers by facilitating digital transactions and processes, improve the fairness of State taxes, reduce the potential for costly litigation and send a clear message from the Government that tax avoidance loopholes will be closed. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

*Budget***BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS 2016-17****Debate resumed from 16 February 2017.**

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (10:21): Today I inform the House of what the 2016-2017 budget delivers for my electorate of Wollondilly. When this Government first came to office in 2011, Labor had left us with a forecast deficit totalling \$4.4 billion. After six years in office and a lot of hard work from everyone on this side of the House, the budget is now firmly back on track with a forecast surplus of \$3.7 billion for this financial year. This is terrific news for the people of New South Wales and in particular for the people of Wollondilly in the Southern Highlands, where we have seen significant investment in crucial areas. The budget announced not only maintains our triple-A credit rating but also delivers record spending in services and infrastructure.

The New South Wales infrastructure program continues to grow, with a record \$73.3 billion spend over the next four years on key service delivery areas, including major spending in health, transport, education, and the list just goes on and on. The New South Wales Government is forecast to spend an average of \$12.1 billion annually on infrastructure over this period, efficiently and effectively on a number of projects which have been carefully accounted for. In contrast, when Labor was in office it spent an average \$6.2 billion a year on infrastructure—not that we know where that money went. We saw hundreds of millions of dollars, if not billions of dollars, wasted on consultants and the Rozelle metro program, for example. The former Labor Government lost half a billion dollars when not a single piece of infrastructure was delivered for the proposed Rozelle metro.

Very briefly, what we have seen is portfolio after portfolio delivering record spends, and I will inform the House of some of those. Since coming to office six years ago, the New South Wales Government has created 338,600 jobs. Furthermore, the New South Wales Government has met its election commitment to create 154,000 jobs since April 2015. Our budget supports employment opportunities and jobs creation through a range of measures, with \$100 million to be invested over two years for the Smart, Skilled and Hired program and \$97 million to be spent in the 2016-17 financial period on new and improved TAFE facilities. The Opposition is very good at scaremongering—it scaremongers on a number of things—and it keeps saying that this Government is talking down TAFE and underinvesting in TAFE. In fact, the Government is putting more money into TAFE than has ever been done before. We certainly support the TAFE sector.

While many families are struggling to break into the housing market at present, this Government understands the dilemma and continues to seek to address this issue. A total of \$41 million of new funding over four years is being provided to the Greater Sydney Commission to support the planned growth in housing supply. This budget also spends \$1 million to develop the Greenfield Housing Code to help convert housing approvals into homes, further increasing the supply of houses that are available. The new code aims to reduce costs and red tape for owners, increase certainty for investors and reduce the time to completion. This is great news for Wollondilly, particularly following the announcement by the Government that Wilton New Town will be created. That greenfield site will become the fifth-largest regional city in New South Wales with up to 16,000 homes and 11,000 permanent jobs after construction over a 20- to 30-year period. It will have health and education precincts, recreational facilities, open spaces and, potentially, an environmental trust to protect all the bushlands in and around the gorge area.

This is the new way of doing things; it has the support of the local community and it certainly has the unanimous support of the council and the Government. It has been seven or eight years of hard work in the making to ensure that we deliver. It is not only the homes and jobs that are important but it is also important for regional areas like my electorate, where we are not quite city and not quite country—it is where the city meets the bush. My electorate covers 3,500 square kilometres and although it has a population the same size as any member's electorate, because it is so spread out it does not necessarily attract the services that other electorates do because people have to travel long distances to access them. Currently, Wollondilly Shire has one public high school and our kids go to more than 35 different high schools outside the area because we do not have the concentration of people in any one town. Wilton New Town will ensure that we have the medical and education services that are so desperately needed. I thank the former Minister for Planning, the Hon. Rob Stokes, for working with the local community, the local council and me to see this delivered.

The Government has also reserved more than \$966 million in the Housing Acceleration Fund, which continues to create new opportunities for housing supply through key projects including upgrades to Camden Valley Way, where my good friend the member for Camden continues to deliver for his constituents. This targeted expenditure also allows families to buy new homes in places like Ingleburn Road, Croatia Avenue and Campbelltown Road in the nearby Macarthur region. It is this type of expenditure that encourages the essential job creation for surrounding areas, including in my electorate of Wollondilly. To further assist people in their quest to break into the housing market, this Government is ensuring that local families get the best chance possible.

The Government is introducing surcharges for foreign investors in residential real estate, including a transfer duty surcharge of 4 per cent applying to all new purchases. With the imminent development of a new growth area being planned within my electorate that is great news.

In relation to the environment, the Government is investing \$391 million, with \$158 million to be spent on renewable energy and energy efficiency programs alone. This demonstrates the ongoing commitment of the Coalition to environmental sustainability whilst avoiding the irresponsible energy policies of other State Labor governments such as South Australia. Since this Government came to office, the Dharawal National Park has been established in my electorate. It was an election commitment and it was one of the first things this Government did under the former Premier Barry O'Farrell. The Labor Government failed to do any work or undertake any inquiry into the disappearing water levels at Thirlmere Lakes.

This Government invested significant money to conduct baseline studies and the Government is investing more money to ensure that we understand what is causing the drop in water levels and, more importantly, how we can fix it. The lakes are tens of thousands of years old and it is very important that we understand what is happening there. The good news is that water is starting to go into the lakes, but it is early days and we will have to wait and see if things improve in the years to come. The Government has declared thousands and thousands of hectares at Nattai a wilderness area to protect the environment. It also brought back Petroleum Exploration Licence 2 and Petroleum Exploration Licence 454 to stop coal seam gas activities in the water catchment areas of Wollondilly, which is the catchment area for more than 80 per cent of Sydney's water. This Government has protected water security for generations to come.

The Government is investing more than \$20 billion on roads and transport across the State, which is an increase of \$3.7 billion on the previous financial year. This is outstanding news for Wollondilly, with investments in projects like the bridge repairs at Victoria Bridge in Picton at \$700,000; grants amounting to more than \$2.4 million to Wollondilly Shire Council for road maintenance; road safety improvements to Drapers Road in Colo Vale and Range Road in Mittagong totalling \$340,000, not to mention a \$40,000 investment into the Safer Roads Program; planning for widened shoulders and resurfacing of Wilson Drive at Hill Top; an investment of almost \$1 million on the installation of central wire rope barriers and removal of hazards on the Hume Highway at Douglas Park; and \$650,000 spent on the important construction of traffic lights at the intersection of the Old Hume Highway and Braemar Avenue to further improve road safety in the Southern Highlands.

Last weekend I was at that intersection conducting village visits. It was great to see residents excited about safety improvements on that road. The Government has delivered on its commitment to invest money to build a new bridge over the train line that connects Willow Vale to the Old Hume Highway. Year after year previous governments had promised a new bridge but never delivered it. It was a 150-year-old bridge; it was wooden, rotten, very dangerous and had no pedestrian access. After the redistribution when I became responsible for that area I said, "Enough is enough. We are going to get that done as quickly as we can." We now have that new bridge with pedestrian access that will come online this week. It is very exciting. It is what can be done when the financial economic principles are right and when money is spent on projects that are important to communities.

The New South Wales Government in the last term of office invested \$27.5 billion in the Roads, Maritime and Freight portfolio, the largest series of investments in the State's history. This financial year the Government committed \$2.9 billion for the WestConnex project, which will link Sydney's west and south-west with the central business district, the airport and Port Botany. Some Opposition members and their Federal counterparts oppose the WestConnex project. However, hundreds of thousands of people in south-west Sydney will be able to better access employment opportunities around that region, with improved traffic flow getting people home to their families, as opposed to spending hours each and every day in the parking lots of our motorways that we are now fixing because Labor failed to do so.

My electorate of Wollondilly is located on the ever-expanding south-west urban fringe and the Badgerys Creek airport is in close proximity. I have been on record from day one supporting then Premier, Barry O'Farrell, in opposing the construction of Badgerys Creek airport in the Sydney Basin. However, the Federal Government on all sides of politics has supported it and obviously the Badgerys Creek airport is going ahead. As any good local members would do, as opposed to continuing a scaremongering campaign or complaining, we are practical. This is a Federal Government decision and we have to make the best of it. We need infrastructure to support it. I would be the first to admit there will be opportunities, particularly employment opportunities.

I inform the House that \$485 million is being outlaid for Western Sydney roads to support population and economic growth as well as the airport, which will be of great benefit to my constituents. It will improve productivity and allow them to spend more time at home with their families rather than on the road in peak hour traffic. Throughout my time in this place my commitment is to ensure that road safety is enhanced throughout my electorate delivering key improvements like the installation of traffic lights at the Picton Road and Hume Highway intersection, as well as new safety barriers on the Old Hume Highway over the Razorback. This expenditure only

builds on that commitment and is only possible due to the great work of our former Treasurer, now Premier, Gladys Berejiklian.

Picton Road is a significant thoroughfare from Wollondilly into the Wollongong region, which has not had any significant investment. The Government has spent up to \$52 million upgrading that road. It has also invested more than \$20 million in Appin Road. When I came to office there had been something like 16 tragic deaths, many preventable. I conducted a road safety forum with the then Minister for Roads, and the mayors of Wollondilly, Campbelltown and Wollongong. We said, "Enough is enough. What can we actually do practically to work together to cut through the red tape to get the desperately needed safety improvements on that stretch of road?" We agreed that the Centre for Road Safety would conduct a safety audit. I am pleased to inform the House that the audit was completed some time ago and that all of the centre's recommendations have been implemented, including realigning, resurfacing or fixing pinch points. In the future, with increased population in the area, new roads will need to be created, but it is important for this work to be done on existing roads.

As I have stated to the House previously, the 2015-16 budget allocates recurrent funding to employ additional police and to increase the strength of the NSW Police Force to 16,795 positions by December 2018. This is crucially important in keeping the people of Wollondilly and the Southern Highlands safe. Policing resources have been a big topic in my electorate in the past few weeks. A couple of weeks ago I was pleased to join the member for Goulburn, the Hon. Pru Goward, at Moss Vale to turn the first sod for what will be the new Southern Highlands Police Command. The command has been housed in an old building at Bowral, and when it rained the building leaked. It was cold, miserable and not fit for purpose. The police and the community are very excited about the new building, and it was great to join the deputy commissioner to unveil the plans.

On the other side of my electorate, the Wollondilly shire is predominantly serviced by the Camden Local Area Command. Due to population increases in the electorates of Camden and Wollondilly, police are doing more with the same number of staff. They have conducted an honourable campaign and have said that they need more resources, which is something the member for Camden and I have backed in this House and in public. We have held many meetings with police, deputy commissioners and the Minister. Only a couple of weeks ago the member for Camden and I had a meeting with the Minister's office, the Police Association, members of the local command, the local area commander and two deputy commissioners to see what could be done within the Police Force and what we as a government could do to support them.

I am pleased to say that in the last few weeks interim measures have been put in place within the Police Force that have seen additional police resources allocated to that area command. We know that with the soon-to-be-released WASP program the command will definitely get more police because of the population, demographics and geographical distances of some of the jobs they have to do. I have a caution for one or two people who seek to cause some mischief locally on the council at Wollondilly. They want to talk crime up and talk their communities down. One of the councillors has circulated a petition asking for the employment of more police, but that problem has been solved. It is political grandstanding. I am happy for people in the community to be passionate about these issues, but I suggest that those councillors focus on council issues and consult with the Government and me before making claims that will scare the community. It leads the community to think that there are no resources and it advertises to criminals that it might be a place to target. I will work productively with the police. [*Extension of time*]

This Government has committed \$218 million for capital expenditure by the police. That is an increase of 59 per cent. I know that our communities are safer as a result and the police are better resourced and thankful for that. The Government's awareness of the benefits of developing technologies is further demonstrated by the commitment of \$36 million towards the implementation of the \$100 million four-year "Policing for tomorrow" fund that will equip police with the technology needed to do their jobs. The electorate of Wollondilly has large rural areas, but that does not make it immune to the threat of terrorism. The violent extremist program will receive \$40.3 million to continue its work to prevent terror attacks.

The program works closely with communities on social cohesion. This work is important, even for a rural electorate such as mine. The budget will provide \$6.4 million to build the new State Emergency Services headquarters in Wollongong. The members for Kiama and Heathcote will attest to the boost that will provide for the Southern Highlands and the wider Illawarra. As the member for Wollondilly I consider the provision of quality public health services as crucial. In 2015, the Wollondilly electoral boundaries were changed and now encompass the bulk of the Southern Highlands region. Since that time I have campaigned relentlessly for funding for the Bowral hospital in order to improve the region's health services.

I inform the House that this year's budget contributes \$20 million of an overall \$50 million upgrade to the hospital. For decades members have spoken about the Bowral and District Hospital, but no additional money has been granted. The doctors, nurses, support staff and administration staff do a fantastic job but they are working in buildings that are up to 60 or 100 years old and not fit for purpose. As the new member for that region and, at

the time, the assistant health Minister I was able to announce a \$50 million upgrade. The health district and stakeholders have produced a clinical services plan that resolves the priorities for the health district. The \$50 million will provide a new building, parking, and a new entrance.

Business interrupted.

Bills

DISCOUNT RATE REDUCTION (MISCELLANEOUS ACTS AMENDMENT) BILL 2017

First Reading

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Clayton Barr, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (10:43): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the Discount Rate (Miscellaneous Acts Amendment) Bill 2017 is to amend the Civil Liability Act 2001, the Motor Accidents Compensation Act 1999 and the Worker's Compensation Act 1987 to reduce the discount rate of an award of damages for future economic loss from 5 per cent to 3 per cent. I will provide context for the bill: When a person is injured under either of the three Acts listed—civil liability, motor accident or workers compensation—their recovery from injury may leave them with a legacy condition that is deemed to have an impact on their future ability to earn a living in the workplace. That does not necessarily mean that they cannot return to work, but in returning to work, or not, there will be limits as to what they can do, how hard they can work and the earnings that they might realise.

The injured person enters into negotiations with the respective insurer or other responsible body. In many instances, through such negotiations, an amount is agreed to, all parties sign off and the matter is effectively finalised without ever going to court. However, in some instances the damages and the impact on future earnings cannot be agreed. In these instances the matter will proceed to court. At court a ruling is given. When an amount is awarded there are a number of factors applied in determining the amount given. This process is incredibly complex and while every effort has been made to make it objective and mathematical there is an element of subjectivity. It is important to note that in awarding an amount there is no single simple formula. I do not envy the judges responsible for this calculation.

Once an amount is determined factors such as the age of the victim, the working years ahead of the victim prior to retirement and statistical data on the likelihood of survival until retirement age and other elements are applied along with a discount rate. What is a discount rate and how does it work? Consider a case where the judgement has been made that a future loss of earnings for a 45-year-old victim would be \$100,000. The retirement age is 65. The judge has determined that over the next 20 years the victim, due to their injury, will likely earn \$100,000 less than if they had not suffered the injury at all. If the judge were to allot the entire \$100,000 up front and the person invested the money as instructed to do they would end up with an amount far more than the judgement of \$100,000. Twenty years of investment with compound interest could turn that \$100,000 into \$130,000 or \$140,000.

To avoid this the judgement requires the discount rate to be applied. The discount rate is applied such that if the person invested the money at a given interest rate over the 20 years they have left to work then the end result will be \$100,000. Currently in the three Acts listed above the discount rate used is 5 per cent. The judge has no option but to use the 5 per cent discount rate. Therefore, the \$100,000 award must be reduced. Based on a 5 per cent annual interest rate the victim would be awarded \$42,000, told to invest the money at 5 per cent and if they do this over the next 20 years of their working life they will realise \$100,000 as awarded at judgement. Can you spot the problem? The problem is that no-one anywhere in this country, or globally, can realise a 5 per cent interest rate in today's market. No-one has been able to get 5 per cent since 2010, since the global financial crisis. The 10-year government bond rate today, as we debate, is set at just 2.61 per cent. The experts have determined that no-one will get anywhere near 5 per cent interest in the foreseeable future.

From the outset, we need to be clear and establish that a discount rate of 5 per cent is entirely inappropriate in today's terms. Unfortunately, for an injured person who will not make a full recovery and who has been awarded a lump sum at any time in the past seven years the situation is irreversible. Those people will never see anything close to the amount that the judgment awarded them. Those who know anything about compound interest or financial growth or graphs and charts will know that if one path is set at 5 per cent and a second path is set at 2.61 per cent then from day one there is a gap. As the lines advance across the chart, over the years the gap between the two gets larger. The gap amount can never be recovered. The lines will not catch up. The gap can never be reduced. In sporting terms, imagine a cricket match where one team bats for 20 overs at

a run rate of five and another team bats for 20 overs at a run rate of 2.61. After the 20 overs, one team has 100 runs and the other team has just 52. The gap is 48. Imagine if that cricket match went on for 40 overs instead of 20. The gap grows and grows. After 40 overs the gap is 96.

The significance of this second example is that it highlights an important point about how the discount rate applies in the real world and the inadequacy of it. The longer a person has left to work, the more disadvantaged they will be by an unachievable 5 per cent discount rate. A person who receives an awarded lump sum judgement payment at 20 years of age, who still has 45 years left to work, will be far more disadvantaged and out of pocket than a 60-year-old person who might receive the same judgement but who has only five years left to work. In the five years, the gap between 5 per cent and 2.61 per cent, while still negative, is quite small. Over 45 years, the gap between 5 per cent and 2.61 per cent is incredibly large.

The same logic applies to a person who is far more significantly injured than a person with a mild injury. It is not hard to foretell that, in very broad and general terms, if one person loses a finger in an accident and another person loses a leg, the loss of the finger would probably be judged as minor in comparison to the loss of the leg. The lump sum awarded for the leg is likely to be much larger. It will be the leg injury, the larger lump sum, with a discount rate of 5 per cent applied to it, that will lose out significantly. It will be much further away from the sum awarded in the judgment and the person will be much more out of pocket.

By comparison, the judgement for the finger is likely to be modest. As time progresses, the gap between the discount rate of 5 per cent and the reality of 2.61 per cent will still be negative and the person will still be out of pocket, but the gap will be much smaller. I acknowledge that a lost finger for a concert pianist, hairdresser or mechanic would be much more significant than a lost finger for a school teacher or a bus driver. Similarly, a lost leg would be more significant for particular occupations. Hence the need to deal with injuries on a case-by-case basis rather than by using an arbitrary medical scale—but that is a conversation for another day.

I return to the discount rate: where it is currently set at and where it should be set. I offer a number of significant points. The discount rate was established in the three Acts at various times over the past 30 years. Various methods, justifications and explanations have been used. To be frank, the 5 per cent rate has been neither here nor there for the past 30 years because interest rates have been well above 5 per cent. If someone wanted to lodge an argument that injured people received well above the judgement trajectory during the 30 years prior to 2010 then I would be unable to lodge much of an argument against that.

Those people who were injured and had shorter periods to work prior to retirement possibly did well. Those who were injured and had a longer period to work may have experienced some good times during the 1980s, 1990s or 2000s, well above the 5 per cent, but recently their investment trajectory will have plummeted. No doubt they will be averaging something closer to the original judgment amount. Life cannot be changed for those people. It cannot be changed for those people injured in the 1980s, 1990s or 2000s, and it cannot be changed, sadly, for the people injured since the global financial crisis and before this bill was introduced. Their destiny has been set.

Today, in this place, we need to address tomorrow—the coming years—and the already injured or soon to be injured who are or will be in the system. We have to offer them a fair and reasonable future that will, in financial terms, allow them to realise an amount that is closer to the amount that was awarded in the judgment. We can do that by changing the discount rate from 5 per cent to 3 per cent. Why 3 per cent? The discount rate is an intellectual concept best examined by mathematicians and actuaries. Setting the rate is part science and part art. People far more eminent than me have set to this task, and they have suggested the 3 per cent rate. I refer now to some examples.

In Australia in 1981 the discount rate was addressed in the High Court in *Todorovic v Waller*. That judgment determined that, based on material available at the time, the discount rate should be set at 3 per cent. At the time of that judgment, the 10-year government bond rate was more than 12 per cent and interest rates were at 14 per cent. As I understand it, the 3 per cent rate at the time was reflective of long-term averages, had a built-in margin for error in terms of wages and growth, and accounted for the potential for a change in workplace. So the rate was set at 3 per cent, which, by any measure, was modest.

In 2002 the States of Australia, along with the Federal Government, invested in a review of the law of negligence. We need to understand that the bill that I have introduced today has little to do with negligence but, through whatever form or context, the theory surrounding the discount rate is the same. The review was undertaken by Mr David Ipp, Professor Peter Cane, Associate Professor Don Sheldon and Mr Ian Macintosh on behalf of Senator the Hon. Helen Coonan, then Federal Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer. They are all big hitters, far more esteemed and qualified to consider discount rates than I am. The final report dealt with the issue of discount rate on pages 208 through to 211. The report made the following recommendation:

The discount rate used in calculating damages awards for future economic loss in cases of personal injury and death is 3 per cent.

That was a recommendation of the report by David Ipp and others, in 2002. At the time of the report, the 10-year government bond rate was 6 per cent, and it had averaged close to 10 per cent for the 20 years prior to the report. At the time, Australia was doing well economically. Construction rates were high and the mining boom was just beginning. At that time, in that context, 3 per cent was a very conservative finding. It is worth noting that, in making the finding, the report referred directly to the information that had been provided to the panel by the Australian Government Actuary—an agency staffed by people who spend their lives working in this field. On page 211 the report said:

... the Panel has been informed by the Australian Government Actuary that, in his view, at present, a realistic after-tax discount rate might be in the order of 2 to 4 per cent ...

This suggests to the Panel that 3 per cent remains a reasonable rate ... We therefore recommend a nationally uniform discount rate of 3 per cent. It goes on further to say:

Given the complexity and technical nature of the task of setting an appropriate discount rate, the Panel's opinion is that it should be given to an appropriate regulatory body.

This is probably the most significant report in the past two decades dealing with the discount rate. The panel had full access under ministerial authority to all the nation's best actuarial advisers, and they arrived at 3 per cent. Why is it 3 per cent? Clearly, it is not a figure that I have just plucked out of the air; members should not suggest in debate in this Chamber that it is some mystical figure that I made up. In fact, if I were to make up a figure using basic, sound logic, with the 10-year government bond rate currently set at just 2.61 per cent, I might suggest a discount rate of 2.5 per cent. But I am not doing that; I am not just taking a stab in the dark but I am deferring to the experts and allowing them to set the number.

I refer briefly to a summary of significant facts with regard to the discount rate. As I have said, the Australian actuary recommended in 2002 that it should be between 2 per cent and 4 per cent. David Ipp and company landed on the middle ground of 3 per cent in their final report. Twenty-one years earlier the High Court set a rate of 3 per cent. An inquiry into personal compensation also proposed a rate of 3 per cent. In the United Kingdom the rate is currently set at 2.5 per cent and in New South Wales the Lifetime Care and Support Scheme, although slightly different but in many ways the same, is currently set at 2 per cent. There is a plethora of other places and spaces where 3 per cent seems to be the obvious and applied number.

I want to pre-empt an argument that will undoubtedly be thrown back at me in the course of debate on this bill—it will probably be the Government's only argument. It is that lowering the discount rate will drive up the price of insurance. On this singular, very limited position Government members are correct. In fact, I have spent the past 12 months seeking guidance from various insurance companies as to the quantum and size of the potential rise. Interestingly, the insurance companies found that task incredibly difficult and it took them quite some time and effort, and required significant insight on the part of their actuaries. That tells us something about the complexity of this matter—as I said earlier, it is part science and part art.

The insurance companies have advised me of increases that range quite enormously, from a 3 per cent to a 9 per cent increase and everything in between. All those figures have been offered with various limitations on their accuracy. I pre-warn Government members that if they offer in this Chamber a specific figure with regard to an insurance premium increase they will highlight their ignorance, not their intelligence. It is worth noting the positions of Ipp and company on insurance premiums. This is very important in pre-empting the logic that will be applied by Government members. On page 25 of the report the terms of reference for the panel include:

- 1.2 This was the second Ministerial Meeting held to discuss public concerns about the cost and availability of public liability insurance. In the Ministerial communique that followed, Ministers stated, "unpredictability in the interpretation of the law of negligence is a factor driving up [insurance] premiums".

Business interrupted.

STEEL INDUSTRY PROTECTION BILL 2016

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 16 February 2017.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) (11:04): The Government opposes the Steel Industry Protection Bill 2016. This Government is leading the nation in delivering roads, rail, hospitals and other infrastructure. One has only to look across the State to see 4,500 road projects. One can look across my electorate to see WestConnex and, further north, NorthConnex. There are light rail projects right across this State. We are investing a historic \$73 billion in our infrastructure program that will continue for years. As a result, the Government is the single largest procurer of steel in Australia. Make no mistake, the New South Wales Government is doing significant business with local suppliers. The Government purchased more than \$33 billion in construction goods and services

over the past four years. Of that, more than 70 per cent—or roughly \$23.5 billion—was purchased from New South Wales suppliers. Most of the rest was purchased from across Australia.

This Government is maximising the benefits from the infrastructure boom, and delivering those benefits across the State. For example the Infrastructure Skills Legacy Program is helping to ensure that our record infrastructure investment provides new opportunities for young people and helps existing workers learn new skills. The program is helping to maintain critical skills and fills skills shortages. The bill will significantly increase the cost of delivering infrastructure projects, reduce opportunity and undo the good work we have done for residents across the State. The bill will force the Government to purchase steel that is 10 per cent more expensive than the global market price—potentially costing hundreds of millions, or even billions, more. This money would be better spent delivering more roads, rail, hospitals and schools, which every Opposition member wants but could never fund. The bill will reduce the amount of critical infrastructure we can deliver. Taxpayers will be forced to shoulder this additional cost.

The increased reporting requirements will also apply to government agencies, local councils and construction suppliers. Suppliers, including thousands of small and medium-size businesses, will struggle with the massive avalanche of new red tape. We already see the avalanche of red tape in relation to building projects in our own electorates. The amount of red tape involved in constructing a steel fence in my electorate using a Community Building Partnership grant made the project more difficult and more costly. These suppliers will be burdened with the additional costs of having to comply with onerous reporting requirements on steel usage. Many construction projects across New South Wales will face increased costs without any benefits for the steel industry.

By restricting the ability of construction companies to remain competitive in the market, they will likely refuse to bid for government projects. Inevitably, this will reduce competition and increase costs for government infrastructure projects. The onerous red tape obligations on suppliers and contractors to report on the use of steel products in the construction industry will add to the complexity and cost of managing infrastructure projects. The Government opposes the bill.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (11:08): I acknowledge the presence in the public gallery of our friends from the union movement, Wayne Phillips and his friends from the Australian Workers' Union, and Arthur Rorris from the South Coast Labour Council. I thank them for being here to support Labor's Steel Industry Protection Bill 2016 and for all their hard work. I am delighted to speak in debate on the Steel Industry Protection Bill 2016. It is truly a community-inspired bill that was—like our steel—made in the Illawarra. It represents the coming together of a range of interests and political parties to help secure the sustainability of steelmaking in the Illawarra, which is part of a proud history of manufacturing in our region.

Members opposite seem to have forgotten that. This bill has already passed the other place. Every political party in that House endorsed its provisions. The only exception, of course, was the Liberal-Nationals Coalition. The Coalition is wasting an opportunity to be part of history in the story of steel in the Illawarra. It is disappointing that members opposite would rather continue to feel the warm glow of purist, neoliberal economics rather than side with the people of the Illawarra to ensure the security of steelmaking. I am particularly proud to have played a role—mostly behind the scenes—in bringing this bill before Parliament. I have always taken the view that there is nothing that cannot be achieved if people of goodwill act in good faith and the credit is shared. That has been the case in the development of this bill.

I acknowledge the hard work of my parliamentary colleague the member for Keira in working closely with me and my office to influence the provisions in the bill to make it practical. I also acknowledge our combined efforts to influence the shape of Labor's Secure and Sustainable Steel Jobs Plan. I acknowledge the involvement of The Greens, the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party and the Christian Democratic Party in the other place and their support of the bill. I also acknowledge my parliamentary colleague who is sadly no longer with us, the late Dr John Kaye. When I gave him a little stick in the media some time ago on this issue he called me to discuss my criticism. He said it was good that we were arguing over 90 per cent and 100 per cent Australian-made steel use. John even told the *Illawarra Mercury* in an email on 30 November 2015:

Anna Watson has been a leader within her party and her community in the campaign to save the steel industry and we welcome her input.

I am pleased to have been one of the first movers politically in this debate in the Illawarra. Then Australian Workers Union Port Kembla Branch Secretary Wayne Phillips acknowledged that point when he told the *Illawarra Mercury* on 30 November 2015:

I think Anna's been outstanding, but she's a lone wolf at the moment and needs to be supported by others—no more mucking around.

The member for Kiama publicly criticised my position on steel and asserted that my party would never adopt the 90 per cent steel use target and take it to the 2019 election. The member for Kiama is the Illawarra's

anti-Nostradamus: His predictions are always deadset wrong. The bill has widespread support from those I have mentioned and, in Wayne's words, there is no more mucking around. Mr David Shoebridge in the other place is recorded in *Hansard* on 25 August 2016 as saying:

I said during my second reading speech that this cannot be seen simply as a Greens bill. If it were, we would not be able to achieve passage through this place.

He went on to say:

...The Greens support the amendment inserting "at least 90 per cent" despite the fact that our counsel of perfection would demand 100 per cent."

Usually I would be critical of The Greens for demanding perfection. But this bill is the product of the goodwill and good faith of parliamentarians working together to do what is good for the steelworkers, their families and their community in the Illawarra. Nearly two years ago the Illawarra faced the death of its steelmaking capacity. The demise of steel in the region would have turned it into Australia's Detroit, with 10,000 jobs wiped out and \$3.3 billion in value slashed from the Illawarra regional economy. That is what we faced. Again, with the goodwill of BlueScope Steel and its workforce, led by able union leaders such as Wayne Phillips and others, the region found its way out of this latest steel crisis by pulling together.

Workers made hard compromises to save jobs and the industry, just as they did during the 1980s. We should never forget that important history of steelmaking in the Illawarra. BlueScope is now recording strong profits thanks to its workforce; however, the structural challenge to steelmaking in Australia and the Illawarra remains acute. The Government does not seem to recognise the structural challenge. It considers its job was done by the payroll tax concession provided to the company in October last year and regards that as the end of the story. Steelmaking is not only under significant and ongoing pressure in Australia; other steelmaking nations face the same challenges. Seemingly endless reports, commentary, stakeholder views and media articles make the same case over and over. The Australian Anti-Dumping Commission report published in August this year, which analysed steel and aluminium markets in Australia, concluded:

Global steel and aluminium markets are cyclical in nature, reflecting the impacts of economic business cycles on demand and the impacts of the capital intensive, long-lived and sunk nature of production assets on supply.

It goes on to say:

...analysis has found evidence of market interventions and trade restrictions that influence market behaviours and decision-making by producers in Asian steel and aluminium markets in ways that diverge from competitive behaviours and normal market decisions.

Those are important conclusions from a Commonwealth government agency that the neoliberal market purists opposite do not seem to understand—particularly the member for Ku-ring-gai, who is not in the Chamber. The commission is saying that steelmaking in Australia does not operate in a competitive market as the economic textbooks and models would assert. The purist market simply does not exist in the steel market. It is a fantasy. The commission also outlined:

Asian governments are not unusual in intervening in steel and aluminium markets. Many countries, including the United States, European countries, and Australia, have policies to promote growth, viability, productivity performance and competitiveness of these industries.

Whether the Government likes to recognise it or not, it has already departed from the fantasy of purism in the market operation of steel production by providing payroll tax concessions to BlueScope. It has already got its hands dirty by intervening in the steel market. The primary objective of this bill is to get our hands even dirtier by addressing the issue of procurement of Australian-made steel in all publicly funded infrastructure projects across the State. It has been interesting to observe overseas developments regarding the steel challenge confronting many steel-producing nations. The House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills Committee published a report on 14 December 2015 entitled "The UK steel industry: Government response to the crisis". The report examined quite comprehensively the steel crisis in the United Kingdom, which was very similar to that faced here. The only difference is that BlueScope Steel is still operating and producing steel in the Illawarra while British steel plants have closed, resulting in massive job losses in regional areas and local communities torn apart.

The report places a large emphasis on the importance of procurement and the strategic nature of the steel industry to the United Kingdom. This bill is a reflection on those very concerns. It is indeed ironic that while the Tory government in the United Kingdom has sought to address the steel crisis—albeit too late according to the Commons committee—its sister party here intends to oppose this bill. Some Government members in this place have not always been so opposed to a mandated requirement for an industry. It is important to highlight briefly their hypocrisy in this debate. The member for Kiama, for instance, is all for mandating the use of ethanol across New South Wales but will not extend his support to the mandating of steel in the provisions of this bill. On 16 March this year during debate on the Biofuels Amendment Bill 2016 he is recorded in *Hansard* as asserting:

I am fully aware of certain sections of the community that oppose the biofuels mandate on the basis of market interference. What those scholars conveniently ignore is the sheer level of brazen market interference engaged in by oil companies and associated cartels. This is why a government mandate is required.

I am not aware of any jurisdiction in the world where a strong and viable biofuels market has been successfully established and maintained without government intervention. If we want a sustainable and competitive biofuels market in New South Wales we need a strong and enforceable mandate ...

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order—

Mr Ryan Park: You don't like the truth

Mr Gareth Ward: I like the standing orders though. As much as I am sure we are all enjoying this fabulous debating point, it is not relevant to the bill before the House.

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

Mr Gareth Ward: It is under Standing Order 76 and goes to relevance. I ask you to draw the member for Shellharbour away from her puerile high school debating point and back to the leave of the bill.

Ms ANNA WATSON: The member for Kiama is very sensitive on this issue because he knows he is not supporting his community.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Parliamentary Secretary will resume his seat. The member's time has expired.

Ms ANNA WATSON: I seek an extension of time to finish my contribution.

Mr Gareth Ward: We are happy to allow an extension.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I have not yet ruled on the point of order. I remind the Parliamentary Secretary that he is not in the chair. I have been listening to the debate. The member for Kiama has taken exception to comments made by the member for Shellharbour. She made some comparisons in her contribution and I have no problem with that. There is no point of order. The member for Shellharbour is granted an extension of time.

Ms ANNA WATSON: I indicate that the Labor Opposition supported and voted in this place for the biofuel measures. That bill supported an industry and workers in the member's electorate. It is breathtaking irony that he cannot bring himself to extend the same level of support to an industry that is crucial to the communities that the member for Keira, the member for Wollongong and I represent very proudly. The member for Kiama will go in to bat to mandate the use of ethanol by motorists across the State but he will not lift a finger to mandate the use of Port Kembla steel in publicly funded infrastructure. Just when we think the member for Kiama can stoop no lower in duplicity and wallowing in hypocrisy, we are surprised yet again.

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 76. That is unparliamentary language. The member for Shellharbour is making claims and hurling accusations across the table. It has nothing to do with the provisions in the legislation. I know the member is very passionate.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I uphold the point of order. The language used by the member for Shellharbour was unparliamentary.

Ms ANNA WATSON: The member for Kiama is turning his back on the sustainable use of steel from the Illawarra. It is very disappointing. He knows that this bill will help to secure the steel industry in the Illawarra. It is a good bill, developed by parliamentarians of goodwill and good faith across all political parties—with the exception of those opposite. It has widespread support throughout the Illawarra community. If this bill is defeated in this place when it is ultimately put to a vote it will be on the heads of Coalition members.

The member for Kiama, in particular, will wear its defeat and his part in it like a crown of thorns in the Illawarra, and take that to the next election. It may take a little longer for this bill to be enacted into law in this State but ultimately we will prevail when the next government of this State is elected. Labor will secure the future of the steel industry by using Port Kembla-made steel in every road, every bridge, every school, every hospital and all other infrastructure that is built across New South Wales. I come from a steel-producing region and it is with pride—I know I speak also for the member for Keira and the member for Wollongong—that I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (11:22): I speak in debate on the Steel Industry Protection Bill 2016 and, like the member for Drummoyne, I oppose it. The New South Wales Government opposes the bill. This Government is a strong supporter of the local steel industry. We are building roads, rail and other infrastructure. Our \$73 billion infrastructure agenda leads the nation. As a result, the New South Wales Government is the largest purchaser of steel in the entire country. There are many examples of projects that have used significant amounts

of domestic steel. There is the Pacific Highway Kempsey bypass, which used 400 massive steel piling tubes produced in both Brisbane and Coffs Harbour. That is just one example.

I note that the member for Oxley, and Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, has just entered the Chamber. I know that she is incredibly passionate about the Pacific Highway Kempsey bypass project. Now that she is the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight I am sure that many other projects like that will be delivered across New South Wales. Significant quantities of Australian steel are also being used on the Sydney Metro Northwest and the Sydney Metro Northwest Skytrain, Wynyard Walk and Barangaroo Ferry Hub—just to name a few. By increasing the cost of steel by 10 per cent, or even more, the bill will jeopardise hospitals, highways and other infrastructure projects. It will reduce the number of projects we can deliver around the State of New South Wales.

In addition, the bill will breach the terms of free trade agreements that successive Australian governments, including former Labor governments, have signed with other countries. Those free trade agreements have benefited domestic industry by eliminating tariffs and other restrictions on trade between countries. If we want Australian industry and consumers to have access to global markets and to realise the benefits from those free trade agreements New South Wales must also adhere to them. Violating free trade agreements would likely prompt other countries to place tariffs on Australian exports such as agricultural products, natural resources, professional services and even potentially steel.

It is worth providing some context regarding the potential for retaliatory action by our trading partners. The Senate Economics Reference Committee inquiry into the future of the Australian steel industry was advised that Australia was the most active initiator of trade retaliation cases in 2015. So it would not be unreasonable for Australia's trading partners to take the same approach and lodge trade retaliation cases against us. Australia's key trading partners include China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, all of which are large producers of steel. They would be concerned about their interest should this bill come into law. In many cases, the markets our exporters gain access to through free trade agreements are much larger than our own.

For example, the Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement gives Australian exporters the opportunity to supply to the United States [US] Federal Government, which spends roughly \$500 billion annually—I emphasise that figure. This export opportunity is approximately 50 times the size of the New South Wales Government's expenditure on all goods and services. That helps put the risk in context. We want our local businesses to have the opportunity to supply to both the New South Wales Government and the US Federal Government. This can occur only if we adhere to the terms of our free trade agreements. The bill promotes unfair competition in the steel industry in Australia and will therefore encourage our trading partners to rethink the terms under which we are given access to their markets. This Government is doing the hard work to reduce regulation and broadly make it easier to do business in our State.

The bill introduces onerous red tape requirements for suppliers and contractors to report on the origin of steel products in public projects. It will also force tens of thousands of suppliers, including small and medium enterprises, to create duplicate supply chains—one for government and one for everyone else. Many of those suppliers will find it difficult to cope with these requirements. All of this will add to the cost of maintaining construction projects. I noted the comment by the member for Kiama that those opposite never ever did anything about this issue when they were in government. They ignored it in government. In opposition, they are trying to talk the talk when in government—for 16 years—they never put it on the table. This sort of mandate will end up hurting New South Wales industries and jobs. The Government opposes the bill.

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong) (11:27): This is the second time that I have spoken on the floor of the House and I welcome the opportunity to do so about the future of an industry that is so important to my electorate and to the rest of the Illawarra. I acknowledge our colleagues from the Illawarra who have joined us today in recognition of the importance of this debate. I said earlier this week that the steel and coal industries are the Illawarra's foundational industries. Thousands of people have worked, and continue to work, in those industries. They have built their working lives around those industries. Steel and coal have provided roofs over heads, food on tables, cars in the driveway, the pathway to better education for children, the memories of holidays, and comfort and financial security in retirement.

The steel industry not only employed members of my family; the wages and salaries of steelworkers in the Illawarra helped create jobs for other family members. But the industry has faced challenges. Thousands of workers have been forced to deal with job insecurity, uncertainty and retrenchment. To this day, nearly 35 years after the steel industry upheaval began in 1983, tragically—and because of the massive job losses during those years—there are still men and women in communities in my electorate who never worked again. BHP—the Big Australian as it was then known—employed a workforce of more than 22,000 in 1983. Today, its workforce stands at about 4,000.

We are used to crises in steel in the Illawarra. In 2011, nearly 1,000 steelworkers lost their jobs due to international pressures associated with the global financial crisis. The then Gillard Labor Government developed the Illawarra Region Innovation and Investment Fund [IRIIF], which provided funding assistance to retrenched workers and a co-investment fund to encourage the expansion of business opportunities. The New South Wales Government chipped in \$5 million towards the IRIIF. The latest crisis was in 2015 when BlueScope plainly told the Illawarra community that it was actively considering the shutdown of steelmaking in the region. If this option, which was actively considered by the BlueScope board, had ultimately been chosen, it would have devastated the Illawarra region. The sheer number of lost jobs across the region is simply too unbearable to imagine.

The University of Wollongong published a study in 2015, which confirmed that if the worst-case scenario contemplated by BlueScope had been realised, 10,000 jobs would have disappeared at the stroke of management's pen and the Illawarra economy's overall value would have been slashed by \$3 billion a year. Had steelmaking shut down in the Illawarra, as the BlueScope board was considering, it is no exaggeration to suggest that the Illawarra would have been devastated, with lives and local communities ruined. I acknowledge the payroll tax holiday that was introduced by the Government in its response to the latest steel crisis. I think those opposite would also agree that the response was supported by this side of the House at the time.

The introduction and passage of the Payroll Tax Deferral (BlueScope Steel) Act 2015 is an example of bipartisan support in addressing challenging times for one of the Illawarra's crucial industries. Of course, this bipartisanship could once again take place if the Government could put aside its ideological obsession with free market purity when it comes to steelmaking. However, this bill is an example of small-scale bipartisanship. This bill passed the other place with the support of all of the minority parties—The Greens, the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers, and the Christian Democrats—on 25 August last year. The only hold-outs in providing support for the bill in the other place were the Liberal and National parties.

The contribution last week by the Parliamentary Secretary for Finance, Services and Property, who is leading for the Government in this debate, was very offensive; it was so offensive that the Secretary of the South Coast Labour Council, Arthur Rorris, publicly released a letter this week addressed to the Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra and South Coast and member for Kiama requesting that he distance himself and repudiate the remarks of the member for Ku-ring-gai. We do not need any lectures on steelmaking or how the industry works in the Illawarra from someone who represents the most comfortable, leafy suburbs of the north shore of Sydney. We will not cop it.

The key provisions contained in this bill include the use of at least 90 per cent Australian-made steel in all infrastructure projects paid for by the taxpayer—it is the Government leading by example. We are very proud of the steel produced at Port Kembla; it is the best steel produced in the world by the best steelmakers in the world. We are so proud of our steel that we want it used in every single road, bridge, school and hospital in every part of the State. The bill also establishes an important new agency, the NSW Steel Industry Advocate, which will be responsible for a range of functions in the administration of the Act. A key responsibility will be monitoring and ensuring compliance with the Australian standard of steel use in publicly funded infrastructure projects.

Another main function of the NSW Steel Industry Advocate will be to conduct a review of the steel and fabrication sector, with particular emphasis on the supply chain capabilities of the sector, the coordination of research and development, and investment in plant and equipment in the sector. I encourage those interested in the debate to consider the last report by the Commonwealth's Steel Supplier Advocate, produced in December 2011, which reviewed Australian participation in large resource and infrastructure projects. That report highlighted a series of concerns applying to the future of the steel and fabrication industry in Australia. The key theme from the report can be found in this quote:

If clients are only interested in the cheapest price, and in the absence of better policies and appropriate incentives to buy Australian products, it will be almost impossible for Australian steel suppliers and fabricators to compete in the current environment against low cost producers in countries with lower living standards.

The Australian Government needs to formulate policies which assist the Australian steel industry to be competitive or acknowledge the fact that steel fabricators and suppliers ultimately cannot survive the pressures placed on it by these lower cost competitors.

Very similar points have been made in the Australian Anti-Dumping Commission report published in August 2016, which considered the steel industry market in Australia. The report notes that many countries with steelmaking capacity directly intervene in the market. There are no purists with clean hands in the international steel-producing market. Indeed, the BIS Shrapnel report commissioned by the Australian Workers Union, published in September 2015, entitled "The Benefits of a Government Procurement Policy for Local Steel", has been instrumental in shaping the debate on procurement policy and steel use. The report states:

One avenue which the government should investigate is legislating to have a procurement policy which aims to have at least 85 per cent to 90 per cent of local steel in all publicly funded projects.

Such a policy may reinstate some advantage back to local producers, who are competing against overseas producers possessing an unfair advantage.

In any case, local procurement policies exist in other countries such as the USA and Canada, while Victoria has also enacted its own local procurement policy.

It is also worth reminding the House that the New South Wales Government, and the member for Kiama in particular, do not mind a bit of direct intervention in the ethanol market. The member for Kiama has slammed this bill and has indicated that he will vote for its defeat because he says mandating Australian-made steel use is protectionist. However, that is not the view he took when it came to ethanol. The member for Kiama opposes mandating Australian-made steel use because it offends his free market predilections, but he has no problem leading the charge for mandating ethanol use across the State. He is the ultimate hollow man. He claims this bill will kill steel profits. As I was not in this place at the time, I read through the member's speech on the Biofuels Amendment Bill 2016, which this side of the House supported.

The member for Kiama makes very cogent points in his speech about the working and vagaries of the fuel production market. He said that oil company behaviour warranted government mandates. I bet London to a brick that if the BlueScope steelworks were located at Bomaderry instead of Port Kembla, the member for Kiama would be championing, supporting, and ultimately voting for, this bill. *Hansard* and *Votes and Proceedings* confirm the member for Kiama voted for mandated ethanol use nearly 12 months ago. When he introduced this bill last week, the shadow Treasurer noted that mandating Australian-made steel is not costless. The BIS Shrapnel report concludes that the mandating will result in additional infrastructure costs for projects of between \$60 million and \$81 million.

I note that there is also a cost on the consumer for mandating the use of ethanol fuel. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission report, published in November 2016, notes that the additional cost to motorists is actually more than any additional construction costs that result from the mandating of steel. So the member for Kiama is more than comfortable with an additional \$85 million cost to motorists for ethanol but not with an additional cost for steel. The Opposition commends the strong support of the minor parties in this place and in the other place for the passage of the bill. The debate on this bill shows that most of the Parliament supports the steel industry and the Illawarra region. It is a pity that the Government has indicated it will vote against the bill. I urge members on the other side of the House to reconsider this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (11:38): I do not think anyone in this place supports the destruction of the steel industry; in fact, we on this side of the House support the steel industry. I note the comments of the member for Wollongong. I know that he is brand new to this place, but the hypocrisy shown by his colleagues is absolutely amazing, particularly in light of the fact that when Labor was last in government a number of its projects were sourced in China. I know those opposite talk about South Korea and all those types of things—

Ms Anna Watson: You're better than this, Jai.

Mr JAI ROWELL: Maybe I am, but this is the truth. A number of the Labor Government's projects were sourced overseas, so it is a matter of the pot calling the kettle black. It is certainly not in the interests of the industry. The Government opposes the Steel Industry Protection Bill 2017 because it is inconsistent with Australia's obligations under its free trade agreements. The bill will damage New South Wales' reputation as an honest trade partner and as a destination for investment. Australia is a member of the World Trade Organisation and has signed free trade agreements with various countries to remove tariffs and other restrictions on trade. That is not just the current Government; it is all sides of politics over the last 20 or 30 years. We have seen free trade agreements benefit Australian businesses and consumers because they provide access to larger overseas markets.

Several of the free trade agreements Australia has entered into apply to government procurement by our States and Territories. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has advised that the national treatment and non-discrimination provision included in existing commitments limits the extent to which government contracts can preference Australian products over imported products, including steel. This provision is included in numerous free trade agreements including those with the United States, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Chile and many others. The Trans-Pacific Partnership, signed by the Commonwealth Government in February 2016 and due to take effect later this year, contains a similar provision. The bill will require the Government to preference domestic manufacturers and suppliers over manufacturers and suppliers from countries with which it has free trade agreements.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wollondilly will be heard in silence.

Mr JAI ROWELL: Indeed, all government agencies, State-owned corporations and local councils will be forced to violate all of these free trade agreements. Countries with which Australia has free trade agreements may respond to a breach by taking retaliatory action in their markets, such as imposing tariffs on exports like agricultural products, natural resources or professional services. Such retaliatory action would negatively impact

the Australian and New South Wales economies because businesses would potentially lose access to profitable and larger overseas markets. Australia's key trading partners including China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan—all of which are large producers of steel—would be concerned about their interests if this bill becomes law. We support the steel industry and, as the member for Kiama has said in this place, we must make sure that it is competitive and supports other industries that underpin it.

However, we must get this right. We want our local businesses to have the opportunity to supply both the New South Wales Government and other governments. This can only occur if we adhere to our free trade agreements. This bill and resulting potential retaliatory actions will act as a disincentive to investment in our economy. No-one is saying that we will not use local steel. The good news is that with record investment in infrastructure right across New South Wales we will see more and more projects and I suspect we will see much more steel, both local and overseas, so this will only be good news for the future of the steel industry here in Australia. In conclusion, the Government opposes the bill.

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (11:42): I speak on the Steel Industry Protection Bill 2016 and state at the outset that I support the bill. The object of the bill is to ensure as far as practicable that at least 90 per cent of the steel used in public works or infrastructure constructed by or on behalf of public authorities is manufactured in Australia. I support that objective and the bill. I acknowledge those in the gallery—members of the South Coast Labour Council, the Australian Workers' Union and the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union. I commend them for the work they have done in pushing their case to get this bill before Parliament. I commend also the shadow Treasurer, who has done a fantastic job, and my colleagues on the South Coast for defending workers and jobs on the South Coast. The bill was introduced in the Legislative Council by The Greens on 17 March 2016 and I acknowledge crossbench members in the Legislative Council whose support led to the bill passing on 25 August 2016. I respond to comments made by the member for Ku-ring-gai who led for the Government on the bill. In his contribution he stated:

I come to this debate with a father whose first job in Newcastle in 1952 was in the Commonwealth Steelworks.

He then indicated that other members of his family had worked in the steelworks. Then he said:

So I bring to this place some knowledge about why the steel industry in Australia and manufacturing in general have been struggling. I welcome the opportunity through this bill to shed light on some of those issues.

I grew up in Newcastle as well so I come to this debate with a little bit of experience of steelmaking in Newcastle, what it did for Newcastle and the consequences of the loss of steelmaking and manufacturing in Newcastle. As an aside, it is interesting that the lived experience of the member for Ku-ring-gai pushed him to the far right while what I saw unions do for workers in Newcastle and what I saw happen when job opportunities disappeared certainly pushed me to the left and proudly to become a member of the Australian Labor Party. I was offered an apprenticeship as an electrician at the BHP Steelworks when I was in Year 10 at a time when most young people left school.

I was probably the first person in my family to be offered an apprenticeship so they thought that was a bit of a thing. I decided to go to Year 12 and do the Higher School Certificate [HSC]. It was a difficult decision because we did not have much experience of that in our community. I acknowledge the steelworkers in Newcastle who paid taxes at the time to allow me to finish school when most young people left and got work. I also acknowledge the steelworkers in Newcastle who continued to pay taxes to allow me to go through university, as they did for the member for Ku-ring-gai, on the public purse. Those who had that opportunity, paid for by working people, should acknowledge that and not criticise those workers and the good wages they are on due to union membership. My earliest memory of our first house in Newcastle is that it was on Broadmeadow Road, Broadmeadow, and we lived next to Goninans steelworks.

The member for Swansea will remember that. It was three-storeys high and I could see it from my backyard. It was painted green, with "Goninans" emblazoned in red and white. At 4.30 in the afternoon my yard was in complete shade as the sun went down. My father laboured for BHP when he was a young man. My grandfather drove cranes for Brambles, which did a lot of work for BHP. I appreciate the job opportunities created by steelmaking in Newcastle. The purpose of this bill is to create job opportunities where those opportunities may not exist unless the State takes a position. It is important for the State to take a position rather than to leave it to the market, which is what those opposite seek to do. The member for Ku-ring-gai then made a comment about industrial practices at the steelworks. He said:

... restrict union practices that were forced on management.

Poor old management hid in their offices. He said that ensured that the investment in capital needed to keep the steelworks competitive was never made. That is simply not true in the case of Newcastle. Business investment in the late 1960s and 1970s was not what it could have been, given the profits that were being made in the town during that post-war period and the public record shows that it was not until the Hawke Government imposed the

steel industry plan on the steel industry in this country that there was a growth in investment in the Newcastle steelworks, maybe a little too late—we can debate that—but certainly the steel plan required a large investment in the steelworks by BHP. They had declined to do this over the previous 20 years, but this kept the steelworks going into the 1990s. That too should be placed on the record.

The decision by BHP to establish in Newcastle was not the playing out of rational decision-making in a free market; it had a lot to do with a State Labor Government. The member for Ku-ring-gai whose father's first job when he immigrated to Australia was with BHP is right to recall that fact as well. BHP established its steelworks in Newcastle in 1915. The company could have established the steelworks anywhere as it was sourcing iron ore from South Australia. It is a matter of public record that BHP started mining in New South Wales but the iron ore was produced in South Australia. BHP was interested in establishing a steelworks in this country. There were steelworks operating in Lithgow and it would have been established in competition with those works. It was the decided opinion of the NSW Labor Party that there should be a steelworks in this State that led to the establishment of the steelworks by BHP in Newcastle. The Labor Party was keen to have a State-run steelworks. The Minister for Public Works and member for Waratah, Arthur Griffith, is not mentioned in BHP's Newcastle steel-making history.

Arthur Griffith was determined to turn Newcastle into an industrial town. Coalmining in Newcastle was in decline as it was moving to Cessnock and the Upper Hunter and Mr Griffith was concerned about employment in Newcastle. He spoke to BHP and convinced it to establish the steelworks in Newcastle, improve the harbour and create a State dockyard to provide a market for the steelworks. That saw Newcastle grow into an industrial town. It is a proud achievement of the first State Labor Government in New South Wales. The McGowan Labor State Government ensured the member for Ku-ring-gai's father had a job. That job provided the member for Ku-ring-gai with the opportunities that brought him to this place, but he has not thanked the Labor Party. BHP's decision led to the Goninans factory expanding and Commonwealth Steel providing a job for the member for Ku-ring-gai's father.

It was all due to a State Labor Government that was determined to see industry in Newcastle. I place that on the public record. That is what the bill is about. It is about the State deciding to promote industry in this country. It is not an accident of the market that there are steelworks in Germany where there is a strong union. It is not an accident of the market that steelmaking still occurs in Sweden, a country with powerful unions, a social welfare safety net and high wages. It is a decision of the State to ensure that happens. I commend the shadow Treasurer for pushing this bill through caucus and introducing it to the Parliament. It is what this Government needs to do to ensure there is a breadth of job opportunities and skills to meet the world market. If this industry closes, that experience will be lost. The future for our children will be making coffee in a bistro. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (11:52): I support the member for Keira's Steel Protection Bill 2016. This is a fantastic bill. It has been introduced by one of the hardest working parliamentarians in this place. The member cares about the workers in his community. Together with the member for Wollongong, the member for Shellharbour and me, the member for Keira cares about fighting for local jobs in local communities. The Steel Protection Bill includes key elements of NSW Labor's secure and sustainable steel jobs package. The package was announced on 30 May 2016. It states that: Australian-made steel must constitute 90 per cent use of the steel used in all publicly funded infrastructure projects across New South Wales; a steel industry advocate is to be appointed to ensure new Australian standards and certification for Australian-made steel use is monitored and complied with; and that the Steel Industry Advocate be located in the Illawarra region.

Day after day in this place the Government talks down Labor's record on economic management. Contrary to the views of those on the other side, the former Labor Government was successful at managing the economy—14 out of 16 budgets were in surplus. Fact. Labor left office with a triple-A credit rating. Fact. Credit agencies such as Moody's believed that the New South Wales economy and budget was in good shape. Fact. Those opposite continue to state the falsehood that this Government is all about jobs. Nothing could be further from the truth. Unemployment rates are increasing and the availability of full-time jobs is decreasing. The unemployment rate is now higher than when Labor left office. In the 12 months to December 2016 the number of people in full-time employment fell by 66,700. Regional and youth unemployment are at record highs.

The Hunter and the Illawarra have been hit particularly hard by this Government. It has turned its back on anyone who lives outside Sydney. Regional and youth unemployment are at record highs. Members on this side of the House understand the value of jobs in the regions and that is why the member for Keira has introduced this bill. The bill goes straight to the heart of supporting regional jobs in New South Wales. Representatives of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union and the Australian Workers' Union are present in the gallery and I thank them for attending on behalf of their constituency. The Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union [AMWU] knows how important this bill is for local jobs. The AMWU secretary Tim Ayres stated:

This policy is great news for Australian steelworkers and great news for the people of the Illawarra. The AMWU believe that a strong sustainable steel industry should be an important part of the State's future and we are glad to see the Labor Party will support it.

As they support workers so does the Labor Party. The Australian Workers' Union [AWU] stated:

We look forward to working with NSW Labor to support local manufacturing in other industries such as trains, buses and other major engineering projects that would benefit from this approach.

The mighty steelworkers union also knows how important this bill is to its members. The AWU Port Kembla branch secretary, Wayne Phillips, was with the member for Keira at the Port Kembla steelworks when the Steel Protection Bill was announced. He is present in the gallery today. Mr Phillips stated:

It is something that we have been fighting for for a long time now. The people who work in the mills behind us can feel exceptionally grateful for what has happened. ... As we have said all along, to do what Labor has done with this bill secures, as far as I am concerned, our industry.

Labor is proud to stand with you. It is not just our friends in the union movement who know how important this bill is. Our Labor colleagues governing in South Australia and Victoria have implemented procurement policies that assist the sustainable production of steel in regional areas in their respective States. The member for Wollondilly spoke of free trade agreements. He did acknowledge the bill and I respect him for that. The South Australian Government is focusing on measures that recognise the economic benefit from procurement through labour, capital investment and supply inputs via small and medium enterprises in the steel value chain, as well as mandating supply to Australian standards and third party compliance to lift the quality in government projects.

The Victorian Government has developed procurement practices that recognise the economic value through the value chain. They have strengthened this via a focus on strategic projects such as requiring the East West Link to have 90 per cent local content and the level crossing work requires 100 per cent local steel content. Can members imagine the impact if New South Wales did that with all of the infrastructure projects underway? It would be fantastic for local workers in the Illawarra and the Hunter. I raise the Government's decision to build trains overseas. Similar approaches are being taken by governments overseas. For example, the British Government has put in place regulations that allow procurers to consider environment and social criteria, including employment and supply chain activity, when allocating contracts for construction and infrastructure projects.

In addition to recognising the value to the supply chain, they include a whole-of-life cost assessment for infrastructure projects using steel. The governments of South Australia and Victoria clearly know the importance of protecting local jobs. It is a shame that our Government, in the steelmaking State of Australia, is failing to do its job, which is to protect jobs in regional New South Wales. The lack of support for this bill from Government members is just one of many examples of this Government's contempt for workers in New South Wales. Who could forget the disaster that was last year's disgraceful announcement about train manufacturing in New South Wales? Imagine how that news was received by people in the Hunter.

Not only did this Government send the \$2.3 billion contract for the new intercity train fleet to South Korea, costing more than 1,000 regional jobs, but it also duded regional commuters with an inferior product. Just ask the member for Blue Mountains. Because of their size, the new trains will not be able get to Lithgow or Katoomba. It is disgraceful. I conclude my contribution today by quoting the member for Keira. In the face of criticism from the self-styled "best friend of workers in New South Wales", the current Treasurer, the member for Keira said in an article in the *Illawarra Mercury* that the Government, and the Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra and South Coast in particular, should "start standing up" for the region. I wish the Parliamentary Secretary were here now, listening. The member for Keira said:

They should have the guts to come down and give the thousands of families, who rely on a strong steel industry for their livelihood, some assurances.

I will never apologise for working with any political party who is willing to fight for the jobs of thousands of local workers. My question to [the Government] and Gareth Ward is: Why won't you?

Like the Member for Keira and every member on this side of the House, I will not apologise for fighting for the jobs of local workers. I will not apologise for standing up and supporting this bill all the way. I most certainly commend this bill to the House.

Business interrupted.

Motions

TRIBUTE TO ROD STOWE, FAIR TRADING COMMISSIONER

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (12:02): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Rod Stowe, the Commissioner for Fair Trading, on his commitment to the people of New South Wales.
- (2) Acknowledges Commissioner Stowe's efforts to protect the consumers of New South Wales.
- (3) Recognises Commissioner Stowe's achievements during his 40 years of public service.

I support this motion, which recognises Commissioner Stowe's achievements during his 40 years of public service. I am glad he is here today to witness our recognition of those 40 years. It is a phenomenal achievement. There are a few members in this House who are not yet 40, including the new Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation, who is in the Chamber. It is phenomenal to think that Commissioner Stowe has spent all that time in public service. What a fantastic contribution he has made to New South Wales. I take a moment to also mention Amy Cook, a former staff member of mine and now a senior media adviser to Commissioner Stowe. It is lovely to see her smiling face. I am sure she is doing a fabulous job.

On Tuesday last week, Valentine's Day, Commissioner Stowe celebrated a magnificent milestone: 40 years of continuous service in the New South Wales public service. I have the highest admiration for the dedication, loyalty, professionalism and thorough decency Commissioner Stowe has displayed throughout his four decades of service to the people of New South Wales. Today Commissioner Stowe might be a 40-year veteran member of the senior executive service, but, like all of us, he had to start somewhere. As an 18-year-old former school captain from Westmead High School, Commissioner Stowe began his working life as a Clean Water Act licensing clerk in the then State Pollution Control Commission. He had some side trips through the Department of Education, the Department of Local Government and the State Superannuation Board, before joining the Department of Business and Consumer Affairs as a policy adviser in 1989.

Commissioner Stowe quickly became one of the agency's key staff, serving for some time in the early 1990s as executive officer to the Commissioner for Consumer Affairs. As the State-wide head of Fair Trading's Customer Service Division, Commissioner Stowe demonstrated two of his enduring commitments in the portfolio: defence of Fair Trading's comprehensive engagement with regional New South Wales and of the agency's vital services to vulnerable consumers. He instilled a passion for history and pride in the organisation's achievements by inaugurating the annual publication of the *Fair Trading Year in Review*, which keeps the agency's story alive in an era of large-cluster annual reports.

A decade before becoming commissioner, Commissioner Stowe led the New South Wales Government's consumer protection strategy for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. He knew that Sydney was being tested as a showcase of the Australian experience, and his work helped to ensure that the many thousands of foreign visitors left Australia with positive memories. I am sure they still hold those memories dear today. I understand that the 24-hour traveller consumer helpline was particularly well received. Later in that decade, Commissioner Stowe had the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to represent New South Wales on the inter-jurisdictional working group that developed the landmark Australian Consumer Law [ACL] in 2009-10. If one looks closely at the ACL, his fingerprints can be discerned. He fought hard to require disclosure by traders that they intended to refurbish defective products as opposed to replacing them completely. The ACL is undergoing a major review right now, and Commissioner Stowe is again playing a pivotal role. It was for those and many other achievements that he was deservedly awarded the Public Service Medal in 2011—a true honour.

When this Government first won office in March 2011, the then Minister for Fair Trading, Minister Roberts, decided to recreate the position of Commissioner for Fair Trading and appoint Commissioner Stowe to the position. I acknowledge Minister Roberts in the Chamber. Commissioner Stowe then set about putting his beloved agency back together, regaining control of the policy and strategy function and reforming the agency's compliance and enforcement functions. He has been a tireless advocate for consumers, seizing every opportunity to take to the airwaves and warn consumers of the latest scams or dangerous products, making sure they know where to get help. Every year, under Commissioner Stowe's stewardship, NSW Fair Trading resolves around 50,000 consumer complaints, handles around a million customer inquiries, administers 40 Acts of Parliament, licenses tens of thousands of tradespeople and other workers, and safeguards—ready for this?—\$1.3 billion in tenants' rental bond money.

Commissioner Stowe has long believed in sharing some of that data with the public. When this Government stated its commitment to open data, he knew that the time was right to act. Last year Fair Trading launched the nation's first ever public register of consumer complaints, which is likely to become a major legacy of his time as commissioner. Another personal legacy is last year's agreement between the Commonwealth, States and Territories for a mandatory information standard on free-range eggs under the Australian Consumer Law. Commissioner Stowe advocated fearlessly for improvement in this fraught area of the marketplace, battling those who said it could not be done. I heard him speak on radio many times on the issue. He did a great job. Commissioner Stowe deserves our enduring respect. I offer him heartfelt congratulations on his fortieth anniversary in the public service. I am glad he is here today. Minister Kean in particular was determined that this motion be moved today because he wanted the House to honour the anniversary. It is fabulous to see that two

Ministers who have worked with Commissioner Stowe are in the Chamber to honour his contribution. I commend the motion to the House.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (12:08): On behalf of the Opposition, I extend our heartiest congratulations to Commissioner Rod Stowe on his 40 years of public service. I acknowledge his presence in the gallery. I am so pleased he is here. Mr Stowe is an exemplary public servant. In my dealings with him, he has displayed the confidence, knowledge and respect that has won him admiration on all sides of politics. Rod Stowe started with the then State Pollution Control Board on 14 February 1977. During his career he moved through various department and agencies—spending time in the Department of Education and the State Superannuation Board, before joining the then Department of Business and Consumer Affairs almost 30 years ago. Mr Stowe's career in Fair Trading has many highlights, such as support for vulnerable consumers—where he was a fierce defender of Fair Trading grants programs, including the No Interest Loan Scheme as well as the Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service for which we are so grateful.

I also note his staunch support for regional areas—I am from a regional area so again I thank him—defending and extending the network of Fair Trading centres delivering dispute resolution, inspections and community outreach services directly to regional citizens of New South Wales. There has been a winding-back of that, but we will not talk about that now. Mr Stowe was also involved in the national implementation of the Uniform Consumer Credit Code, and helped oversee the consumer protection strategy for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games.

In more recent times, as Deputy Commissioner at NSW Fair Trading, Mr Stowe oversaw the critical national reform and has been invaluable in driving the initiatives of the Council of Australian Governments, including the implementation of the Australian Consumer Law and the National Occupational Licensing System. Mr Stowe has witnessed a range of changes in his 30 years in Fair Trading—although I think that is an understatement—and has seen his agency evolve over time in response to new and emerging threats and risks to consumer rights. I also note that he has done a fair amount of heavy lifting in the media department—we listen to him regularly—and it is often through Mr Stowe's media presence that I, along with the broader community, have become aware of Fair Trading issues.

I congratulate the Government on moving this motion, and trust it is a sign of its confidence and respect for Mr Stowe. I say that because it was only a few years ago that he earned the ire of the then Minister—the third of the six we have had from this Government in the same number of years. The reason behind this kerfuffle appears to be that Mr Stowe was simply doing his job—getting out there into the community and warning of dodgy products. At the time a dangerous USB charger was linked to a tragic death. Some of us in the House—I note the member for Bankstown and the member for Blacktown are in the Chamber—recall the spectacle of the Government's shabby treatment of Mr Stowe at that time. If it were up to elements of the right in the Liberal Party, Mr Stowe's career in the service would have ended prematurely.

I hope that today's motion represents a collective apology from the Liberal Party. I know its rough treatment of Mr Stowe a few years ago did earn the condemnation of the community and many public servants. It reflected the attitude of this Government towards the public service. However, today is not the day to dwell on the nasty vindictiveness of the Tories. I appreciate the opportunity as shadow Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation to extend the thanks of the Opposition to Mr Stowe for his years of service. Mr Stowe is a model of a good modern public servant, and the Opposition again congratulates him on his 40 years of service. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation) (12:12): It is an honour and a privilege to acknowledge in the House today one of the State's most outstanding public servants. Rod Stowe is a great man, a man of integrity, decency, intellect and loyalty. A more dedicated public servant we will not find in this State. Today I join my colleagues and thousands of New South Wales citizens to say thanks to Rod for giving everything he has to this State over 40 years. It is appreciated and today we want to celebrate that—40 years of dedication to protecting consumers and providing good government, which is what he has done every day he has turned up for work. It all began on Valentine's Day 1977.

Dr Geoff Lee: For the love.

Mr MATT KEAN: For the love, obviously. Rod saw an advertisement in the local paper inviting people to apply for employment with the New South Wales Public Service. He was offered a job on the spot and he got to choose where he wanted to start. I believe cards were held up and for some reason Rod chose to start his public service in the State Pollution Control Board. His first boss was Assistant Commissioner David O'Connor, a man who would have a major influence on Rod's career and would later go on to become the first Fair Trading Commissioner in New South Wales.

After a short time there he went on to serve in the Department of Education, the Department of Local Government, and the State Superannuation Board before joining the Department of Business and Consumer Affairs as a policy advisor in 1989. It was in this role that Rod found his true calling: protecting consumer rights and standing up for the vulnerable. Rod has so much to be proud of, but most notably his role in leading the consumer protection strategy during the 2000 Olympics will not be forgotten.

As Fair Trading Commissioner Rod has built a national profile as one of the most respected figures in consumer affairs. He is a revered figure across the nation. In fact he was the driving force behind the landmark Australian Consumer Law enacted in 2009. These are just two of the many reasons that Rod was appropriately awarded the Public Service Medal in 2011—fitting recognition for an enormous contribution. In addition to these many tangible personal achievements, I take this opportunity to acknowledge Rod as a leader within government. In the past weeks while I have been the Minister I have seen that what has been said about the devotion of his staff is true because of the loyalty he shows them and the leadership he shows every day of the week.

When Rod speaks, people listen; largely because of the reputation he has forged for honesty and acting with the highest levels of integrity. His staff are rightly devoted to him. He is a genuinely collegiate leader, motivated not by money or power but by a burning desire to make New South Wales a better place. Rod has provided wise counsel and absolute loyalty to 17 Ministers before me. As the eighteenth, I personally thank him. I sincerely thank him for taking an interest and for mentoring me and helping me get through these past few weeks. I cannot say how excited I am to continue working with him to make our State even better in the months and years to come. Everyone who knows Rod, everyone who has been fortunate enough to work with him or to be showered by his friendship is a little bigger, better and stronger because of it. We are here today to celebrate a remarkable contribution and the difference that Rod Stowe has made to this State. Rod, I can confidently say that New South Wales is a better place because of your service. I commend the motion to the House.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (12:17): On behalf of the Opposition and the electorate of Bankstown, I congratulate Mr Rod Stowe, the Commissioner for Fair Trading, on his commitment to protecting consumer rights in New South Wales and, in particular, his amazing service over the past 40 years. I acknowledge what the Minister and the shadow Minister have said and congratulate the member for Holsworthy on moving this motion today. Having worked for 18 Ministers, I encourage Mr Stowe to write a book because it would contain some very interesting stories. Mr Stowe was appointed as Commissioner in August 2011 and I was appointed as the shadow Minister in October 2011 and served in that role until March 2015. During that time some good reforms were implemented and others of concern to me. There was a slash-and-burn mentality at that time.

The O'Farrell Government wanted to cut many jobs and no doubt there was destabilisation in Fair Trading, the branches and the department. I can imagine it would have been a very difficult time for Mr Stowe's staff because his role was to protect consumers, to provide invaluable information to businesses and to ensure that the regulatory framework survived. Some things were very challenging, but there were some good results, such as the motor vehicle inquiry that both the Government and Opposition supported. That led to some great achievements. We passed legislation to protect children with the installation of child-safe windows following a shocking number of children falling from apartments. Those reforms were very important and I am delighted the Opposition had a role in ensuring they happened.

It would be remiss of me not to mention a dark period in the commissioner's tenure, July 2014, which I lived through as the shadow Minister. I echo the words of the member for Swansea. The member for Blacktown and I had Mr Stowe's back during that difficult period, which he did not deserve. It came about as a result of the tragic death of young Sheryl Anne Aldegue caused by a faulty USB charger. Then Minister Mason-Cox did not want to take responsibility for the failure of communicating with the public. Instead, he chose to spend a week engaging in some of the most appalling behaviour. I know the commissioner was undermined tremendously by some people who are still working in this place. I will not embarrass any individual, but we know who undermined him at that time. I congratulate Commissioner Stowe on his amazing efforts. I am delighted he still holds his position. I hope that when he chooses to do so he retires on his own terms and is not forced out by a ridiculous situation like that which took place in July 2014. I congratulate the member for Holsworthy on moving this motion.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Planning, Minister for Housing, and Special Minister of State) (12:21): It is a pleasure to be with my colleagues to celebrate a life of service to the people of New South Wales by the extraordinary Commissioner Rod Stowe. I love calling him Commissioner Rod Stowe because we reintroduced the title of commissioner after some members opposite took it away. Today we are celebrating his great contribution and we have heard many stories. The Department of Fair Trading, led by Rod Stowe, is the workhorse of the New South Wales government sector. People sometimes forget the amount of input the department has in everyday life. I will reflect on some of the things Commissioner Stowe, his team and I did together.

As the father of the Australian Consumer Law, Rod was the man everyone deferred to and sought advice from at Council of Australian Governments meetings. There is not a State or Territory consumer affairs Minister or consumer affairs department head who did not regularly telephone Commissioner Stowe to seek his advice and counsel. Our strata reform package was part of a great period. Well, it was sort of great. We packed it all up into a box ready to go, then I was shipped off to the Resources and Energy portfolio. The reforms were then unpacked and repacked by a couple more Ministers. It was great to see Minister Dominello coming through and getting the reforms done. I thank the commissioner for that. It was a long process but it was important to give people living in our new vertical villages a degree of freedom, self-governance and empowerment.

As the workhorse of government, it was Fair Trading that took on the fight against synthetic drugs. That work saved people's lives and I pay tribute to the commissioner for it. The reforms regarding window locks are still coming online, but they are undoubtedly also saving lives. We also protected many people from travelling con men, who we chased up hill and down dale. That was a great time. Our work got a lot of runs in the English media, which was tremendous. There is so much I could discuss just from our first few months working together. Rod Stowe is a true friend of the consumer and the most vulnerable. Nothing illustrates that more than the No Interest Loan Scheme. Through his great work and leadership we are assisting people who are at their most vulnerable and needy.

Rod has been a great mentor to me. I could not have asked for a better public servant to head a department, and I always appreciated his advice and counsel. I learnt a lot about leadership from the way Rod quietly went about his job but always had the back of his department and staff. I pay tribute to Rod for that. It is a great credit to him. I thank Elizabeth and Rod's family for giving him to us for 40 years. I know he is up early every morning; he used to call me on his way to the station in Leura. In rain, hail, snow or sleet Rod belts his way into town to serve the people of New South Wales. We should call him Rod Stoic. On behalf of the Government I thank Rod Stowe for his 40 years of service. I look forward to seeing him give many more years of service to the people of New South Wales.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) (12:25): I pay tribute to Commissioner Rod Stowe and congratulate him on celebrating 40 years of excellent public service. As a humble backbencher I have been particularly impressed by the three Ministers the commissioner has mentored, guided, informed and chaperoned to keep them out of trouble. He has done an excellent job. I first met Commissioner Stowe when he had a small office in Fitzwilliam Street, Parramatta. He immediately saw the value of Parramatta and Western Sydney and knew his department had to move to there. I thank him for his forethought in moving his entire operation to the new centre of Sydney.

I remember going to his office on the day when he was working with Minister Roberts on a synthetic drugs bust in which department officers would visit convenience stores and tobacconists to identify those that were selling products that polluted people's bodies and were a terrible influence on the community. Within 24 hours officers hit the ground and Rod was leading an entire team of inspectors and sheriffs around Sydney. That was one of my first memories. I also remember the Fair Trading undercover operations. They would always fascinate me. I think Minister Roberts was Minister at the time the department had the HiAce van with the fake wall. Department staff would sit in there hour after hour doing surveillance and taking photos. Some people would say they were more like stalkers but, no, it was all done for absolutely the right reasons. I pay tribute to Commissioner Stowe for allowing his staff to get on with all their necessary enforcement work.

What impresses me most is the commissioner's ability to protect the rights of consumers and the most vulnerable in our community. It is too easy for businesses and unscrupulous operators to do the wrong thing, and it is the people with the least power in the community who often seem to be the victims. His leadership has led to legislation being enacted for the right reasons. Government members do not always like legislation; we like the concept of small government and allowing people to get on with their lives. But commissioners like Rod Stowe and departments like Fair Trading are excellent examples of why we need professional services looking out for the community. Once again, I congratulate the commissioner. I know that there is no show bag, no Christmas toy or Valentine's Day gift off limits. He and his dedicated staff will be there at every Royal Easter Show and every Christmastime when we are munching up toys in front of the cameras. I hope the new Minister will soon be out in the hard hat and vest, feeding unsafe toys into the shredder.

Mr Matt Kean: We're going to have a crusher.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Apparently we will have a crusher this year. I am sure you will be able to inform Minister Kean about the best method. Thank you very much for your 40 years of dedication and service. Thank you for moving to Parramatta. Thank you for your advice and guidance. As a backbencher, I know that I can ring you and ask for your fearless and frank opinion and advice, which I always follow. Well done, Rod Stowe. I pay tribute to your 40 years of service.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Finance, Services and Property) (12:30): By leave: I also pay tribute to Commissioner Rod Stowe. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Like Minister Roberts, I was there from day one in 2011. There are only a handful of us who have been here since that time. It gives us a perspective from inside Cabinet; we get to see how every agency works, how effective they are, which ones perform and which ones are the heavy lifters. By any view—I have said this to the commissioner before, and I say it now on the record—NSW Fair Trading can hold its head up high as being probably one of the best agencies inside government. I mean that because I have seen them all. The amount of work that one small unit pumps out is seriously impressive.

I particularly appreciated that every time I went to NSW Fair Trading it was not like visiting an agency; it was a family. The commissioner has said that so many times. It is the result of his leadership, dedication, stoicism and, as my colleagues have said, his humility. The greatest leaders I have ever met are humble, and Commissioner Stowe captures that in the way he holds himself. He has taught me a lot about leadership, which really comes down to hard work and respect. Thank you very much, Commissioner. We are indebted to you for your service over four decades. I have a list of reforms that we have made together, and it is just extraordinary. There was the fun part—the dodgy Easter show bags and perilous Christmas toys. I must admit that no-one did it better than Minister Roberts: He was the champion when it came to crushing toys.

Let us not forget the commissioner's mornings with Wendy Harmer. The fact that he could communicate, in a very conversational manner, some pretty complex issues about consumer protection adds weight to his credibility. In our time together we oversaw the Samsung recall—to my knowledge the largest recall in Australian consumer history. Indeed, we took the lead on that issue, with the commissioner showing the other States and Territories how to do it. I think we were the first and the only State to have a mandatory government recall—again, to the commissioner's credit. Minister Roberts mentioned the commissioner's compassionate side in his dedication to the No Interest Loan Scheme campaign.

There was the Mr Fluffy task force. We are spending a quarter of a billion dollars remediating homes in the Queanbeyan region. Commissioner Stowe is overseeing that huge project. He was also part of the very complex real estate reform and the smart meter rollout. We do not hear about that. We hear about what happened in Victoria because it was a mess. That it has been going so smoothly on his watch is a credit to the commissioner. I was not going to mention biofuels—but I will. My friend opposite and I love biofuels, as I know does Commissioner Rod Stowe. So much so, it was a present from my dear friend Mr Roberts.

Ms Melanie Gibbons: What about Phelpsy?

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: Do not worry, I am getting to that. The hits keep coming. Biofuels was such easy reform. Then there is the strata reform. There are some seriously meaty reforms—the most in a generation. I will not go into detail now, but there are more than 90 reforms in the legislation. Congratulations to Rod Stowe on that. The FuelCheck initiative was the first of its kind in Australia. NSW Fair Trading drove it, and to this day I still talk about efficiency in government and how fast the commissioner implemented it to huge consumer benefit. Now even the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission says that if people want to reduce their petrol prices they should use FuelCheck. It is showcasing it for what it is: a true model of consumer empowerment. Then there is something that is very close to the commissioner's heart: the Complaints Register. It was a very difficult policy to drive because he had to get the communications right and he had to have the trust of the stakeholders. The way Rod Stowe handled it is, again, an eternal credit to him. I have left the best till last: free-range eggs.

Dr Hugh McDermott: Time expired.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: I will be quick. I will never forget the time we spent in Canberra—the toings and froings and the machinations. We could write a book about free-range eggs. But we got it through. As we say constantly, if we can resolve the free-range eggs issue we can go to Israel and solve the problems in the Middle East. On that note, I offer my congratulations and eternal thanks for your stewardship, your leadership and your enormous contribution to our State. Thank you very much.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (12:35): In reply: I will be brief to compensate for the time taken by Minister Dominello. A 40-year career in the public service gives us a lot to talk about. There are not many motions that bring three Ministers and two shadow Ministers to the Chamber to acknowledge one person on a Thursday.

Ms Trish Doyle: And the member whose constituent he is.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: That is nice to know. Two humble backbenchers, the member for Parramatta and I, also wish to acknowledge Rod Stowe's work. His main office is in the electorate of the member for Parramatta, who I know is terribly pleased about that. He tries to take all jobs to Parramatta. We try to promote

jobs coming to our electorates as well. NSW Fair Trading has many regional offices that make a great contribution to the areas they serve, and I thank Rod Stowe for his commitment to the regions. He has heard today about the confidence people have in him and the respect they have for him. The commissioner is someone I think all members in this Chamber have a great affinity with; everyone talks about how they can pick up the phone and seek his advice.

We often hear him on the radio providing that advice to everyone. I quickly checked my washing machine during the Samsung debacle to see what brand I had. After hearing him on the radio, you check your appliances and toys to make sure they are safe. We have heard about the great work that Commissioner Stowe did on strata reform, motor vehicles, children's toys, synthetic drugs, window locks and with FuelCheck, as well as countless other issues that he has taken up and led. As the member for Lane Cove, the former Minister, said, the commissioner is a true friend of the consumer and the most vulnerable. That is a nice comment to make about someone. Commissioner Stowe has a desire to make our State a better place, as the member for Hornsby, and his current Minister, said. Eighteen Ministers is an awful lot to have to deal with and teach. I am sure that some were easier than others, and some were more challenging.

Mr Anthony Roberts: Some were not hard.

Ms Tanya Mihailuk: Some were more challenging.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: Some were more challenging. But what a difference Rod Stowe has made in providing consistency, leadership and forward planning. I wish him all the best in the years ahead for his career and his contribution to New South Wales. I wish him all the best during his time with Minister Kean. As the commissioner will have heard, the Minister has great admiration for him and urged the Government to bring forward this motion today acknowledging the commissioner. I am pleased to be able to lead the debate. Thank you to your staff; it is lovely to see them with you today to hear your service acknowledged. Thanks also to your family. I know you leave home very early and get home very late, and they obviously help you do that. Thank you from us all. It is nice when all members can come together to honour someone with your integrity and commitment.

Motion agreed to.

INTERCITY TRAIN FLEET CONTRACT

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (12:40): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that unemployment in the Newcastle electorate is currently 6.1 per cent, higher than under the previous Government.
- (2) Notes that youth unemployment in the Newcastle electorate is currently 12.1 per cent, higher than under the previous Government.
- (3) Notes that the Minister for Transport has announced that the new Intercity train fleet will be built in South Korea.
- (4) Notes that the contract is worth \$2.3 billion and is expected to generate up to 1,200 jobs.
- (5) Notes that local Hunter manufacturing workers are gutted by this decision.
- (6) Condemns the Government for the value of this contract and hundreds of jobs going offshore.
- (7) Calls on the Government to reverse its decision and build the new Intercity fleet in New South Wales.

I begin by clarifying the unemployment rate. The unemployment rate has risen to 6 per cent, which is still above the 4.9 per cent when Labor was in government, and, tragically, youth unemployment has increased to 12.7 per cent.

Ms Yasmin Catley: Outrageous!

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP: Absolutely. In August last year the Government announced that the new Intercity train fleet will be built in South Korea. This contract is worth a massive \$2.3 billion and will create 1,200 jobs—all generated in Korea. Perhaps the Minister should be called the "Minister for Employment" and go to Korea. Newcastle has a very proud industrial history: BHP steelworks has been an institution for decades, we have a good working port and we have a solid manufacturing base. With that kind of background, one would think Newcastle would be a natural contender for this massive contract. But not on this Government's watch.

The Intercity train fleet will service the Newcastle to Sydney and Sydney to Wollongong and the Blue Mountains routes. One would think locally run trains would be built locally; we have the resources to build them and to repair them. Newcastle also has a problem with youth unemployment. With skilled workers bearing the brunt of the coal downturn, the closure of major employers including Forgacs, and the reduction in manufacturing

work, that unemployment figure is likely to continue to rise from the current 12.7 per cent. Unemployment and youth unemployment rates have increased under this Government. The Government could have done itself and the Hunter a favour and awarded the contract to one of the Hunter's manufacturers such as Goninan or UGL. It could have supported the local economy and employed more than 1,200 people. It boggles the mind how this decision came to be—

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! Members will come to order. The member for Newcastle has the call.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP: —especially when it is widely known that the Victorian Premier, Daniel Andrews, managed to get a cheaper deal from a Victorian manufacturer and has kept 1,100 people off the unemployment queue.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Newcastle has the call. Members who continue to interject will be called to order.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP: The New South Wales Minister for Transport and Infrastructure said that it could not be done cheaper. Victoria has shown the way.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I call the member for Drummoyne to order for the first time.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP: The Government claims that it is "revitalising Newcastle". I ask the Premier to tell me how Newcastle is going to be "world class" when the youth of today cannot find jobs because the Premier has assisted in running the Newcastle manufacturing industry into the ground.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I call the member for Oatley to order for the first time.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP: With no manufacturing industry left in the town what will the young do for work?

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I call the member for Lakemba to order for the first time.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP: Only so many cafes and baristas can fit into one town. This decision is just as ludicrous as the Government's decision to send our light rail carriages contract to Spain. Millions of Australian taxpayers' funds are being sent offshore to support the Spanish economy. Jobs are being propped up in Spain to make carriages for Newcastle. Is it just me or do other people think this is absolutely ludicrous? There are two train manufacturing companies in the vicinity of Newcastle, which makes Newcastle the obvious choice for the contract. I ask the Premier to tell me how the Government can revitalise a city and its economy when it sends money offshore and cripples local jobs and growth.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I remind the member for Oatley that under Standing Order 54 he is required to be seated when in the Chamber.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP: This Government is committed to crippling Newcastle with the restrictions placed on the number of containers allowed to pass through the port, with the Government's dodgy deals so we cannot even get a container terminal there, with the privatisation of the public transport system, and with the underfunding of TAFE—we have had a reduction in TAFE numbers from 65 to 25.

Mr Adam Crouch: Point of order: The motion is about rail, not about TAFE.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Newcastle will return to the leave of the motion.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP: The motion goes to youth unemployment, which is skyrocketing under this Government. How can people get retrained if TAFE has been slashed, burned and destroyed by this Government? The Government should take a leaf out of the Victorian Government's book and support Australian workers, Australian jobs, Australian manufacturing and the Australian economy. We have a new Premier who has been Minister for Transport, and Minister for the Hunter. As the leader of this new Government, she has the background and the knowledge of the City of Newcastle and of the financial benefits of investing in local jobs. The Premier knows that Newcastle has a large manufacturing industry that is in the middle of a downturn. The industry is screaming out for work—crying out for contracts—but, sadly, we are watching industry leaders like Forgas and UGL having to cut staff.

Getting the trains made in Newcastle just makes sense. We understand the dimensions and size of the rail network and what fits—unlike this Government, which seems to have forgotten what trains will fit on the

track. Last year the member for Blue Mountains raised the issue of the Government's new railway carriages not fitting on the Blue Mountains rail line. The Government did not measure the width of the Blue Mountains tunnels. It seems the Government has not done much research at all—another example of the incompetence, waste and mismanagement by this Government. It is absolutely disgraceful. The member for Keira said that the member for Bega should meet with the South Korean Minister for employment as he is the only person who is "over the moon" about this contract, and that he should watch out because the New South Wales transport Minister might take his job.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (12:47): Obviously the Government opposes the motion. We have listened to a lot of waffle for the past seven minutes. We will not be lectured by those opposite about how to deliver trains and services. Labor failed the people of New South Wales for how many years?

Mr John Sidoti: Sixteen.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Sixteen long years.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! Members will come to order. The member for Terrigal has the call.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Let me refresh the memories of those opposite about some of the projects. The former Labor Government promised 626 brand-new carriages to replace 30-year-old non-air-conditioned trains, and how many were delivered? Zero. I will quote what Michael Costa said about the Millennium trains in 2014:

It's a good train, I don't think that anyone questions the comfort value, but we are not going to accept the position where there is a significant escalation of costs for a design that could be rolled out in a much more efficient level of procurement. Then there is the classic of all time. In 2006 John Watkins announced the then Labor Government's joint venture with Downer EDI to build the Waratah trains. And where was that to be? China. A Labor Government was going to deliver Waratah trains built in China. The member for Newcastle will say anything in opposition but could not deliver in government. Our commitment to building a world-class public transport system is exemplified in the procurement of the new intercity fleet.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the first time.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: The best thing a government can do to support jobs is deliver quality infrastructure and services, which is yet another thing those opposite—who delivered trains from China—would be unfamiliar with. The hypocrisy is enormous. This Government is investing billions in the State's next generation train fleet for customers travelling longer distances—including those from my electorate and that of the member for Swansea—from the South Coast, Blue Mountains, Central Coast and Newcastle. I would have thought the members for Newcastle and for the Blue Mountains would be thanking the Government for improving the level of comfort and convenience for customers travelling on the Intercity network. It should come as no surprise that the member for Newcastle has brought forward this outrageous motion after his bleating about the Newcastle car race. Rather than spending time writing and moving motions attacking the Government for supposedly not creating jobs in the Hunter, he should be supporting the Government's ambitious agenda for the revitalisation of Newcastle.

Mr Tim Crakanthorp: Point of order: My point of order is Standing Order 129.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! Standing Order 129 is not relevant to this debate. There is no point of order.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: To deliver this broad program of work, the New South Wales Government has engaged contractors with a national and international presence to bring international best practice to Newcastle. These contractors are engaging many local Newcastle and Hunter region firms to deliver work—a point that was sadly overlooked by the member for Newcastle. Hundreds of local people have already been involved in the program. Subcontractors are already on the ground, delivering a range of works including construction, geotechnical work, surveying, engineering, project design and planning, and urban design—all of which was overlooked by the member and this motion. For example, Laing O'Rourke was awarded the contract to design and build the interchange at Wickham in December 2014. Since then, around 70 per cent of the dollar value of all contracts has been awarded to local suppliers and contractors. Downer has been engaged to clear the former heavy rail corridor to make way for light rail—which the member opposes—and urban renewal in Newcastle. Downer is running this project from its office in Hexham. If only the member for Newcastle knew what was going on in his own electorate. The Broadmeadow station upgrade is being delivered by Abergeldie Contractors.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Newcastle will come to order. He has had an opportunity to contribute to the debate.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: This project is being run out of Abergeldie's Thornton office and its subcontractors have a strong local presence. By achieving value for money for New South Wales taxpayers

through a competitive tender process—again, something that is foreign to members opposite—for the new Intercity fleet, we have the opportunity to direct the savings to other vital transport projects.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the second time.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: The ongoing maintenance of the fleet will require a state-of-the-art maintenance facility. This large investment will provide significant employment in both the construction stage and in ongoing operation, plus training opportunities and downstream investment. The new purpose-built Intercity fleet maintenance facility will be built on the New South Wales Central Coast. I am delighted about that because it will provide almost 300 jobs. There will be 170 jobs in the building phase plus a \$300 million investment for jobs on the Central Coast, which I welcome. The new purpose-built maintenance facility will include offices, amenities and staff parking. This contract is expected to deliver, as I said earlier, about 200-odd jobs during construction and maintenance for a term of at least 15 years. Our new facility will be state of the art and will provide a significant boost to the local economy. There are so many facts that the member for Newcastle was happy to ignore about development, infrastructure and investment in Newcastle. Obviously I oppose the motion.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (12:53): It is with great pleasure that I support the member for Newcastle and his fantastic motion. I start by commending the member for Newcastle for bringing this very important issue before the House. The member for Newcastle knows only too well the importance of manufacturing, not just in New South Wales broadly but also in the Hunter region where he and the members for Port Stephens, for Wallsend and I reside. The Hunter has an enormously proud history of manufacturing; a proud history of workers in our region producing essential products and infrastructure for local, regional and international markets. You name it, and it was probably once built in the Hunter.

In particular, in the Hunter region we are very proud train manufacturers. Almost every major train built in New South Wales has been touched by the hand of the Hunter's manufacturing men and women. It is a shame that the member for Terrigal has left the Chamber. He skulked out before I reminded him that although the Waratah train shells were built in China, I assure the House that they were 100 per cent fitted out in the Hunter. I know that because I have been to Cardiff Downer EDI and watched them being built. I look forward to catching up with the member about that. But the Government's decision means that we cannot say the same about the new Intercity train fleet because it will not be built in the Hunter.

As the motion indicates, this Government, led by Gladys Berejiklian and Dominic Perrottet, has offshored more than 1,000 jobs by granting the new \$2.3 billion Intercity train contract to South Korea. That decision is absolutely disgraceful. It is not just the member for Newcastle who knows how bad this decision is for the Hunter; the Leader of the Opposition also knows it is terrible to offshore local manufacturing jobs to South Korea. Luke Foley told the ABC on the day of the announcement that the Government's decision was a crushing blow to local jobs. He pointed out that rival bidders would have provided hundreds more jobs in regions that desperately needed them. He said:

In Victoria there is a minimum 50 per cent requirement for local rolling stock orders. Here in NSW, nothing.

The [Liberal] Government is completely disinterested in supporting local manufacturing and local jobs.

It's these sorts of decisions by governments that crush the hopes and dreams of young people living in regions like the Illawarra and the Hunter. This is a very heavy blow to jobs and manufacturing in NSW.

A spokeswoman for one of the failed bidders, Stadler Rail, said the company was disappointed not to be selected to build the new fleet. She said:

We felt we put in a strong bid, based on our plan to breathe life back into train manufacturing in NSW by providing new jobs and a major boost to the state economy.

Sadly, this Government did not agree. But if we think it could not get any worse than offshoring 1,200 local jobs, we should think again. What about the absolute debacle of trains that are unable to complete the trip to the Blue Mountains? As the member for Blue Mountains so accurately put it, the Minister jumped "head first into a project without actually running the measuring tape over the narrowest point the trains have to pass through". She said:

Instead of buying "off-the-shelf" designs, they should have brought the project in-house to the experts at Railcorp and designed a new train with our local conditions in mind from the outset.

... You couldn't make this stuff up.

That is absolutely true. This is a very serious matter indeed and, like the member for Newcastle, I note that our local manufacturing workers are gutted by this decision. The decision sees good, high-paying local jobs sent overseas. I join the member for Newcastle in condemning the Government for offshoring those jobs and sending \$2.3 billion to South Korea. I wholeheartedly join the call by the member for Newcastle demanding that the

Government reverse its decision—its terrible, nasty decision—and build the new Intercity fleet in New South Wales. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) (12:57): This is a great debate but it would help to drizzle a few facts over it every now and again. Labor members come to the Parliament every sitting day and oppose every savings measure. They then have the hide to attack the Government. Since when did they care about jobs? The Government has always done the right thing. Yesterday the member for Newcastle opposed the V8 car race and now he is talking about jobs. I am advised that the 2016-17 budget allocates more than \$130 million for a brand new, modern fleet of Intercity trains for commuters from the South Coast, Blue Mountains, Central Coast and Hunter regions, offering a new level of comfort and convenience. The contract for the rolling stock, simulators and maintenance of the new fleet was awarded in August 2016 to RailConnect, which is a joint venture between the Hyundai Rotem Company, Mitsubishi Electric Australia and UGL Rail.

The first new trains are expected to be delivered in 2019. Customers were engaged to help identify key cabin features. This will deliver increased comfort and include features never before seen on an intercity service. It will offer: two-by-two seating on upper and lower levels; wider fabric covered seats with arm rests and more space; charging stations for modern devices on each seat; dedicated space for luggage, prams and bicycles; accessible toilets and spaces for customers in wheelchairs; closed circuit television and digital screens; cup holders; and tray tables.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I remind the member for Port Stephens that she is on two calls to order.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: You name it, it will be provided. This Government bought a train design based on a proven platform and technology. This will ensure the best value and service and will have the new trains on the tracks faster. Those opposite say, "Why is it not being built in Australia?" The Government has worked with Australian and overseas train manufacturers to identify the most suitable train design. Tender evaluation selected an international consortium as the preferred supplier. All four tenderers proposed international design, manufacture and delivery. Previously New South Wales developed unique and often costly new trains.

This Government is committed to value for money by using existing designs with proven technology. The request for tender required a design based on a proven platform rather than an off-the-shelf design. The selected design is based on the most proven method. This will ensure the best value and service and have the new trains on tracks faster than ever before. I emphasise that the Opposition has never cared about jobs but now tries to dictate to the Government. What the Opposition says in this House is not what is said in their own electorates. The member for Newcastle should take a cool shower.+

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Newcastle will cease interjecting if he wishes to reply to the debate.

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) (13:02): The decision to award the contract for new rolling stock to a South Korean manufacturing concern has sent shockwaves through the Wallsend community and the Hunter. I thank the member for Drummoyne for speaking about the attributes of the carriages. My colleagues will agree that EDI and UGL could have built all of those trains with all of those attributes, including cup holders. I am sure we could have built cup holders in Australia. The Government has taken away Australian jobs. It is a betrayal. The Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union secretary, Tim Ayres, stated:

This is money that should have been invested in Australian workers and Australian communities, instead we are deliberately sending manufacturing jobs offshore.

The unemployment rate in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie is over 6 per cent, well above the 5.7 per cent average. The employment situation for young people in Wallsend is even worse. The Hunter has the worst youth unemployment in the State. There are no skilled jobs in the manufacturing sector. In the past that was a ticket to a secure life. At least it was when I grew up in West Wallsend, but not now. It was not flashy or luxurious but it was enough to raise a family. Now the local manufacturing industry has evaporated and the jobs gone to South Korea. AMWU organiser Corey Wright said:

There have been rolling stock job losses in the Hunter Valley and they are criminal.

Further:

This contract alone would have sustained 800 jobs in the Hunter.

Ms Kate Washington: How many families could that feed?

Ms SONIA HORNERY: That is 800 jobs that would have fed families.

Mr Nick Lalich: How many jobs is that?

Ms SONIA HORNER: That is 800 jobs. The Government's failed Smart and Skilled policy caused a lack of skilled workers. The TAFE cuts, increases in fees, the proliferation of dodgy private providers and the downturn in manufacturing will mean trouble for the local economy in the Hunter. Instead of investing in the workers of tomorrow by generating apprenticeships for young people, \$2.3 billion is being spent overseas. The member for Cabramatta will want to hear that again: The Government is going to spend \$2.3 billion overseas to benefit the South Korean economy. Mr Wright said, "It is a massive missed opportunity for this State, for the State Government and a shame for the people of Wallsend."

According to AMWU figures 1,200 local jobs would have been generated in the Hunter by requiring local content through a tender process. Not all of those jobs would have been in Wallsend, but they would have been in the Hunter. The employment may have been in the electorate of Newcastle at the UGL site in Broadmeadow or in my electorate with EDI. This is not occurring. Tim Ayres said, "It defies economic sense to wilfully send these jobs overseas." Every Labor member agrees. This Government has committed to slugging Wallsend with hit after hit. It tried to close the greyhound track and to wreck the local economy, and has removed police stations. I agree with the member for Newcastle, we need to keep local jobs in Wallsend and the Hunter.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (13:06): With the exception of my friend the member for Wallsend, I am not going to be lectured by this poisonous vestibule of hypocrisy that sits opposite. It is all canting, whimsical, wimpy, hypocrisy from the Labor Party. Members spoke of their great stallion, Ryan Park, the shadow Treasurer. Who was the Deputy Director General for Transport for NSW that issued the contract to build the trains in China? It was the great stallion of local procurement, Kim Jong Park himself. The member cannot speak about local procurement when he was the one to sign the contract. The member for Swansea spoke about construction. The reality is that there is no difference between this contract and the one the member for Keira signed because maintenance jobs will remain in New South Wales. The assembly jobs will remain in New South Wales. When this decision was announced Ryan Park spoke about the Swiss transport company Stadler.

Dr Hugh McDermott: Point of order: I request that the member address the shadow Treasurer by his correct title, not by his name.

Mr GARETH WARD: Potts Point Parky.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I uphold the point of order. I remind the member for Oatley that he is on one call to order. The member for Kiama will address members by their appropriate title.

Mr GARETH WARD: Mr Park spoke of one of the contractors that had been shortlisted and was considering establishing an office somewhere in the State. When Stadler was not successful Mr Park marched down to Port Kembla and stood out the front of BHP—

Dr Hugh McDermott: Point of order: Once again, the member has not addressed the shadow Treasurer by his correct title.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Kiama will refer to the member for Keira by his appropriate title.

Mr GARETH WARD: The member for Keira stood outside BlueScope Steel and said, "These trains could have been manufactured with Australian steel." The problem is that BlueScope does not produce aluminium and Stadler's trains are made from aluminium. The only metal at that press conference was the tinfoil hat that the member for Keira was wearing. What an embarrassment. The last two projects that the Opposition built when it was in Government were the western grandstand at WIN Stadium, and the Shoalhaven correctional centre. Neither was manufactured with Australian steel. They are now lauding themselves as the worker's friend and the local procurer's friend. When it was in Government and could do something about it Labor did nothing.

They talk about local procurement and local delivery of infrastructure. They promised 12 rail lines and delivered none of them. They had 10 transport plans and delivered none of them. Yet they drag their miserable political carcasses into this Chamber and try to argue the case for local procurement. No-one believes the Opposition because they sold out the workers. Just as Bill Shorten sold out the workers as a trade union official, the Opposition has sold them out in this House today. I commend any member who argues for local jobs. We can work to improve opportunities, but businesses also need to be competitive. I say to the member for Newcastle that the difference in value on this contract was half a billion dollars. Where was that half a billion dollars going to come from? Was the Opposition going to take it out of hospital funding, or roads? Which school was the Opposition going to close? Which hospital was the Opposition going to shut down?

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Newcastle will have the opportunity to reply to the debate.

Mr GARETH WARD: Opposition members say that they are for local procurement, but when they were in government they did nothing about it. The Opposition does not have the money. It does not have the policy sense. The Opposition is an absolute disgrace.

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (13:10): By leave: I thank the member for Newcastle for moving this important motion. The debate on this motion illustrates the distinction between the policies on the Opposition side of the House and the decisions made on the Government side of the House. The rate of unemployment in Newcastle is now 6 per cent, and in the Hunter Valley youth unemployment is as high as 10.3 per cent. In that context it is difficult to justify this Government's decision to send a \$2.3 billion contract to build the next intercity train fleet, a contract for 500 carriages, to South Korea. No doubt Seoul will appreciate the expected 1,200 jobs that will come with this project. However, the taxpayers of Newcastle and the Hunter are right to feel ripped off.

The Premier has claimed in this place to lead the party of the workers. I have heard that said again today. I invite Premier Berejiklian to come and say that in the Hunter, and I do not mean at a Property Council lunch. If she has the gall to say that in this place, she should say it to the workers who have lost their livelihoods because of her lack of consideration for their jobs. She should say it to the men and women who cannot find jobs, because no jobs are created when a train manufacturing contract is given to South Korea. In the Hunter we have a proud reputation of manufacturing and maintaining high-quality passenger and freight trains. Hunter residents know that Downer EDI at Cardiff and UGL Goninan at Broadmeadow are world-class train manufacturers. Downer EDI has provided passenger trains for Queensland Rail and Western Australia, but they are apparently not good enough for New South Wales.

UGL has built trains not only for New South Wales and Victoria but for the MTR rail in Hong Kong. That quality international manufacturer was not good enough for the Premier, but other countries and other States know that it is good enough. Labor's Steel Industry Protection Bill, which is before this House for debate, includes a change to the procurement policy so that whole-of-life cost, not just purchase price, is assessed in large Government projects. I know that the residents of New South Wales think that if station platforms have to be extended, tunnels widened and sections of track upgraded so that these slightly cheaper trains can work in this State then one has to ask what the real cost is. Apparently, we are meant to be happy that the train maintenance contract has been kept in New South Wales.

It is only because the Government cannot fly the trains overseas that we were given the crumbs of the maintenance contract. The Victorian Government, under Labor Premier Dan Andrews, has recently delivered new trams to Melbourne's streets that are proudly emblazoned with "Made in Melbourne". The New South Wales Government is completely out of touch, because it does not think that residents would share that sense of pride in seeing high-quality, locally manufactured carriages delivered to railways across New South Wales. They would take pride in knowing that good men and women were able to put food on the tables for their families because they had a job.

The New South Wales Government has an opportunity to fix this mess. The tender for the next fleet of XPT regional trains will be decided in the first half of this year. If this Premier wants to say that she leads a party for workers, then she can work with local manufacturers to ensure that the replacement XPT trains are built in New South Wales, built in the Hunter, where we have the capacity and the expertise. The trains should be proudly branded "Made in New South Wales" so that people in every country town can see the high-quality manufacturing that the Hunter is capable of. The Hunter is a strong and proud manufacturing region. It has innovated and evolved to meet the demands of the changing local and global economy—we can even do cup-holders—and it continues to do so. It is time that the Berejiklian-Barilaro Government ended the rhetoric and stopped awarding major manufacturing contracts overseas so that people in my community and across the Hunter have the dignity of having a job.

Mr Kevin Conolly: I seek leave to contribute to the debate.

Leave not granted.

Mr Greg Piper: I seek leave to speak.

Leave not granted.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (13:15): In reply: I am disappointed that the Government has denied a local member and one of its own members the chance to participate in this debate. It demonstrates that the Government does not want this matter in the public arena. It does not want people talking about it. It does not want the local Independent, Greg Piper, the member for Lake Macquarie, to say a word about it. He cares about his community. Even the member for Riverstone wants to talk about the issue. It is a disgrace that they were

denied leave to speak. I thank the member for Terrigal, who spoke about the benefits of jobs, although I think all the jobs will be in South Korea.

The member for Drummoyne enlightened us about cup-holders and other things that he thought we could not build here. The member for Kiama was full of bluster. He was confused about the difference between maintenance and fit-out. He thinks maintenance is fit-out. It is not. We fitted out the Waratah trains. The member for Swansea made a great contribution. She said that this is a very serious matter, which it is. The member for Wallsend is very concerned, with Downer EDI in her electorate, and she should be. The member for Port Stephens spoke about our proud tradition. She also mentioned that the Government spouts rhetoric but does not do anything. I came across a letter in today's *Newcastle Herald* headed "Put our State first". The letter says:

If Gladys Berejiklian intends running NSW for all of its constituents' benefit then she needs to reverse some decisions made while Mike "sell it all" Baird was premier.

The letter continues:

Don't buy the intercity trains from Korea, have them built here ... These projects will boost employment and the economy ... something she wanted to happen as transport minister. Put NSW first, rather than trying to save a few dollars.

When I spoke to Cory Wright of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union last year he said that there are two manufacturers in the Hunter that have lost 1,800 direct and indirect jobs. Our region has a very high youth unemployment rate. There is a lack of apprenticeships and a lack of investment in skills and training. TAFE is being slashed and burnt. Knowing that, how can this Government send billions of dollars offshore to Spain and let down the workers of Newcastle and the Hunter? Last year we saw shipbuilding giant Forgas sold and the shipbuilding course at Newcastle TAFE scrapped. There is a fitting solution to the downturn in the manufacturing industry in Newcastle, and the Premier can certainly implement it.

Surely the Premier can see the commonsense solution. The Government has sold our port and taken the profits to Sydney. It has nobbled our container terminal by doing a very dodgy deal so that every shipping container over 30,000 has to send \$100 to Sydney, which makes it unviable. The Government apparently has a record-breaking surplus. It claims to love investing in Newcastle. The Premier should show that her Government stands by its mantra. The Government should revitalise Newcastle and the Hunter. It should revitalise our longstanding industries. I call on the Government to invest in Newcastle by investing in our workers, not the workers of South Korea or Spain. We have a proud tradition of train manufacture. The Government should invest in Australian-made products and Australian pride. I implore the Premier to reverse the decision on the train carriage manufacturing contracts. Let us build them here.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes33
Noes47
Majority..... 14

AYES

Atalla, Mr E
Chanthivong, Mr A
Daley, Mr M
Finn, Ms J
Haylen, Ms J
Lalich, Mr N (teller)
McDermott, Dr H
Mihailuk, Ms T
Parker, Mr J
Scully, Mr P
Washington, Ms K

Car, Ms P
Cotsis, Ms S
Dib, Mr 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)

Catley, Ms Y
Crakanthorp, Mr T
Doyle, Ms T
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
Bromhead, Mr S (teller)
Constance, Mr A
Davies, Ms T
Fraser, Mr A

Aplin, Mr G
Brookes, Mr G
Coure, Mr M
Dominello, Mr V
George, Mr T

Ayres, Mr S
Conolly, Mr K
Crouch, Mr A
Elliott, Mr D
Gibbons, Ms M

NOES

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

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

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

PAIRS

Aitchison, Ms J
Foley, Mr L
Hoenig, Mr R

Barilaro, Mr J
Berejiklian, Ms G
Hancock, Mrs S

Motion negatived.

CASSIA COMMUNITY CENTRE

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (13:26): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Recognises the Cassia Community Centre, Pendle Hill, for the fine work it accomplishes in providing social services to some of the most vulnerable people in Western Sydney and the great work of its executive committee, led by Ms Kerrie Denton.
- (2) Notes that the centre will be demolished by Transport for NSW to make way for 70 new car parking spaces in Pendle Hill, which is short of the Government's promise to provide 130 parking spaces.
- (3) Notes that the executive committee of Cassia Community Centre have been excluded from the consultations with Cumberland Council to plan the centre's relocation.
- (4) Calls on the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure to ensure that Cassia Community Centre is involved in the relocation planning and therefore able to continue its great work during and after construction works by Transport for NSW.

I address this House on a very important issue in my electorate, that is, the future of the Cassia Community Centre located on Billabong Street, Pendle Hill. For 60 years the Cassia Community Centre has worked tirelessly to assist our community's most vulnerable families. Without a doubt I can say that the volunteers and staff of Cassia Community Centre have literally saved thousands of lives throughout its long history. The support Cassia provides young families who may be broken by domestic violence, drug abuse and of all possible problems that are associated with social disadvantage is simply invaluable.

Cassia's history reflects the growth of families in Western Sydney. Formerly known as the Pendle Hill Baby Centre, the centre was established in the 1950s after a lot of very hard work, tears, and extensive public fundraising—over a prolonged period of time. In those days, the new baby health centre was predominantly used by the wives of war veterans living in new war service homes in the immediate district around Toongabbie and what became Pendle Hill. These were the very first residential developments around Pendle Hill in the late 1940s—war service homes for veterans who saw, and survived the worst aspects of World War II and the Korean conflict.

Sadly, the Berejiklian Government plans to demolish this centre, to raze it to its very foundations, built by the dedicated individuals who wanted a future for the disadvantaged people in our community. Already, the land on which Cassia stands has been compulsorily acquired. The Berejiklian Government's plan is to construct a new commuter car park on the site of Cassia. The agency responsible, Transport for NSW, has failed to provide Cassia with the certainty it needs that the centre will be relocated and provide the design of the centre.

Despite months in the making, representatives from Transport for NSW have failed to provide firm commitments regarding the future of Cassia with its management. It has failed to guide it through the process of its relocation—if in fact there will be allocation and relocation. Cassia has been left in the dark and those disadvantaged people—who I again remind the House are some of the most vulnerable people in our community—

have no idea what will happen. The fine print of a community centre etched into preliminary engineering diagrams shown to the non-engineers who run Cassia is not the consolation our community deserves—Cassia needs infeasible assurance that its facility will be rebuilt by the New South Wales Government.

I understand, and the people of Cassia also understand, the need for progress. The Pendle Hill community and the residents of surrounding suburbs understand this very well. Pendle Hill is in dire need of more commuter parking at Pendle Hill Railway Station—far more than the State Government has committed to. However, Cassia, and the community it services, deserve peace of mind as well. Since the Government is yet to reply to Cassia's request for essential needs in terms of a new centre, I will lay them out here, to be recorded permanently in *Hansard* and the list that I am about to give reflects the correspondence sent to Transport for NSW on 16 January 2017 by the executive director, Kerrie Denton.

First, the centre requires a front room reception area with a waiting room to accommodate up to 12 parents, prams and strollers at one time and a storage area large enough for the centre's records. Secondly, a library area with three medium-size bookcases and information, and resource bookcase, along with a large drawing board. A manager's office is also needed, that is large enough to contain two lounge chairs, desks and a space for filing cabinets. A second office is also needed, which is suitable for running groups of up to 12 people and to use as a childcare room, with two large trestle tables.

A larger room is also needed for main groups that could accommodate up to 100 people, mainly for family events, open days, playgroups and school holiday activities. A large storage room is needed for playground equipment, art supplies and toys, and also, a storage room for cleaners' supplies. Staff bathrooms are needed, a client bathroom is needed that is large enough to deal with baby change tables and wheelchair access. A kitchen area is needed, which should be suitable to be used for any type of community activities there.

An outdoor area for family events and live entertainment is needed. Currently, the Cassia Community Centre holds events with 150 people in attendance in the open space which is now available. The space must be fully fenced and childproofed. All spaces must be wheelchair accessible and the centre should have an opening onto Civic Avenue to improve the centre's safety and security. Perhaps most importantly, the existing centre must not be demolished until the new centre is ready, as hundreds of families in our community cannot afford to be without Cassia's support. I urge the Government to act, to save the Cassia Community Centre, and to provide Cassia with the centre outlined in the last few minutes of my speech, but in turn to protect and support the families of Western Sydney.

Debate interrupted.

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

Visitors

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the gallery Rotary International exchange students Ms Filippa Jeppsson Wall from Sweden, Ms Louise Lejeune from France and Ms Val Blampain from Belgium, accompanied by none other than former Clerk of the Legislative Assembly Mr Russell Grove and Ms Lillias Bovell.

Announcements

TRIBUTE TO SEAN O'CONNOR

The SPEAKER: I inform the House of the sad departure of my Chief of Staff, Sean O'Connor. This is his last sitting day before he takes up a Clerk Assistant position in the Northern Territory. While I warned him about crocodiles and box jellyfish, he is keen for a new adventure. He has been absolutely professional in his work in the Speaker's office and has carried out his role with dedication and commitment. I know I speak on behalf of all members because my instructions to Sean were to treat all of them equally despite any grievances and issues. I thank Sean for his service.

Documents

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

Reports

The SPEAKER: In accordance with section 78 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, I table the following reports of the Independent Commission Against Corruption:

- (1) Report entitled "Investigation into the conduct of a Casino Boolangle Local Aboriginal Land Council CEO and administrative officer", dated February 2017.

- (2) Report entitled "Investigation into the conduct of a former chief executive officer and members of the board of the Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council", dated February 2017.

I order that the reports be printed.

Question Time

POLITICAL DONATIONS

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that some of them are on calls to order from earlier in the day. Those calls will carry over for the remainder of the day.

Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (14:20): My question is directed to the Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Disability Services. I refer to the transcript of evidence at the Independent Commission Against Corruption on 8 May 2014 when Mr Tony Merhi confirmed under oath that he is a property developer. Given that admission, does the Minister continue to assert that he is not a property developer?

Mr Brad Hazzard: You should verify the document.

Mr LUKE FOLEY: Here it is, mate. There you go.

The SPEAKER: Order! A piece of paper does not necessarily constitute evidence. Nevertheless, the Minister has the call and may answer the question if he wishes. The Minister will be heard in silence.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Disability Services) (14:21): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I refer the member to my previous answer yesterday.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (14:22): My question is addressed to the Premier. How is the New South Wales Government improving customer service to the citizens of New South Wales?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:22): I thank the member for Wollondilly for his great question and I also acknowledge the great work he does in his community. I know how much his constituents value great customer service. I know the Service NSW centre, which opened in Mittagong last year, was a great local win for the member, because we know how much all people across New South Wales love those Service NSW centres. As everyone would know, one of the hallmarks of our Government is our commitment to making sure that the people of New South Wales get the best-quality customer service when they use our services.

Gone are the days under those opposite when you had to go to the old Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] or Roads and Transport Authority [RTA] to renew your car licence or registration. We would all take books to read. I am glad we are all in violent agreement on that point—it is great. You would then go to a different government office to renew your builders licence, if you had one of those. If you jumped on a bus you could not work out whether you needed a 1-2 section or 3-9 section on the Travel Ten. How many of us were caught out on that? If you were on a train you could not work out what the announcement said.

I am pleased to say in the six years that we have been in government we have turned this customer service perspective completely around. We have introduced Service NSW, which allows everyone across the State to access hundreds of different services at 73 locations around New South Wales, or 24/7 over the phone. I am pleased to say that this will continue. I am also pleased to say that due to the good work of—I will not be modest—myself and the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, we now have the great Opal card, and I know all those opposite love to use the Opal card.

Mr Guy Zangari: Stop this "Glad-wrap", seriously.

The SPEAKER: That is a good line. Where did the member for Fairfield get it from? Is it original?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: "Glad-wrap"! That's fine. I remember when we first came to government we said that the customer, the student, and the patient would be the centre of everything we do, and that is exactly what we have maintained. I do not apologise for moving hundreds and hundreds of people from the back office to the front line because that is what we want. We do not apologise for being the party of the worker who makes sure all our workers are supporting the front line. We know we need to make it easier for people to access government services, not more difficult. Today I am happy to say that we have the results from the most recent customer satisfaction survey.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I want to confess the results are good, but not good enough.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: There continues to be very positive perceptions in relation to government services overall. From a very low base, which was in negative territory when we came to government, we are now seven and a half out of ten. There is more to do, but we are getting better. It is higher than it was previously. The survey captured customer feedback on 22 different services. I will go through some of those results. In particular I am pleased to say that satisfaction for those of our customers in rural and regional areas has increased quite significantly. Services that people are accessing online also have improved significantly.

Mr Stephen Kamper: That's a phenomenon.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It is great, I know.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am pleased to say that when New South Wales is compared to other jurisdictions we are doing very well. When I say to everyone in the New South Wales Government that we want to be best in class, we are not talking about Australia because we know we are the best State; we are talking about best in the world. We are comparing ourselves to what is happening in the United Kingdom, in North America and other places around the world. We want to provide the best customer service for the people who use government services. [*Extension of time*]

I was very pleased that the largest increase in consumer satisfaction in the last year came from people rating that the Government is accountable for its services. This means that people said we demonstrate openness and transparency in decision-making and we are making it easy to access information about services. This is not us saying that; this is what people in our communities are saying across the State. That is due to all the hard work our Government is doing to focus on the needs of our citizens, day in and day out. That is why we are here and that is why we will continue to work hard on their behalf. Whilst we have massively improved the way in which people can renew their licence and get services, there are other things to do, such as making communication clearer when using public transport and making sure services can be accessed more easily.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the Customer Service Commissioner, Mike Pratt, and his team for the excellent work they are doing across government. I pay tribute, in particular, to both the current and former finance Ministers, who are ensuring that data collection across government through the Data Analytics Centre [DAC] is allowing us to continue to improve our services day in, day out. Not only do I commend those in government who are improving services, I also take this opportunity to thank our frontline staff, who are making life easier for people day in, day out. That is what good government is about. I want to keep all of us accountable for improving these customer surveys into the future.

POLITICAL DONATIONS

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:30): My question is directed to the Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Disability Services. I refer to this book written by the former Liberal member for Strathfield, entitled *The Life and Times of John (Jack) Iori*.

The SPEAKER: It is a wonderful piece of literature, no doubt.

Ms JODI McKAY: I am happy to give it to you, but you cannot take it out of the building, according to the Parliamentary Library.

The SPEAKER: I do not want to take it out of the building; I want the member for Strathfield to ask the question.

Mr Gareth Ward: Let's read Nathan Tinkler's biography or Hilton Grugeon's.

Ms JODI McKAY: Those opposite will not let me ask the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Strathfield will ask the question or resume her seat.

Ms JODI McKAY: When the Minister sought political donations from—

Mr Gareth Ward: Nathan Tinkler and Hilton Grugeon.

Ms JODI McKAY: Can I just ask the question?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Strathfield will ask her question.

Ms JODI McKAY: My question is directed to the Minister for Multiculturalism. I refer to the book written by the former Liberal member for Strathfield Paul Zammit, entitled *The Life and Times of John (Jack)*

Iori. When the Minister sought political donations from this successful property developer, was he aware that this book details that Iori "developed a very keen eye for real estate opportunities" and that he finds it very useful "to be able to call on elected officials for assistance"?

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Disability Services) (14:32): I thank the member for her question and refer her to my previous answer.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) (14:33): My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. How is the Government continuing to support small businesses across the State, ensuring they have the tools and opportunities they need to start up and grow?

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional New South Wales, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business) (14:33): I thank the member for Camden for his question; he recognises the value of small business. Every time I am asked a question in relation to small business and it comes from someone who recognises the value of small business I am more than happy to update the House on what the New South Wales Government is doing to support small businesses in this State. The member for Camden knows that during some of the disasters that occurred in his electorate late last year our small business advisers were on the ground supporting small businesses to rebuild and ensure that they continue to be part of that fantastic electorate and community, creating employment and supporting that community.

The New South Wales Government recognises the potential and opportunity in this State if we empower and see small businesses thrive in this State. The latest Sensis Business Index for December 2016 shows that confidence among small and medium-size businesses is higher than in any other State because of the environment that the New South Wales Government has created for small businesses, not only for today but for the future, by investing in their businesses and their employees. We know how important employees are for small businesses; they are the greatest investment for a small business owner. That is why we value small businesses in this State. The CommSec State of the States report in January 2017 again has New South Wales at number one for the tenth consecutive quarter. The New South Wales Government is working hard to deliver for small businesses in New South Wales to ensure that they continue to be part of the story of prosperity that this great State has embarked on.

The Government is investing \$30 million in the Business Connect program, which provides specialist business advisers to support small businesses right across the State. We have a range of expert advisers on the ground supporting small businesses, especially in this day and age when we know the landscape of small business is changing significantly. Under this new Business Connect program, contracts have been put out for financial, digital and creative specialist advisers to support small businesses because we know that small businesses need a range of new supports if they are going to survive in what is now a very competitive global environment and market for many small businesses. As I said, small business confidence is at an all-time high because they know that the New South Wales Government is focused and is delivering for them in this State.

Yesterday I spoke about small business in this State and the Opposition's plan for small business, which was to defer a range of duties, mortgages and taxes on small businesses to fund a very tiny infrastructure plan. We know that that is the Opposition's policy for small business. But those opposite have an opportunity to join members on this side of the House because next week we will celebrate Back to Business Week, which will provide an opportunity to celebrate those fantastic mums and dads, those individuals who show absolute courage and are the backbone of the economy in rural and regional areas and in Sydney. The New South Wales Government has funded 128 councils to put on 160 events, which are opportunities to celebrate small business in this State. Those events will include a couple of roadshows, one in Cowra and one in Cooma, to showcase these fantastic small businesses that are so important to our communities and to the economy.

The shadow Minister for Small Business, the member for Maitland, is highly credentialed in small business—I will always acknowledge that. She has broken the trend of those opposite coming out of the unions; she is someone who has a good story, a strong story, in relation to small business in her own journey, and I recognise that. I hope that now there is some light on the other side of the House and that those opposite will learn from the member for Maitland and start supporting small business in this State. I wrote to the member for Maitland recently to let her know that in her neck of the woods a Back to Business Week lunch will be held at the Maitland Regional Art Gallery. I hope that she attends to celebrate these fantastic small businesses. [*Extension of time*]

Tomorrow I will be in Cooma at one of my favourite cafes, the Lott Café, where I will be rolling up my sleeves and helping out behind the coffee bar.

Ms Sophie Cotsis: Barilaro the barista.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Barilaro the barista—it just rolls off the tongue.

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO: The Lott Café is under new management. Leah Dyball, the new owner, has received support from the New South Wales Government, especially through the Business Connect advisers, to get her on track. Recently she said:

We are excited to be part of the Back to Business Week launch celebrations. Showcasing the contribution of businesses to our community is so important.

I hope that other businesses get the support that the Lott Café has had. Knowing that you don't have to go it alone—

Getting the right support from the New South Wales Government at the right time makes a genuine difference to the way she runs her business today. The \$30 million investment by the Government through its Business Connect program is about supporting individuals and businesses because we know it can be difficult at times. Businesses face varied challenges across the State. However, with support from the Government, the Office of the Small Business Commissioner and the program, small businesses can be empowered to make the right decisions in a timely manner and can look for opportunities. That will ensure we have a thriving small business community, especially in regional New South Wales. A small business in Cooma called Birdsnest today employs 120 staff. That is a fantastic example of the small businesses that are taking the Government's support and growing their businesses in regional New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: Hear, hear to Birdsnest!

HAWKESBURY CLUB

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) (14:40): I direct my question to the Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Disability Services. Can the Minister inform the House as to whether, to the best of his knowledge, the Premier has at any time before today attended any function organised by or connected with the Hawkesbury Club?

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

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Disability Services) (14:42): I thank the member for his question. I advise the House that as a local member of Parliament I have attended many community meetings and functions to advocate for better schools, roads and hospitals. As a Minister I follow all the guidelines for ministerial diary disclosures, as do my colleagues. Details of all ministerial meetings would be available on the Department of Premier and Cabinet website and disclosed accordingly, and I imagine the same applies to the Premier.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: The question was not what the Minister attended; it was what the Premier attended.

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

JOBS AND GROWTH

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (14:42): I address my question to the Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations. How is the New South Wales Government delivering real jobs and real economic progress for the people of New South Wales, and is the Treasurer aware of any alternative projects?

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Hawkesbury—Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations) (14:44): I thank the member for her question. There is no doubt that the Berejiklian-Barilaro Government has put New South Wales in pole position when it comes to economic performance. After 16 years of monumental mediocrity, it has taken a Coalition Government to deliver record growth, record investments and prosperity for all. When it comes to economic management, no-one does it better than the Liberal-Nationals Government. Members do not have to take my word for it. It is not only me who is saying that; everyone is saying it. The "State of the States" report says:

NSW solidly held its position as the best performing economy.

The ANZ State-ometer has said, "NSW above trend and accelerating"—it is top of the class. The Deloitte Economic Outlook has said, "NSW has its mojo back". Even that left-leaning think-tank, CIS, recently published a scorecard that gave us an A; the only State in the country with an A. These are examples of real news, real sources, credible news from actual economists. We are winning so much here that we are getting sick of it. However, unfortunately it has come to my attention that there is a whole range of alternative facts out there. Our ABC reported on the CIS rating recently and said in its report that "economists were divided" over our economic

performance. I could not understand this because economists obviously love us, so I thought: who are these economists whom the ABC is quoting and who believe that we are not doing so well?

I trust the ABC; I think Brigid Glanville is fantastic. However, as Reagan said, "Trust, but verify", and verify I did. So I googled the name of this objective economist that the ABC interviewed—it is Ben Spies-Butcher. But what the ABC failed to mention is that in his spare time, outside being an economist, he is an organiser of the national Greens, a Senate candidate for The Greens, and a former Greens candidate for the seat of Heffron in 2008. In his defence, he is really in touch with the issues of the day. On his profile he leads with his big issue being the Second Vatican Council back in 1966—clearly a man with his finger on a modern-day pulse. He is also a regular speaker at the Fabian Society, a secret Labor cult that I am investigating, infiltrating and will soon be exposing in this place.

Some members opposite should be very worried. This man is no objective economist. This man is an activist masquerading as an academic. This is fake news. The ABC should update its article to be transparent about this. I thought after this my day could not get any worse, but it did. I found another source of fake news—the February edition of "The Ryan Park Economic Update". To give credit where credit is due, this is the first economic update from Labor in six years, so he is off running with a good start; he just needs to work a bit harder on his content. He starts with some helpful pictures. At the top we have one of his southern estate. [*Extension of time*]

He moves to one of our infrastructure projects, the light rail, and we can see the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure there with his hard hat on. Then he moves to positions vacant, because we all know he will soon be looking for a job.

Ms Jodi McKay: My point of order relates to the use of props.

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

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: Madam Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Order! I will stop the clock if the member for Maroubra is simply wasting time.

Mr Michael Daley: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. While the member for Keira is flattered, this is not at all relevant to the question.

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: "The NSW Labor Government"—in bold—"was successful in managing the economy". Because it is in bold does not make it true.

Mr Greg Warren: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! Members are taking vexatious points of order. The Treasurer has remained relevant to the question.

Mr Greg Warren: My point of order relates to Standing Order 73. The personal reflections of the Treasurer are irrelevant.

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: It mentions the housing crisis, but it does not mention that Labor did not build any houses and, if it did, the member for Keira bought them. It states that the unemployment rate was 5.1 per cent under Labor and that is lauded as a success. But it does not mention that the national unemployment rate was lower at 4.9 per cent. I am looking forward to the next edition.

LAND AND PROPERTY INFORMATION

Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (14:51): I direct my question to the Premier. I refer to a document marked "Sensitive New South Wales Cabinet". It is another leak from a leaky government. It is the draft contract for the privatisation of Land and Property Information [LPI]. Will the Premier commit to including in the final contract an absolute requirement to keep all of the several hundred LPI jobs in New South Wales, given that nowhere in the 232 pages of the draft contract is there any requirement to keep any jobs in this State?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:51): I am pleased to receive a policy question regarding Land and Property Information. It is interesting that Opposition members have not had the guts to ask me other questions today. What I say about LPI is that this is a government that does what is in the best interests of its customers.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order or they will be removed from the Chamber.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I credit the member for Cessnock with knowledge about this issue. The LPI is divided into a number of sections, and the only section that will be offered for private sector operation is the administration section.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Those who are employed in evaluation or survey are not in question and never have been.

Ms Kate Washington: It is not true.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I ask the member for Port Stephens whether she has read the work. Those opposite must be clear if they are talking about jobs growth. This Government has created hundreds of thousands of new jobs and ensured that New South Wales has the lowest unemployment rate.

Mr Clayton Barr: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The question related to jobs at LPI, and pages 21 and 22 of the document refer to jobs leaving the State.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I have previously stated that this Government is about creating jobs in New South Wales. No matter which part of this State we look at, the Government is creating jobs, jobs, jobs.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: This State has the nation's lowest unemployment rate and the nation's highest jobs growth.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I assure every person that the Government will continue to create jobs.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for The Entrance should read the standing orders before interjecting. I call the member for The Entrance to order for the second time. The member for Rockdale will come to order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: This Government delivers on its commitments, which cannot be said of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The employees of LPI are concerned for their jobs.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Members know that no-one in LPI needs to be concerned. Last year the Leader of the Opposition promised that he would publish his diary of meetings every two months. Guess how long it has been since he published his diary? Seven months. What is the Leader of the Opposition hiding?

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! I will not rule again on relevance. Does the point of order relate to a different standing order? Has the Premier concluded her answer?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No.

Ms Jodi McKay: The Premier should not disrespect the Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Strathfield will resume her seat. There is no point of order. I warn members not to use points of order as an opportunity to argue.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: This Government has made promises to employees and it will keep them. Those opposite cannot keep promises. The Leader of the Opposition said he would publish his diary every two months but he has not published it for seven months. Why not? [*Time expired.*]

WESTERN SYDNEY

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (14:57): I address my question to the Minister for Western Sydney, Minister for WestConnex, and Minister for Sport. Will the Minister explain to the House what the Government is doing to make Western Sydney a better place to live?

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that several of them are on three calls to order, including the member for Port Stephens.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Western Sydney, Minister for WestConnex, and Minister for Sport) (14:57): I thank the member for Riverstone for his question. He is a passionate advocate for his community in Western Sydney. His community has been the beneficiary of investments in road projects such as Richmond Road. That has opened up opportunities for people to buy a home in Western Sydney. The Government has invested in services with the delivery of a new police station. As parts of Western Sydney grow the Government is investing in services to ensure this fundamental and important part of the State grows and prospers both economically and socially.

This fast-growing and dynamic region of Western Sydney creates opportunities that will support a successful State. The Government is making the lives of people in Western Sydney better through record spends in health services. Hospitals such as those at Campbelltown, Westmead, Blacktown, Nepean and Mount Druitt have benefited from health infrastructure upgrades. There will be more than \$2 billion of investment in new hospitals across Western Sydney. The contrast between what this Government has offered and what Labor offered is highlighted by what happened at Nepean Hospital. The Coalition has provided \$570 million compared to a Labor policy that provided of \$370 million.

The SPEAKER: Order! I place the member for Londonderry on three calls to order. The member will cease interjecting.

Mr STUART AYRES: The difference for Nepean Hospital is \$200 million. This is what the Opposition spokesman for Health had to say about the Nepean Hospital, "We will be watching." We will be watching the Opposition rip \$200 million out of the Nepean Hospital. I turn to education, where we have invested in more than 11 new schools, such as the Parramatta Public School and the Rosehill Public School, in this important part of Sydney. We also have invested in the Fernhill School, which has opened in Glenmore Park, making sure that students with special needs receive the services they need. One of the things this Government has done incredibly well is not only invest in education infrastructure in Western Sydney but also ensure that important needs-based funding gets to the students who need it most. In this year alone we are spending \$219 million on additional needs-based funding across Western Sydney. This will make sure that young people in our State get the best start in life. I turn to roads and transport. We are seeing massive investments in roads, in big roads such as the Northern Road, connecting the north-south corridor.

Mr Guy Zangari: Big road.

Mr STUART AYRES: It is a big road. It is a bigger road than Labor ever built. It is connecting the communities of Campbelltown, Penrith and Narellan.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Fairfield and the member for Parramatta will cease interjecting across the Chamber.

Mr STUART AYRES: It is providing new economic opportunities for people across Western Sydney. Our roads program also includes the local roads package. We are not only delivering roads; we are also making sure that we support Western Sydney businesses, with more than \$45 million worth of local contracts being awarded by the Government. The Government is a strong supporter of an integrated transport model. That is why we are building the rail lines that were not built by the Labor Government, which had 16 years to build them. Sydney Metro Northwest, that elusive rail line that was never delivered under the previous Government, is being built right before people's eyes.

We also will create new opportunities across the south-west, with Sydney Metro City and Southwest. Both will increase capacity on the western line, meaning that we will be able to put more trains on one of the most heavily used rail lines anywhere in the country. We are investing in light rail, making sure that we connect the areas around Parramatta. We are making sure that communities such as Dundas and Telopea, which have never had access to public transport, have access to it. We are planning stage 2 of that, as well as Sydney Metro West, to link to important locations like Sydney Olympic Park.

Mr John Robertson: Dundas has never had public transport? Since when? You boofhead!

The SPEAKER: Order! That is the pot calling the kettle black.

Mr Anthony Roberts: It takes one to know one.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is very true. We all know that.

Mr STUART AYRES: I am more than happy to acknowledge the interjection from the member for Blacktown if it allows me to remind everyone in Western Sydney that, on top of investing in light rail, this is the Government that is delivering new sporting infrastructure. [*Extension of time*]

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting. There is no need to be aggressive.

Mr STUART AYRES: The new Western Sydney Stadium is being developed. It is under construction right now. It will provide some of the best spectator experiences ever seen, with steeper stands. It will give new clubs the opportunity to use a new stadium and to showcase the fantastic sporting franchises that are so important to communities in Western Sydney.

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

Mr STUART AYRES: The Government is working with the Commonwealth Government to develop the Western Sydney Airport. The airport will be a genuine driver of jobs for our community. We are working with the Commonwealth Government on our Western Sydney infrastructure program to make sure that roads and rail connect to the airport. I would have thought that the Opposition would recognise how important this new airport is. I was reading *Hansard* the other day and I noticed this quote, "The community has been told repeatedly that the airport will bring jobs ...". It is pretty good up to that point. It continues, "... this is a con." Who said that? The member for Blue Mountains. There we have it: The Labor policy on the Western Sydney Airport is that jobs growth caused by the airport is a con. If members want to know about Labor's support for the airport, there is no need to go further than the member for Blue Mountains. People who think that the airport is anything other than an opportunity to create jobs do not understand the importance of creating employment for the people of Western Sydney.

Ms Trish Doyle: If it is your plan, it is a con. Where is the detail?

Mr STUART AYRES: Sorry? What was that? The member for Blue Mountains does not believe in the airport. It is not Labor's policy. I turn to WestConnex. It is the largest infrastructure project and is connecting communities that have been denied access to Sydney ports and airports for 25 or 30 years. Only this Government will deliver that connectivity. [*Time expired.*]

POWERHOUSE MUSEUM

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (15:04): My question is directed to the Premier. Given reports that to move the Powerhouse Museum may cost in excess of \$1.5 billion, will the Government reconsider and focus on a new museum in Western Sydney that reflects the unique history and spirit of the community?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (15:04): I thank the member for Balmain for his question. I commend him for his passion for the arts in this State. I am also passionate about the arts and our cultural institutions. That is why I am excited that Parramatta will have a Powerhouse Museum. It is very important to make sure that we appreciate that greater Western Sydney deserves iconic cultural institutions at its heart. I feel inspired by the member for Penrith and Minister for Western Sydney, who just articulated all the great things we are doing in the region.

I pay special tribute to the very hardworking member for Parramatta. He has ensured that his community and the entire western region of Sydney will have an iconic cultural institution. I want to allay any concerns the member for Balmain may have. We will look at the final business case for the Powerhouse Museum. We will make sure that not only do we build this fine cultural institution but also that we spend billions of dollars in infrastructure across New South Wales. In the cities, in greater Western Sydney, down south, up north, in the far north, in the far south and in the far west—all across the State—we will be building things.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Members will come to order. Members who are not interested in the answer may leave the Chamber. Those who wish to have private conversations will do so outside the Chamber. The member for Keira will resume his seat.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: If Opposition members were sitting on the Treasury benches there would be zero dollars to spend on arts, sport and all the things the community wants. I genuinely thank the member for Balmain for his question. It is not often that I am asked a question on arts and culture. I reiterate my support for all our cultural institutions.

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Rockdale for the final time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I look forward to the Powerhouse going to Parramatta.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (15:07): My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. It is difficult to hear the member for Holsworthy. I remind the member for Bankstown that I have asked members to come to order.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: I ask the Minister to inform the House about what is being done to improve housing affordability and increase housing supply, and any related matters.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members who are removed from the Chamber will be out for the remainder of the day. They will miss private members' statements and other opportunities to speak. I have given too many final warnings. The Minister for Planning has the call and will be heard in silence. Members will come to order.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Planning, Minister for Housing, and Special Minister of State) (15:08): I thank the member for her question. Holsworthy is an area that is witnessing exciting new development as we tackle housing affordability by increasing supply.

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

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Before I answer the member's question, I inform the House that a short time ago the independent Planning Assessment Commission published its determination on the Drayton South project. The commission has refused consent for the project. In its determination the commission recognised that the mining industry delivers significant economic benefits in its own right and flow-on benefits to a number of associated industries. However, the commission determined that the project is not unique or the primary contributor to the wider coal industry in the Hunter Valley. The commission considers that a unique set of circumstances exists due to the proximity between the project and the thoroughbred operations of the Coolmore and Godolphin studs.

The commission found there would be key effects related to air quality, blast noise and reputation for the studs. The commission also found that approval of the project would be contrary to the coexistence and diversification principles found in the Hunter Regional Plan 2036, Upper Hunter Strategic Land Use Policy and local council strategies. In response to concerns raised during this and other approval processes for State significant developments, I have asked my department to develop options for consultation that will provide guidance on how many times and how frequently a project that is not substantially different can be submitted to government for approval. Returning to the member's excellent and superb question, there is no doubt that faster approvals, particularly for housing, are a priority for this Government. We are fixing the mess that Labor left behind.

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

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: As I informed the House last week, in the last five years of Labor, Sydney's population increased by 333,000 people but over the same period the number of new home completions numbered 14,000, on average. What a bunch of lazy losers. Thanks to Labor, housing development stagnated and affordability became a thing of the past.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Canterbury that she is on three calls to order.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Recently the Treasurer, the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure and I spoke about Labor's lost opportunities. Labor needs to apologise for neglecting the people of Sydney, particularly Western Sydney, for so long because of its ineptitude.

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

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: It is thanks to Labor that the people of New South Wales, particularly the Sydney metropolitan area, are facing an affordability problem, and it is this Government that is fixing the years of Labor mismanagement and neglect.

[Interruption]

Some people were able to get into the market—four, five times? I am proud to say that housing approvals and completions across New South Wales are now at record levels, with 72,445 home approvals in the calendar year 2016, almost 55,000 homes completed in the year to September 2016 and new housing approvals reaching a 42-year high. As both former planning Ministers would have said, we are again the party of the workers and Labor is the party of the shirkers.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Lakemba to order for the second time. I call the member for Bankstown to order for the third time. This is her final warning. There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: These faster housing approvals will boost housing delivery, instil confidence in the housing industry and in the community, and provide certainty to the housing market. That is why I am pleased to inform the House today that the Government is expanding the capability of its digital planning system, the NSW Planning Portal.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Lakemba to order for the third time. This is his final warning.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Online lodgement of development applications will soon be possible via the portal, further speeding up processing time frames and saving applicants money. Application time frames will be reduced from up to 10 days to less than 30 minutes when online lodgement begins. The portal also will allow people to view spatial data about a property online, rather than having to go to a council office. The new portal eventually will be the one-stop shop for development applications and complying development certificate submissions. This new one-stop shop is not to be confused with the former Government's old one-stop shop, which involved Eddy and a bag of cash.

The SPEAKER: Order! A number of Opposition members are on three calls to order. If they continue to interject they will be removed from the Chamber for the remainder of the day. I have given final warnings to those members.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: This Government is getting down to business, making it easier for home owners and builders to lodge their applications. [*Extension of time*]

Copying and printing heavy tomes and delivering them should be a thing of the past in this digital age. It also will benefit the people of rural and regional New South Wales—the people those opposite did not think or care about.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129. Is the Minister suggesting that software will bring down house prices? Is that really what he just said?

The SPEAKER: Order! I suggest the member for Maroubra have a point of order when he seeks the call. There is no point of order. The member for Maroubra will resume his seat.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Those opposite do not understand how to deal with supply issues. It will benefit the bush, where people may live hours away from their local council offices. Eventually the portal will connect any type of application to be lodged to any council in New South Wales. This will provide a uniform and consistent approach across the State. The proposed changes to allow online lodgement of applications have been made public and community feedback is encouraged. To make a submission visit the planning portal at www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au.

Mr Jihad Dib: Just send us the link.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I will send the link to the member for Lakemba. New South Wales requires more housing to meet the needs of our diverse and growing population. This Government is fixing the housing affordability problems that Labor gifted this State. We know that more must be done and this Government is doing all in its power to improve the situation for home seekers by focusing on streamlining the approvals process and speeding up approval times. We are getting on with the job of increasing the supply of housing in Sydney and across the State. If those opposite are not on board just get out of the way.

Committees

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Report: Procurement of Government Infrastructure Projects

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: I table report No. 2/56 of the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure entitled, "Procurement of Government Infrastructure Projects", dated February 2017. I move:

That the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

*Petitions***PETITIONS**

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

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**.

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

HARRINGTON AND COOPERNOOK FLYOVER

Petition requesting that the Government approve the planned construction of the Harrington and Coopernook flyover, received from **Ms Leslie Williams**.

*Committees***COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE****Report: Access to Transport for seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional NSW****Debate resumed from 16 February 2017.**

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (15:19): Transport disadvantage is a serious problem that can strengthen the already large divide between rich and poor. Without access to frequent, reliable, efficient and affordable transport options disadvantaged people cannot access employment or education opportunities, or health and welfare services. They are unable to participate in social activities, which leads to isolation and poor wellbeing. Many people live in rural and remote areas without a car and many who do have a car cannot afford to use it for all their needs.

As a member of the community services committee inquiring into access to transport for seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional New South Wales, I learnt about how a lack of transport options entrenches disadvantage in the country. Basic tasks such as shopping, banking and going to the doctor are a major challenge for many seniors and disadvantaged people. While I am an inner-city representative, I was pleased to be part of this inquiry that investigated a social justice concern for the whole State. Improving transport options is a challenge in rural and regional areas. I believe the committee was able to make practical recommendations that will be easy to implement while making a real difference to people's lives.

I encouraged the committee to include options for people without cars who own companion animals. Our final report found significant problems and recommended that more work by Transport for NSW was needed. I hope the outcome will benefit pet owners throughout New South Wales. The current rules for public transport are confusing and make it hard for those who do not have private transport. I hope the Government adopts our recommendations and improves transport equity across the State. I thank all committee members and staff for their support throughout the inquiry process.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (15:20): The Committee on Community Services inquiry into transport for seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional New South Wales was productive and conducted in a collaborative manner. I concur with the recommendations in the report and the comments by the Chair during this debate last week. They broadly represented a consensus view of the committee. The committee site visit was a very useful exercise in this case. Hearing firsthand the experiences of country people confirmed what we had learned from other submissions and witnesses, and helped us to understand it in a readily accessible context. One thing certainly learnt and which is reflected in the recommendations is that resources are not available in some areas because they are either under-utilised or poorly coordinated. I hope we can make use of that learning to ensure that people in rural and regional areas have better access to transport in the future.

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (15:22): As a member of the Committee on Community Services, I make a brief contribution to debate on our report regarding access to transport for seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional New South Wales. I thank my committee colleagues and express my appreciation to Dora Oravec and the team of excellent staff who worked ably with us to gather stories and to hear the concerns of people across our State. We formed a productive group who listened to an array of concerns and solutions. Access to transport for seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional New South Wales is a critical issue. I was pleased to have the opportunity to hear a range of community members inform the inquiry about their issues. Many people who are impacted by a lack of transport access were desperate to share their ideas for improving transport connections.

Our 19 recommendations deserve serious consideration by the Government. I urge it to focus particularly on finding 1 and recommendation 4 about transport connections and timetabling. A lack of connections in rural and regional areas substantially affects people's ability to move around. Also, people with disabilities, older residents and parents with prams struggle from a lack of easy access train stations. Our committee listened to people speak about all those issues and staff were given the respect they deserve. People rely on us to come together to inform good public policy. It is therefore incumbent upon reports such as this to make useful and necessary contributions.

Some stories remain with me. I particularly remember the people from Armidale who spoke about accessing transport when you have a profound disability. Those people shed tears while telling us their stories. I thank them for being so frank and heartfelt in their contributions. Every week the Woodford Railway Action Group in the Blue Mountains desperately seeks signatures on a petition for an easy access station upgrade that will benefit a large number of people with disabilities. I thank everyone who came together in a respectful manner. I look forward to the Government's response to our report.

Report noted.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 30/56

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the House take note of the report.

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSON (Upper Hunter) (15:26): As Chair: Legislation Review Digest No. 30/56 was the first digest tabled in 2017. The committee reviewed two bills introduced into Parliament in the last sitting week of 2016—the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment Bill 2016 and the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment (Disclosure of Information) Bill 2016. I will highlight the committee's comments on the first bill shortly. I also draw the attention of the House to two regulations upon which the committee commented.

The Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment Bill 2016 seeks to change the structure, management and procedures of the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC]. The bill was developed following a report of the Joint Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption and a previous review of the ICAC undertaken by an independent panel consisting of the Hon. Murray Gleeson, AC, and Mr Bruce McClintock, SC. The committee highlighted that the bill will commence by proclamation. This empowers the Executive, rather than the Parliament, to choose when the provisions in the bill take effect. The committee generally prefers legislation to commence on assent or on a fixed date. However, the committee acknowledged that the bill was implementing a number of reforms relating to the structure and governance of the ICAC. The committee therefore concluded that flexibility with respect to the commencement date may be desirable.

The first regulation that the committee commented on was the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Amendment (Directions under Part 14) Regulation 2016. That regulation amends a code of practice to allow a police officer to give a direction in certain circumstances in relation to a genuine demonstration or protest, or a procession or organised assembly. The committee noted that this may impact on the right to

peaceful assembly in some instances. However, the changes to the code of practice are merely administrative in nature to ensure that the code reflects amendments that already have commenced in principal legislation

For this reason, the committee made no further comments. Finally, the committee commented on the Surveillance Devices Amendment (Police Body-Worn Video) Regulation 2016. The regulation provides for several additional circumstances in which information obtained from police body-worn video equipment may be used. Examples include in relation to coronial proceedings, administrative decisions made under Acts administered by the Minister for Police or investigation of complaints against, or conduct of, police officers. The regulation also will allow information from body-worn video equipment to be used for certain media productions, subject to limitations.

The committee noted that it is likely many instances of innocent behaviour may be recorded using body-worn video equipment, which may impact on the right to privacy. However, the committee also acknowledged that the regulation and the principal Act contain some safeguards to minimise the risk of unduly trespassing on an individual's privacy. Ultimately, the committee considered the circumstances provided for in the regulation to be reasonable. That concludes my remarks on this digest. I thank the committee members, and the staff in particular, for their input and engagement with the issues. I hope that the digest is a useful resource for other members. I commend the digest to the House.

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (15:30): I speak on behalf of the Opposition on the thirtieth Legislation Review Digest of the Fifty-sixth Parliament dated 14 February 2017. The committee considered two bills. In terms of individual rights and liberties, we commented only in relation to the commencement date of one of the bills. As the comments concerned the commencement date they were inconsequential in terms of infringing on individual rights and liberties. We commented on two regulations. The Chair spoke about the surveillance devices amendment regulation. The committee considered the regulations to be reasonable in the circumstances.

However, it noted with regard to the regulation concerning law enforcement that we already had commented on the principal bill. The bill did infringe on the right to peaceful assembly and, as a consequence, the regulation also infringes upon the right to peaceful assembly. Having made that point, the committee did not comment further. I too thank my fellow committee members and the secretariat which provides great support to the committee. I commend the digest to the House.

Report noted.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 31/56

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the House take note of the report.

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) (15:32): As Chair: I thank the House for the opportunity to speak about the Legislation Review Committee's thirty-first digest for the Fifty-sixth Parliament. The committee reviewed five bills introduced into Parliament in the first sitting week of 2017. The committee commented on one of those bills—the Transport Administration Amendment (Independent Transport Safety Regulator) Bill 2017. This bill abolishes the Independent Transport Safety Regulator and transfers its functions to the National Rail Safety Regulator. In 2012, New South Wales adopted the Rail Safety National Law, which established a national rail safety regulatory scheme. At present the Independent Transport Safety Regulator operates the New South Wales Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator through a service level agreement. However, the transfer of functions to the national regulator is expected to provide clearer accountability on rail safety oversight.

The committee highlighted that the bill will commence by proclamation. This empowers the Executive, rather than the Parliament, to choose when the provisions in the bill take effect. The committee generally prefers legislation to commence on assent or on a fixed date. However, the committee noted that the bill transfers functions from one regulator to another. As such, the committee commented that some flexibility may be desirable to ensure appropriate administrative arrangements can be put in place to support the transfer of those functions. Therefore, the committee made no further comments.

The committee also reviewed the four other bills introduced into Parliament in the previous sitting week: the City of Sydney Amendment (Restoring Equal Voting Rights) Bill 2017, the Fines Amendment Bill 2017, the Motor Racing Legislation Amendment (Newcastle 500) Bill 2017, and the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment Bill 2017. The committee did not make any comments on these bills with respect to the issues for the committee's consideration in the Legislation Review Act 1987. However, I will briefly describe the subject matter of each bill. The City of Sydney Amendment (Restoring Equal Voting Rights) Bill 2017 is a private member's bill that proposes to restore the system of business enrolment and voting at elections for the City of

Sydney council before the enactment of the city of Sydney Amendment (Elections) Act 2014. The changes in the 2014 legislation gave rate-paying businesses in the city of Sydney two votes and made it compulsory for them to enrol and vote.

The main purpose of the next bill, the Fines Amendment Bill 2017, is to transfer responsibility for enforcing victims' restitution debts to the Commissioner of Fines Administration. A restitution order under the Victims' Rights and Support Act 2013 enables all or some of the compensation paid to a victim of violent crime to be recovered from the offender. The proposed changes follow a successful 12-month trial by the Office of State Revenue enforcing restitution orders as court fines. The bill also proposes other changes to the Fines Act 1996 unrelated to restitution orders to enable the Office of State Revenue to better tailor enforcement action to individual circumstances. The Motor Racing Legislation Amendment (Newcastle 500) Bill 2017 will facilitate the conduct of the Supercars race in Newcastle for the first time, along with associated events. The event is expected to contribute a significant amount of money to the Hunter region economy and will be held annually in Newcastle until 2022.

Finally, the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment Bill 2017 enables rights, assets and liabilities relating to Stadium Australia to be transferred to Venues NSW. This will give the Government full control over the Stadium Australia business since the Government purchased the leasehold rights for the stadium in July 2016. That concludes my remarks on this digest. Again, I thank the committee members, and in particular the staff for their assistance. I commend the digest to the House.

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (15:37): I speak on behalf of the Opposition on the thirty-first digest of this Parliament, dated 21 February 2017. The committee considered five bills. We commented on only one bill and that comment went to the start date by proclamation rather than being on assent or on a fixed date. In the scheme of things it was a good day for a committee charged with policing infringements on the rights and liberties of the citizens of New South Wales, and it was a good meeting as a consequence. Again, I thank the members of the committee and the secretariat that supports us. I commend the digest to the House.

Report noted.

Matter of Public Importance

GAY AND LESBIAN MARDI GRAS

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (15:38): Tonight we recognise the significant contribution the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras makes to our city and to our State and we welcome the festival and all its visitors on behalf of the New South Wales Parliament. Mardi Gras began as a gay and lesbian rights protest on 24 June 1978. Thousands of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex [LGBTI] people and their supporters participated, and although organisers got permission from police, that was later revoked and police violently broke up the march and unfairly arrested participants at a time when homophobia and discrimination were rife. Last year saw a formal and long overdue apology from the New South Wales Parliament to the 78ers as well as an acknowledgement of their work, and the work of many others, to champion the rights, equality and wellbeing of our State's LGBTI citizens.

This year's theme is "creating equality", which is in keeping with the festival's political roots. This is an especially timely theme, given the strength of the marriage equality campaign and the support that exists for reform across the country and across parliaments. I have been proud to be a part of the marriage equality movement for the past 10 years. During that time, according to pollster Crosby Textor, we have seen public support double to 72 per cent and also grow in our Parliament from the initial support by only The Greens and the Democrats to current support from leaders of all major political parties.

It is also very encouraging that as we celebrate this Mardi Gras the prospect of the plebiscite is now behind us. It was voted down in the Senate. The numbers for that are not changing and funds for the plebiscite have been reallocated. There also was recently a very encouraging Senate inquiry, which released a consensus report suggesting improvements to the Government's draft marriage equality legislation. For me, what is most inspiring is the local community campaigns that are happening right across the country, supported by the work of Australian Marriage Equality and Australians for Equality.

One campaign I would like to highlight is the one in the Gilmore electorate, led by Dawn Hawkins. This is a very positive, polite and effective local campaign. The Speaker, who is here in the Chamber, and the member for Kiama have worked to get support from both Shoalhaven and Kiama councils and they continue to engage positively with their Federal member Ann Sudmalis. This year will be the first time the Gilmore electorate will be represented in the Mardi Gras. It will have its own electorate-based float, sending a strong message about marriage equality to their local area and to the Federal member.

Mardi Gras brings many local and international visitors. I particularly look forward to welcoming my friend Senator Ricardo Lara from California. Ricardo will once again join the equality campaign parade entry and will speak next Tuesday at a politics in the pub-style session with former Premier Kristina Keneally, Australian Marriage Equality's Dr Shirleene Robinson and the equality campaign's Tiernan Brady. The festival began last Friday and will continue until Sunday 5 March following the famous parade on the Saturday night. Over 80 events are scheduled including comedy, exhibitions, music, theatre, film, parties and community events.

I am proud to once again march in the parade with my colleague the Lord Mayor of Sydney, Clover Moore, who has been coming to the Mardi Gras parade for more than 30 years and was the first member of the Legislative Assembly to march. It is wonderful that this year we will be welcoming an increasing number of politicians from across the political spectrum with The Greens, the Liberal Party and the Labor Party all having significant float entries. We will take the opportunity in Clover's and my float to thank Sydney for its support for equality and LGBTI communities. Most people in Sydney support full equality of the law, including removal of exemptions in discrimination law and marriage equality. In the New South Wales Parliament we know that there is strong and growing support in a coalition of members from across the political divide, working together to achieve equality, and I acknowledge particularly my fellow members of the LGBTI cross party working group and all those members who are here today, especially our chair, the member for Coogee.

Mardi Gras sends a message of acceptance and celebration of LGBTI communities, but it remains an important activist tool because the law continues to treat lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people as lesser citizens. We have achieved much but we still have a long way to go. With the Mardi Gras organisers, volunteers and participants, I am committed to pushing for reforms that achieve full equality of the law. I commend everyone on the Mardi Gras board—the chief executive officer, the team and all the volunteers—for their hard work and commitment, and on behalf of the Parliament I wish everyone a very happy Mardi Gras.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) (15:43): I thank my friend the member for Sydney for bringing this matter of public importance here today and I thank the Speaker for being here in the Chamber. Mardi Gras is a big event right across this city, across this State and, indeed, across the country. Mascara pens are being sharpened, cheeks are being waxed, screams are being heard coming out of beauty parlours, even the member for Blacktown is getting ready, and the leathers are being polished—and that is just my straight friends. The Mardi Gras festival is now embraced by the whole community of Sydney. What started out in 1978 as a peaceful political protest ended that evening with the unseemly arrests and violence against those first protesters, and that was the beginning of a new era not only in New South Wales politics but also, indeed, in the politics of this nation. In many ways New South Wales has been the world leader in recognising lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, and intersex [LGBTQI] rights.

Since last Friday and right up until the evening of 4 March celebrations are happening and we will be inviting all of Sydney, all of New South Wales and all visitors from interstate and across the world to join with us in celebrating not only what we are today but also what we have achieved and what we are yet to achieve: not only equality for our own citizens in this country but being a beacon for other citizens around the world, some of whom live in much more oppressive and dangerous regimes. We offer them hope that they too will share the same sort of equality and respect from their community and from their parliaments that we are afforded.

It was wonderful to be in this House to deliver an apology to the original 78ers, a few of whom are dear friends of mine whom I met not long after that first chaotic and traumatic event. From a very early age I was acutely aware of how important that was not just to their lives but to the lives of so many people in this city. Mardi Gras is a time when we should celebrate that which unites us rather than those things that divide us. We must remember that we all have differences in this place, being on different sides of politics, but many of us share the same ideals and the same values. We should be examples to the rest of our community that we can strive for a common goal despite our political differences and show respect to one another in doing so. On that heavy note, I wish to get out the feather boas. Mr Deputy Speaker, I will bring one in for you. I know that the member for Wollondilly has got his chaps ready to go for the parade. I wish everybody a safe, glorious and happy Mardi Gras.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (15:48): Echoing the concluding words of the member for Coogee, I also wish everybody a very happy Mardi Gras. I wish the member for Coogee and the member for Sydney a happy Mardi Gras and I thank the member for Sydney for bringing this matter of public importance to the Chamber. I think it goes back as far as about 2004 when the member for Sydney and I first connected on the issue of campaigning for marriage equality. Who would have thought that a good 13 years later we would find ourselves here in this Chamber still campaigning for marriage equality? The Greens' float this year will be calling for marriage equality to be brought in. We know that it is long overdue reform and something we must see our Federal Parliament deliver.

If only the Federal Parliament could be guided by how we in this place come together and unite on the need for an end to discrimination in our laws and for an end to the political pointscoring that is playing with

people's lives. We want to see marriage equality realised for all so that we can celebrate love and not see entrenched discrimination in our legislation at a Federal level. It is wonderful this time of year to see the celebration. It was great to be able to join the start of the Mardi Gras festivities at Fair Day in the electorate of Newtown at Camperdown Memorial Park just last weekend and be joined by Greens Senator Janet Rice and a number of my Greens colleagues. I was pleased to visit the 78ers in their pride-of-place stand, to say hello and pay respect to the elders of the LGBTI community, expressing once again our appreciation for their struggles and determination all those years ago.

The apology has been mentioned, and being part of that last year was a significant and humbling experience for me. I give a commitment to the 78ers that The Greens and I will continue to push to ensure that the new Commissioner of Police makes a genuine apology to the 78ers for the wrongs that were done to them. Until we see that apology from the NSW Police Force we will not see a resolution of the violence and aggression that happened all those years ago. While this is a time for celebration, the theme of Mardi Gras of "Creating Equality" means that we must be vigilant about how we push for equality. That means making sure all our schools are safe schools, that we get rid of exemptions in the Anti-Discrimination Act allowing religious organisations to discriminate, bringing it home for marriage equality and ensuring that this time next year we are celebrating everybody's love because marriage equality is realised. Happy Mardi Gras.

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (15:51): By leave: I am honoured to speak in support of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras and thank the member for Sydney for bringing this matter of public importance before the House. For 39 years Mardi Gras has been at the heart of the LGBTI and at the forefront of the fight for equality and progressive values in Australia. Mardi Gras grew from a small, spur-of-the moment protest into a month-long festival that celebrates diversity, culture and inclusion. Internationally of course Mardi Gras put Sydney on the LGBTI map; it is huge. People from around the world come here for what is a fantastic celebration.

This year's theme "Creating Equality" speaks directly to the sense of playfulness and positivity that has been present in the LGBTI protest. It speaks of the importance of the fight that continues to confront us—the fight for marriage equality, the fight for equality for trans- and gender-diverse people and the fight for the rights of LGBTIQI people to access services and support, particularly in the bush. Last year I was honoured to be part of the historic apology to the 78ers, the heroes who put everything on the line and marched in the very first Mardi Gras. At that march LGBTI took a stand against the brutal treatment they endured at the hands of the police, the justice system and the New South Wales Government.

They were beaten and detained and the names were then published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Thanks in large part to their struggle we have come a long way in this State. Homosexuality is no longer illegal; despite ongoing challenges, we are turning the tide on HIV and AIDS; same-sex couples are able to adopt and to register their relationship with the State Government; and we have a life-saving program in schools that seeks to protect young queer people from bullying. Of course, there are still many more fights ahead of us and Mardi Gras reminds us that the LGBTI will not stop fighting until they have won and I stand with them in those fights. I say to each of those groups that were part of Fair Day and will be part of the march that the Labor Party and I stand with them. I look forward to marching again and wish everyone a very happy Mardi Gras.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown) (15:54): By leave: Firstly, I commend the member for Sydney for bringing this matter of public importance to the Chamber. I shall talk briefly on what Mardi Gras is about this year, that is, marriage equality. I think it is one of the last hurdles to overcome in recognising true equality for the LGBTI community. Rather than ask why, I ask why not? Why not support marriage equality? Why not say that this is a part of our community that deserves to enjoy something that the rest of us enjoy?

This House knows that my son is part of that community and I am proud to say that this year he will march for the first time in the Mardi Gras march, something I am very proud of. I am very proud of my son but am also very conscious of the significance of the Mardi Gras march. Whilst it is a celebration it is also a reminder of the struggles that went on. It is always important to remind ourselves of history because history sadly does have a tendency to repeat itself. If we do not talk about that history, the struggles of the 78ers and what has gone on previously, there is the risk that we move backwards.

Sadly, I think we are now less tolerant of each other than we have been in my lifetime, through social media and a whole range of events going on around the world. Sometimes we like to target those we think are different. Those differences do not exist when it comes to the LGBTI community. They are a lens that some people choose to look through when they look at this community but they are as much a part of our community as anyone across this State, nation and world. As we look at this year's Mardi Gras I say: Why not? Why not think about how great it will be when we can see everyone have the right to choose to marry the person they love because fundamentally the institution of marriage, despite what some may say, is based on one human principle and that is love?

If there is a household of love and two people love each other and want to make that commitment, they should be able to celebrate that love. We should not put in their way a barrier to stop them from saying, "I do" to each other in a ceremony where they can celebrate with their friends and loved ones—a public acknowledgement of a commitment that so many of us take for granted, a public acknowledgement of something that is important. In this day and age we should not be worried about LGBTI people getting married when we have a television show, *Married at First Sight*, that lets people who have never met before say, "I do" on national television. Happy Mardi Gras.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (15:57): In reply: I thank the members for Coogee, Newtown, Summer Hill and Blacktown for their contributions and look forward to seeing all of them on parade day as we all march down Oxford Street together. I also thank the Speaker for her support for this matter of public importance and for her presence in the Chamber during the debate. The clear message from today is that the New South Wales Parliament will continue to work together to support Mardi Gras and to support the LGBTI community in this State. Let us hope that next Mardi Gras the theme can be that we can celebrate the achievement of marriage equality. Happy Mardi Gras.

Community Recognition Statements

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL MODEL SEARCH

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (15:58): I inform the House that 10 Indigenous models from Manning-Great Lakes will attend the State finals of the National Aboriginal Model Search competition. Kiyani Simon, Jade Holborow, Sarah Hammond, Brielle Long, Kayla Cavell, Trisha Pearson, Ryan Pearson, Ariella White, Indi Dimon and Jinanli Potter-Bolt were selected at the Aboriginal Model Search competition when it was held in Forster. I do not profess to know much about the world of modelling but I understand that to win the contestants had to speak publicly to the audience and walk the catwalk. Aboriginal Model Search founder Sharlette Townsend said: "In everyday life you don't see that many Indigenous models on the front line of fashion". By focusing on public speaking, Sharlette said the competition assists young people discover a higher sense of self-belief, self-confidence, and self-esteem. The nine girls and Ryan have done wonderfully to be picked for the State finals and I am certain they will do their families and community proud.

LAKE MACQUARIE SPORTS DINNER

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (15:59): Last weekend I attended thirty-second annual Lake Macquarie Sports Dinner, held at the Belmont 16 Footers Sailing Club, where the finalists celebrated their achievements and the announcement of seven award category winners. Particular congratulations go to a number of Swansea residents who were recognised on the night. The 2016 sportsperson of the year went to Nords Wharf local Rhiannan Rand, whose awe-inspiring daredevil feats won her the Red Bull Cliff Diving World Series.

The 2016 junior encouragement award went to Beth Slade, who represented Australia at the 2016 Winter Olympics on the luge track. Finally, the 2016 junior female sportsperson of the year was awarded to Lara McSpadden for her efforts on the basketball court. In 2016, Lara competed in Australia's under-17 world championship-winning team—the first Australian team ever to win the under-17s basketball world championships—and has signed a two-year contract with WNBL club, the Sydney Uni Flames, becoming the youngest player on their roster. It was particularly inspiring to see so many young women recognised for their sporting achievements.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members will remain silent during the giving of community recognition statements.

WINGECARRIBEE ATHLETES

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (16:00): I recognise a number of young athletes from the Wingecarribee area of my electorate who have been selected for a range of athlete development programs with the Illawarra Academy of Sport. The academy currently provides athlete development programs across eight sports disciplines and the programs generally last for 12 months with some athletes spending two to three years and longer in the various programs. Some of the more notable athletes to have attended this program include recent Olympians athlete Ryan Gregson and swimmers Jarrod Poort, Emma and David Mckean; surfer Sally Fitzgibbons; rugby league players Josh Morris and Brett Stewart, as well as Australian test cricket great Brett Lee. The young people selected for this year include: James Morton of Mittagong, Tearloch Carr, Georgia Wade, Rhys Chivers, Ashley Stone and Georgia Barr of Bowral, and Kyle Jesshope of Yerrinbool. Each of these young people is a credit to their community and I wish them all the best with their future sporting endeavours.

TRIBUTE TO KEN LONGWORTH

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (16:01): I recognise the contribution of Ken Longworth of the *Newcastle Herald* to the community and in particular to theatrical arts in Newcastle. I congratulate Ken on his well-deserved Order of Australia medal, which he received this year for his enormous contribution to the dramatic arts in Newcastle. Ken has dedicated his life to reviewing, commenting on and promoting professional and amateur theatre in Newcastle since the 1960s. He has played a major role in developing and encouraging local theatre companies through his position as a judge for the City of Newcastle drama awards. I acknowledge Ken's long-term and outstanding contribution to the theatre in our community and I thank him for his lifetime commitment to improving and promoting the dramatic arts.

TOONGABBIE WEST PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (16:02): I pay tribute to the great work occurring at a school in the Seven Hills electorate, the Toongabbie West Public School. The school was founded in 1967 and has been an integral part of the growing community. Appointed as school captains were Stevie-Ray Gage and Niamh Nolland. Appointed as vice-captains were Joel Webster and Jasmine Woodley. Today, the 238 students at Toongabbie West Public are supported by a strong and effective Parents and Citizens Association and school council that ensure the school is focused on building core skills, encouraging positive behaviour for learning, and embedding technology in learning. I note that the 20 teachers at Toongabbie West already do a fantastic job. I wish them all the best for 2017.

SCOUTS NSW SCARF UP FOR SCOUTING

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (16:02): On 22 February 2017, the Inaugural Scouts NSW Scarf Up for Scouting reception was held in the Fountain Court at the New South Wales Parliament. Scouts across the world commemorate 22 February as Founder's Day, the most important day in the scouting calendar. I thank the youth and volunteer leaders of Scouts NSW for organising this wonderful event. The Scarf Up for Scouting program acknowledges and celebrates the significant role scouting plays in the community and its commitment to the empowerment of young people in New South Wales. Scouting continues to be the largest youth development organisation in New South Wales, with a presence in most local communities. Scout scarves, created especially for this occasion, were presented by the Scouts NSW Branch President the Rt Hon. Ian Sinclair, AC, and Vice-President the Hon. John Price, AM. Members were given the opportunity to meet a number of the youth members and hear from them about the great programs provided through scouting. I thank Scouts NSW for their ongoing commitment to our local community.

TRIBUTE TO HELMUT KLEIN

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (16:03): I offer my congratulations to Helmut Klein who, at the age of 76, is preparing for his first world championship event. Helmut is heading to New Zealand in April for the World Masters Games to compete in swimming. He was recently awarded a certificate from Masters Swimming Australia for placing in the top 10 in the 2016 Master Swim Series for his male age group, and he won three gold medals at the Pan Pacific Championships in 2016. On behalf of the House I wish Helmut every success at the world championships.

2017 ILLAWARRA SURF LIFE SAVING BRANCH CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong) (16:04): On 12 February I was pleased to join hundreds of people from the Illawarra who were participating in and watching the 2017 Illawarra Surf Life Saving Branch Championship at Wollongong's City Beach. The cream of the Illawarra's 17 surf clubs was on display with around 300 nippers taking part in beach and swim events in the morning and the open and masters events were on in the afternoon. This came on the back of successes for individual clubs in the electorate of Wollongong: Windang Surf Life Saving Club was awarded both the New South Wales and national rescue of the month awards for a rescue on Boxing Day. I acknowledge Kaye Norris, Doug Hockey, Jayson Norris and Russell Trott for their quick action that saved six people. On 2 January North Wollongong Surf Club rescued four people. It has been awarded rescue of the month for January. I thank all volunteer surf lifesavers in Wollongong who give up their time to help keep us safe while we are enjoying some of the best beaches in New South Wales.

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Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (16:05): I congratulate Cudgen Headland Surf Life Saving Club on an amazing result at the recent 2017 Stramit NSW Country Surf Life Saving Championships held at South West Rocks. The club came close to winning last year but fell short to Byron Bay SLSC. This year they obliterated the competition. The club ended up with more than double the points of its nearest rival, Sawtell SLSC. The win came from the success of the beach relays in the under-17, under-19 and open events, and the under-17 board, surf and

ironwoman races. Congratulations to all the members of the Cudgen Headland Surf Life Saving Club based in Kingscliff and the participants. It was a great result—one to be proud of.

WYONG COMMUNITY FESTIVAL

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (16:06): On 11 February a new and hopefully annual community festival began in the Wyong town centre. The Gallery Precinct 2259 Love Lanes Festival promoted and celebrated Wyong and its rich history in the lead up to Valentine's Day. In a town centre that has been quiet for many years, it was fantastic to see pre-federation forgotten laneways come alive with live music and markets. Visitors braved the heat to sample produce, see cinema under the stars and even scale a rock climbing wall. Robleys Lane, Alison Road and Bakers Lane were packed as locals came together in this new and exciting celebration. A big thanks and congratulations are owed to all the groups which helped make this event possible. Wyong is usually a quiet town these days; hopefully this festival was a sign of great things to come.

TRIBUTE TO MERV PRESLAND

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (16:07): I congratulate Merv Presland on his retirement. I inform the House that the Chatham High School held an emotional goodbye last week for Merv. Merv started his career in 1980 at James Ruse Agricultural High School in Carlingford before moving on to Shalvey High School in Mount Druitt. Prior to taking on his first executive role in 2006, Merv was an agricultural teacher. Well done. Teachers and staff from the Chatham High School stepped forward to share their heartfelt messages and funny stories about the departing deputy at an afternoon tea. Merv delivered a speech to the crowd where he said he was "touched by heartfelt emotion" when hearing their kind words. Merv now plans to become a seven day a week hobby farmer on his property. The group finished the celebration with a cake in the shape of a Belted Galloway cow. Good luck to him if that is his hobby. All the teachers and students speak very highly of Mr Presland and I congratulate him on his long teaching career and the contribution he has made to education in the Myall Lakes area.

UNIT

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (16:08): On 2 December last year I was proud to attend the annual awards for the Randwick City Unit of the State Emergency Service and present the 10-year long service medal to Matthew Gray, a flood rescue officer. Congratulations also to Peter Gray who received a clasp for his national medal for service, Barry Askew, who received a clasp for his national medal, and Terry Pappas who received the national medal. Between those four men there is over 75 years of exemplary service to the SES. Congratulations and a sincere thank you to all our SES volunteers in the Randwick City Unit. Those volunteers risk so much under the most trying circumstances, whether that is flood, storm or fire. It is such a credit to them that the people of New South Wales can rely on our SES volunteers to help so readily in those most difficult times.

CRONULLA SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB CRAYS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General) (16:08): I congratulate the Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club Crays on celebrating 50 years of surf success this year. Cronulla Crays is one of the oldest and most successful clubs in Australia and was the Junior State Champion for 12 years in a row from 1997-98 to 2008-09. The club, comprising more than 600 nipper members, introduces children aged 6 to 14 to surf lifesaving. Surf lifesaving clubs in my electorate do an outstanding job introducing children to important surf skills and helping them to develop an awareness of beach hazards and safety. These programs—which also provide terrific social benefits—encourage children to work in teams, to build confidence, and to have fun. I acknowledge the excellent work of club chairperson Michele Cole, club secretary Bob Sagar, and all other committee members past and present. I wish the Cronulla Crays all the best as they celebrate their club's golden anniversary.

AUSTRALIA DAY AND CHINESE NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) (16:09): On 22 January 2017 I had the pleasure of attending Australia Day and Lunar New Year celebrations organised by the combined Chinese associations of greater Western Sydney at the Golden Palace Seafood Restaurant in Cabramatta. The celebration was attended by His Excellency Gu Xiaojie, consul general of the People's Republic of China, and his wife; Chris Hayes, the Federal member for Fowler; and Fairfield City councillors. The combined Chinese associations comprise 30 different organisations that come together at important cultural dates throughout the year or to raise funds when people are in need, such as when natural disasters occur, both here and abroad. I congratulate the community leaders, who work together in such a harmonious and cooperative fashion. Gong hei fat choy!

TRIBUTE TO DIANE GARROOD

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (16:10): I pay tribute to Diane Garrood, who was regional manager South Coast with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service for almost 20 years. On 16 December 2016

I attended her farewell celebration at the Minnamurra Rainforest Centre. Diane started her career in park management as a ranger at Jervis Bay in 1983 with Parks ACT, and finished her service for the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service as regional manager South Coast last December. In that time, Diane's achievements spanned additions to reserves, such as the declaration of the Dharawal National Park and the 30 new reserves and extensions under the Southern Regional Forest Agreement, and working with stakeholders and local communities for better shared outcomes.

Some examples include working with NSW Fisheries to plan, zone and implement the Jervis Bay Marine Park and the zoning of Batemans Marine Park; the establishment of the Cullunghutti Aboriginal Area; and substantial input into the Gundungurra Indigenous Land Use Agreement. Over the years Di became known for her ability to resolve contentious issues. She played a key role in the resolution of longstanding lease issues in Murrumbidgee National Park; the smooth implementation of extensive wilderness gazettals on the New South Wales South Coast and in the Southern Highlands; and the incorporation of Lake Wollumboola into Jervis Bay National Park. I congratulate Diane on her outstanding service.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT ON UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (16:11): This week and next, students are celebrating orientation, O-Week, on university campuses across New South Wales. University is an exciting time and, for many, represents so much more than the next step in education. It is a time that requires openness, trust and a sense of adventure. Unfortunately, some students will not have the opportunity to fully experience their time at university. Seventy-two per cent of female students report experiencing unwanted sexual advances, harassment, stalking, assault or rape on campus. The majority either will not report it or have no way to report it.

Labor this week launched the It's time for Action campaign, drawing attention to this problem and standing in solidarity with young people fighting to end sexual assault on campus. Students are calling for mandatory consent training in residential colleges, a standard sexual assault reporting model and specialised services for victims of sexual assault on campus. No student deserves to feel unsafe in their place of learning. Labor stands with the brave young women who have been victims of sexual assault. Together we will end the scourge of sexual assault on campus.

MARDI GRAS FAIR DAY

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (16:12): I draw to the attention of the House the fantastic efforts of the Mardi Gras team who coordinated another successful community Fair Day. The fair was held this year in the Camperdown Memorial Rest Park in Newtown. There were more than 220 stalls, hundreds of performers and a crowd of around 70,000—many more if we include the four-legged doggy friends who also attended. It was great to catch up with so many champions of our LGBTIQ communities on the day. I give a shout-out to Australian Marriage Equality, the Mardi Gras 78ers, the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby, Positive Life NSW, Out for Australia, the Gender Centre and Rainbow Families. I offer my congratulations to the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras staff, including chief executive Terese Casu, the Volunteer Fair Day Working Group and the many volunteers who helped out across the day.

CLANCY CATHOLIC COLLEGE MURAL

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) (16:13): I acknowledge an event I attended on Thursday, 9 February—an opening mass for the school year and the unveiling of a college mural at the Clancy Catholic College at West Hoxton in the electorate of Liverpool. The mass was celebrated by Father Joseph. At its conclusion the college mural was unveiled. It commemorates the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the college. The mural was designed by Clancy students, in conjunction with the Clayhouse who are local artists associated with the Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre. The idea for the mural came from a parent at Clancy, Mrs Funes, as a tribute to her brother, David Legaspi, who recognised the capacity of art to unite people and to give them hope. I congratulate the students, artists, teachers and the Clancy Catholic College community on the event and on the mural. As the principal, Iris Nastasi, said, the artwork represents the community inside and outside the school. I acknowledge school principal Iris Nastasi for her leadership.

TRIBUTE TO KEREN MACPHERSON

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (16:14): I inform the House that Taree's Keren Macpherson joined 25 other young innovators from around Australia for the second National Questacon Invention Convention held in Canberra from 16 to 20 January. Under the tutelage of Questacon Inspirators and Invention Convention Ambassadors, the 17-year-old learned about innovative designs and entrepreneurship. The week kicked off with a series of team-building exercises to prepare the participants for the week ahead. From there they were introduced to the theme for this year's event: "Food. Water. Shelter."

Keren chose the concept of water and began researching and creating a design based on the topic. The result was a small working model of a water efficient swimming pool. Innovation experts and local entrepreneurs helped turn her original design for the pool into a functioning prototype. Networking and communication skills also were developed across the week. Keren has encouraged other like-minded people to speak about their design concepts. She hopes to follow a career in interior design and plans to enrol in the Bachelor of Interior Architecture at the University of Canberra in 2018 after completing her Higher School Certificate. I wish Keren all the best in her future endeavours.

CAMPBELLTOWN CITY COUNCIL AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (16:15): I congratulate the Campbelltown City Council's Australia Day Award recipients for 2017. Campbelltown Lost, Found and Injured Pets was awarded Community Group Initiative of the Year for creating an after-hours service for residents to use when the council operated animal care facility and private vet clinics are closed. Cameron Nonemacher was named Sportsperson of the Year for his all-round athletic performance. Cameron has excelled in Oztag, rugby league, Little Athletics, cross-country and swimming. As he is only 10 years old, I am sure his success will continue for many years. Adam Herman was awarded Young Citizen of the Year for his work in the Campbelltown Youth Network. Adam also is involved in the Fisher's Gig music festival. Peter Jakobsson was named Campbelltown's Citizen of the Year in recognition of his 35 years of volunteering with the Ingleburn RSL and Campbelltown Pipes and Drums marching band. Peter's annual performances at the Anzac Day march in Mawson Park are legendary. I congratulate him and all the other recipients.

GYMTASTIC

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (16:16): I acknowledge the fantastic achievement of Gymtastic in Picton. Thirteen gymnasts and three coaches from Gymtastic Kids will attend the thirty-fifth anniversary Gymnastic Festival in Osaka, Japan. Sheryl Faulkner, who owns Gymtastic Kids, said they are all excited about representing Australia at this great event. Only one club from Australia is selected to attend. What a great honour. The team will perform one routine to Michael Jackson's *Thriller* and another routine inspired by Australia. The team and coaches selected to attend are: Roanna Beeston, Ciaran Bone Wright, Crystal Faulkner, Mitchell Faulkner, Claire Fleming, Adeline Hamilton, Simon Harriman, Sarah Jones, Tegan Lawes, Elise McKinlay, Annalise Price, Alexandra Frances Reynolds, Erin Sanaghan, Mitchell Sanaghan, Emily Sargood, Brianna Smith, and team manager Sheryl Faulkner. Congratulations to everyone. I look forward to hearing all about the trip.

SLOW FOOD MOVEMENT

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (16:17): I acknowledge the Slow Food movement and its activities in the Blue Mountains, inspired by the vibrant and energetic Anne Elliott. Slow Food Blue Mountains has been flourishing since 2006 under the guidance of Anne. She lives and breathes the Slow Food refrain: "Change the menu; change the world." Slow Food is a non-profit, eco-gastronomic, member-supported organisation that was founded in 1989 to counteract fast food and fast life. A few of the excellent events and initiatives across the Blue Mountains include the Wines of the West festival, Sunday Long Lunch, precinct food walks, food talks, the Summer Harvest Festival, the Blue Mountains Pianola Revival Society potluck suppers, the Blue Mountains *Slow Fashion Guide*, the *Slow Food Consumer Shopping Guide* and A Kitchen Garden in Every Home. I acknowledge that Cittaslow communities provide and emphasise the infrastructure that allows Slow Food to flourish. Congratulations to all who are involved in promoting this colourful, healthy and life-giving movement.

COOTA HAY RUNNERS

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Cootamundra) (16:17): Eighty trucks, which included about 40 trucks from Cootamundra, carted 2,600 bales of hay to fire-ravaged Dunedoo last weekend. This was all thanks to Cootamundra men Andrew Glover and Paul Manwaring who, after witnessing the devastating inferno, decided to put the word out about a fodder run. The response was far bigger than they expected, with farmers and truckies committing hay and transport and other community members donating funds for fuel. Cootamundra was the starting point for the convoy, with other trucks joining the fodder run along the way. This included one man from Emerald, in Queensland, who travelled 1,300 kilometres one way to deliver hay, and a Tottenham farmer who donated 700 square bales of hay, equal to 14 trucks worth.

Behind the scenes, assisting Paul and Andrew to coordinate the event, were Paul's wife, Nat Manwaring; Andrew's wife, Peta Glover; Paul's brother, Adam Manwaring; Marty Colletts, formerly of Cootamundra and now living in Dubbo; and Adrian Jones of Jones Transport. A second fodder run is set to head back to Dunedoo this weekend for those transport operators who wanted to assist but were unable to last weekend. Donations are still being accepted for the fuel fund to help get the trucks to where they are needed. A bank account has been set up

for the purpose of collecting these donations. The details are: Coota Hay Runners, National Australia Bank, BSB 082536, account number 311866303. tribute to Col Neal

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (16:19): I pay tribute to a great friend, supporter and worker's champion, Mr Col Neal of Macquarie Fields. I have known Col and his wife, Roslyn, for many years. They are among the most genuine people one could ever meet. Col has, for as long as anyone can remember, been an active and proud member of the Transport Workers Union. Even though he is now retired from driving, Col still plays an active role in the union. He is a passionate and tireless advocate for the frontline transport workers and contractors who work hard but who have often been left unpaid by "phoenix" transport and construction companies that declare bankruptcy only to rise again under a different name. Col is currently recovering from surgery. Recently I wished him a speedy recovery over a cup of tea. There are few greater champions in the transport industry than Col Neal. I take this opportunity to thank him for his tireless work over many decades and may he and Roslyn enjoy good health for many years to come.

PARRAMATTA LIGHT RAIL

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (16:20): I pay tribute to the advocacy work of the group of constituents in my electorate of Seven Hills who wrote and who have spoken to me about greater transport options for getting around Westmead and Westmead Children's Hospital precincts. I was delighted to inform them of Friday's announcement about the construction of Parramatta Light Rail, which will start at Westmead Station and pass through a number of stops in my electorate, namely Westmead Hospital and Westmead Children's Hospital. The railway line will then travel south past the new Western Sydney Stadium toward Camellia and north to Telopea.

This is a great win for the nurses, doctors, interns, students and the many other workers at Westmead Hospital who have contacted my electorate office about transport options which are safe and which provide greater access. Access to public transport and community safety are two issues that are frequently raised by my constituents. I look forward to further discussions with the Minister about the new Parramatta Light Rail and how we can ensure that the hardworking people of the Seven Hills electorate can get around this precinct in a safe and efficient manner.

JOSEPH WEHBE WALK

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (16:21): Last week I had the great pleasure of joining the extended Wehbe family for the unveiling of Joseph Wehbe Walk. Some years ago, Parramatta City Council voted to name an unnamed walkway after Joseph Wehbe, who was a well-known and well-respected builder who lived in an adjoining home and voluntarily maintained the long steep walkway for decades. He saw this as his civic duty. Unfortunately, the Geographic Names Board opposed the name. On behalf of the family, I sought the assistance of the then Minister for Lands, the Hon. Niall Blair, noting there are more than 100 local Wehbe families and many roads and lanes named after prominent people.

I thank the Minister for overturning the board's decision. Joseph and his family came from Blouza in Lebanon and made Granville then Carlingford their home. He and his family have contributed much to Australia and Joseph's granddaughter Gabriella Wehbe was named 2017 Parramatta Young Citizen of the Year on Australia Day. The Joseph Wehbe Walk sign is now also displayed outside the family home in Blouza, further strengthening the bond between the 1,000 residents of Blouza and the 5,000 descendants of Blouza in Sydney.

NATHALIE AVERY AND ERICA TILLMAN

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (16:22): I offer my congratulations to two South Grafton High School students, Nathalie Avery and Erica Tillman, who have both earned places at the Australian Junior and Youth Athletics Championships to be held in late March. Nathalie recently defended her 2016 100-metre State title in sizzling heatwave conditions in Sydney with a gold medal time of 12.89 seconds while Erica won gold in the under 18 triple jump and bronze in the long jump. I wish both girls every success at the national championships.

HEALTHY HAROLD FAMILY FUN DAY

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (16:22): On Sunday 19 February I had the great privilege to attend Healthy Harold's Family Fun Day at the Life Education NSW headquarters in Colyton. Life Education has been delivering a tremendous service for children in our schools for more than 35 years, with many of us to this day having fond memories of Harold the Healthy Giraffe. I am pleased that the electorate of Londonderry is Healthy Harold's home and I am proud of the work that Life Education does in schools across the State. The centres are built on land given to them by former Premier Neville Wran. I also was pleased that Life Education received \$10,000 from the Londonderry Community Building Partnership Grant for the installation of two touch screen

monitors at the Colyton Centre. I extend a big thank to the Hon. Alan Cadman, OAM, and the amazing Kellie Sloane, who is the chief executive officer of Life Education NSW, for inviting me along, and also to all of the staff at Life Education for the work they do with children in promoting healthy, happy and safe lives.

TRIBUTE TO NAMOI DOUGALL

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (16:23): Namoi Dougall is Davidson electorate's 2017 Local Woman of the Year. Namoi Dougall recently retired from six years of service as chair of the Board of Management of Ku-ring-gai Youth Development Service [KYDS], where she continues to serve as an active board member. Through her work with KYDS, Namoi has helped young people and their families to address challenges presented by adolescent mental health problems. KYDS provides support and confidential counselling for northern Sydney adolescents who experience problems such as bullying, depression, family breakdowns, anger, school-exam stress, substance use, self-harm, anxiety and suicidal thoughts. KYDS also provides a range of support programs for families and schools.

Namoi has shown how local women can make a contribution to their community in the difficult area of adolescent mental health. While having her own family, Namoi spends time helping other families to navigate an often emotional path through adolescence and the mental health issues that sometimes accompany it. Namoi has also admirably served the public in senior executive positions in both the local and State government sectors. The Minister for Women, the Hon. Tanya Davies, presented the Local Woman of the Year award to Namoi at the New South Wales Parliament House today.

RURAL FIRE SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (16:24): I commend the six Rural Fire Service crews from the Ballina and Byron shires and the Far North Coast Rural Fire Service duty officer, Bob Wilcox who last weekend kept our communities and homes safe from out-of-control grassfires on Ross Lane at Lennox Head. The fire covered about 100 hectares of bush and threatened 12 properties in the area. Thirty firefighters battled the blaze and several choppers water bombed the blaze and embers throughout the weekend. As always the bravery, selflessness and skill of our Rural Fire Service is astounding. On behalf of the electorate of Ballina I thank each and every volunteer for their dedication to the health and wellbeing of our community.

TWEED HOSPITAL MEDICAL GRADUATES

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (16:25): I welcome 18 new medical graduates who will undertake a year-long internship at Tweed Hospital in 2017. I was delighted to meet with the new interns recently over lunch where they shared their origins and the university they studied at before starting at the hospital. They are very excited to be part of the great Tweed Hospital. This year a total of 992 interns will start at hospitals around the State—up from 983 in 2016. I am sure this will be a very informative and exciting year for all the interns and clinicians involved, led by Dr Mike Lindley-Jones at the Tweed Hospital and his fine medical council. Currently the Tweed Hospital is ranked in the top 10 hospitals across the State.

DOUGLAS HOLMES

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (16:26): I acknowledge and thank Douglas Holmes for his many years working to advance the interests of mental health consumers locally, statewide and nationally following his retirement as the St Vincent's Hospital mental health service consumer participation coordinator. Many in the inner city—consumers and service providers—will miss Douglas, including my office. Douglas personally has helped many consumers negotiate their way through mental health services to get the help they need as well as setting up partnerships and networks to maintain ongoing coordinated responses to people with complex needs. He has been instrumental in service improvements at many inner city health, welfare and homelessness service providers that work with people with complex needs, including mental health concerns. I am sure that retiring from paid work will not prevent Douglas from contributing to his community and we will continue to see him making sure that more people get on the road to recovery.

TRIBUTE TO JUNE ROE, OAM

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General) (16:27): I congratulate Caringbah South resident, Mrs June Roe, who has been awarded the Order of Australia [OAM] for her service to veterans and their families. Mrs Roe is a founding member of the Partners of Veterans Association Australia, and was the inaugural treasurer, publicity officer, and veteran community advocate. She is a founding member and director of Australian Families of the Military Research and Support Foundation since 2012, and inaugural treasurer from 2012-14. Mrs Roe has also been a dedicated supporter of the Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre. She has worked as a volunteer intermittently for 20 years and has assisted the Curatorium Committee with a number of exhibitions. She has been

the secretary of the Caringbah Garden Club since 2009. I congratulate Mrs Roe on her outstanding service to the people of New South Wales.

TRIBUTE TO ALEXANDRA BOWEN

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (16:28): Attending awards ceremonies for schools in our communities is a great part of our job. It provides us all with a unique opportunity to see the impressive young talent and intellect that is being nurtured within our local public school communities. One of these outstanding public schools is the Northlakes High School. Among the 2016 cohort was a young woman named Alexandra Bowen. Throughout her time at the Northlakes High School Alex has excelled in physical culture and other artistic endeavours. In 2013 she was the National Champion in Physical Culture and again in 2015. Upon her graduation, she was inducted into the Northlakes High School Sporting Hall of Fame. In addition to being an incredible athlete, Alexandra also came first in Textiles and Design, PDHPE and Dance. I am convinced that we will all be seeing more of Alexandra in the future, and wish her all the best in the next chapter of her life.

COOTA BEACH VOLLEYBALL CARNIVAL

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Cootamundra) (16:29): Last weekend a record 125 teams converged on Cootamundra for the wildly popular Coota Beach Volleyball Carnival. Teams travelled from throughout regional New South Wales and as far away as Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra for the annual competition. Accustomed to battling through extreme conditions, it was no surprise that some uncharacteristic drizzle failed to dampen their spirits. Hundreds of spectators also enjoyed the festive atmosphere, which featured blaring music, 650 tonnes of sand freshly dumped on the street and a visually striking array of costumes.

The A Grade final was taken out for the sixth consecutive year by a team dressed in flannos, cowboy hats and sheriff badges aptly called the Wild Wild West. Steve Dyason of Temora said the team is made up of mates mostly from Melbourne and Sydney. Most attended school together and the annual Coota Beach carnival provides a chance to meet in the middle and enjoy a fun-filled weekend. The beach sprints also attracted plenty of attention, with Tom Tooth taking out the under 8 boys title and Willow Hull emerging victorious among the girls. Jack Ruslan was the best of the under 14 boys, while Ashley d'Aran won the girl's competition. Murrumburrah duo Harry Forsyth and Austin Grace tried their hand at volleyball and had a ball in the process. The carnival has grown dramatically since its humble beginnings in 2001 when it attracted a comparatively modest 16 teams. It is another example of fun and tourism being alive and well in my electorate of Cootamundra.

Petitions

COAL AND GAS MINING PROJECTS

Discussion

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) (16:30): In the short time I have available to speak on the petition on coal and gas mining projects I will remind everyone of the benefits that mining brings to the people of New South Wales. Most resources that exist below the earth's surface belong to the State and the people of New South Wales. The extraction of those resources contributes royalties, economic benefits and energy security for citizens. In 2015-16 the mining industry contributed nearly \$1.2 billion in royalties, which was used to fund infrastructure and services for the benefit of all people in New South Wales. As of June 2016 the industry employed more than 27,000 people directly and more than 100,000 people indirectly through the provision of mine and non-mine related services.

Mining also brings significant economic benefits and employment opportunities to people living in regional and rural areas. As the member for Upper Hunter I can attest to the importance of mining for my region. In the 2015-16 financial year 4,400 local miners were employed directly, earning a combined \$591 million in wages. Business purchases in Upper Hunter totalled \$801 million, with a total spend of \$1.4 billion in the area. In addition, 1,607 local businesses are supported by mining. There are currently nearly 50 major mining project proposals in New South Wales at various stages of planning and approval, promising investment of around \$13.4 billion in new capital expenditure and having the potential to create around 8,000 new jobs. However, we do not pursue these benefits to the State and community at any cost. Mining operators are required to operate within strict constraints—from the technical requirements they must demonstrate to environmental performance and community consultation. We also recognise that the search for, and development of, resources must be done in a way that recognises the rights of landholders to conduct their activities free from unreasonable interference or disturbance.

A key objective of the Government's 2015 NSW Gas Plan was to ensure the protection of our precious water supplies, farmland, environment and local communities while securing our vital energy supplies. The establishment of a framework for the Community Benefits Fund was a key NSW Gas Plan action aimed at

ensuring that the benefits of gas development are shared with the local communities in which the activity takes place. Under this framework, which has been operating since 1 July 2016, gas companies in New South Wales can set up a fund that covers the local area and community in which they are undertaking gas exploration or production.

Once a fund is established, individuals, organisations or enterprises that deliver local community development initiatives can apply for grants from the money invested in the fund. These grants can support local initiatives to improve a range of outcomes for the community, including health, education, environment, and economic development outcomes. This framework enables local communities to directly shape and affect how the funds will be spent for the benefit of their town. To be absolutely clear, the Community Benefits Fund does not replace titleholders' obligations to negotiate compensation with landholders who are directly impacted by titleholders' activities. The requirement remains unchanged to pay compensation directly to affected landholders. The fund instead provides resources to support local initiatives, which may include, for example, upgrading transport networks, supporting local apprenticeships or restoring local heritage. This Government has been and remains committed to protecting community rights and assets, while ensuring our reliable and affordable energy supply is not compromised.

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (16:34): I congratulate the activists and environmentalists who have worked so hard to collect more than 10,000 signatures to this important petition. Like the signatories, I have deep and grave concerns about the risks of coal seam gas [CSG] exploration and extraction. In 2015 I welcomed the Labor policy announcement to adopt a moratorium on coal seam gas across the State. In my electorate of the Blue Mountains the community takes a very keen interest in the evolution of public policy in this area. The villages of the Blue Mountains are sited along a ridge line that cuts straight through the middle of pristine World Heritage listed national park. The national park also takes in much of the waterways that form Sydney's drinking water catchment area that feeds Warragamba Dam.

To this end, I highlight the first of six points that the petition makes. It is absolutely critical that we protect our waterways and our drinking water catchments. Ensuring coal seam gas exploration and extraction is banned from these sensitive areas is the first step towards this. However, we must also reduce the impact on these waterways by other mining activity. For example, the Centennial Coal Springvale mine is currently discharging highly saline effluent water into the Cocks River, which flows through our World Heritage area and into the Sydney drinking water supply at Warragamba. The Berejiklian Government is permitting this to occur at levels many factors greater than the recommended maximum level of salinity in discharges of this nature. It is a crying shame.

I note for the benefit of those in the gallery that Labor shadow Minister the Hon. Adam Searle has had his Coal Seam and Other Unconventional Gas Moratorium Bill before the Legislative Council since 2015. It now falls to the Government to support rather than impede the bill's progress through Parliament. As the Hon. Adam Searle noted, we simply do not know enough about the longer term impacts of extracting gas from coal seams; and until we do, no prudent government can permit further development of the industry. Until there is a scientific consensus that CSG mining will not damage aquifers and groundwater systems, we need to put a stop to further exploration and extraction.

Further to the matter of CSG mining the petition touches on more traditional mining activities. I have mentioned my concerns about mining effluent that is damaging waterways in the Blue Mountains. I remind the House that the very same operator also was responsible for an environmental catastrophe in the Wollangambe River, which is another Blue Mountains waterway. To this end I call upon this Government to get serious about environmental protections and regulations. The Environment Protection Authority needs to be adequately funded to investigate and prosecute environmental breaches at mines, and it needs to be given teeth to ensure potential catastrophes are identified and averted before they are allowed to occur. I thank all those activists across our State involved in the critical task of raising awareness of this issue. I particularly thank the Lock the Gate Alliance, Our Land Our Water Our Future campaigners, the Knitting Nannas, the Blue Mountains Stop CSG Group, the Nature Conservation Council and my beloved Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES (Barwon) (16:39): Petitions with 10,000 signatures are always interesting. When this Government was elected we made sure that people got to have a say and that once there were a certain number of signatures on a petition the public could be more actively engaged in the democratic process. I have been a Minister with responsibility for water resources, and I represent nearly half the State—from pristine farming areas in the north-west of New South Wales to the South Australian and Queensland borders. So in my electorate there is the full gamut of mining—mining in Broken Hill and Cobar, and coal and gas extraction on the eastern side of the electorate. In my electorate there is also some of the most pristine farming country anywhere in the world. I will defend those farmers until the cows come home.

The six points that the signatories raised are fundamentally important. I have been in this place long enough to recognise wolves in sheep's clothing. I respect the fact that Opposition members can change their views,

but when they were in government they handed out these licences—largely with the support of The Greens. It has taken this Government four to six years to buy back—to extinguish—the exploratory licences that those opposite gave away or, in some cases, sold to their own party members or to people overseas. The Government has largely achieved that buyback; it has put protections in place. The Government bought back a large number of licences and I am only embarrassed that it took too long to get the Caroonia licence on the Liverpool Plains extinguished and bought back. We achieved that last year. We are still working with Shenhua in that area to make sure those areas where extraction is taking place are not anywhere near the flood plain.

I have always defended the right of landholders to say no. I can see a Potts Point signatory on the petition; Potts Point is the headquarters for an alliance that is across the State. I have supported most of the alliance's principles over the past few years. Significant progress has been made. This Government is protecting land and water. It is protecting people's right to say no. If anyone forces their way onto somebody else's property, for whatever reason, I will be the first person there. My constituents know that. People on this side of the Chamber know that as well.

I also will defend the right of any region in this State to defend its values. If that means saying no to certain industries or progressing others, people in those areas should have the right to do that. So, speaking generally, I think this Government has addressed pretty much all the issues that have been raised by the signatories. It would be good for the signatories and some of the alliance members to acknowledge that. There is still more work to do, but I will be the first person to defend the values, rights and livelihoods and the environmental values of my electorate. I will be second to no-one in doing that.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (16:42): I contribute to this discussion having fought a potential coalmine in my electorate for just over 15 years now. I have to agree with the sentiments of the signatories to the petition that the current assessment process is totally unfair, unbalanced and stacked all the way in favour of mining companies. In 2010 the Labor Government knocked back a mine but the proponents resubmitted exactly the same application, which is now being reconsidered. When members of the mining industry do not like a decision they keep going and going until someone throws his hands in the air and gives them permission to operate. The guidelines say that any application should be assessed in the public interest and in the light of the likely impacts of the development, including environmental impacts on the natural and built environments, and social and economic impacts in the locality.

The assessment process works in terms of "How can we make this mine happen?" That has certainly been the experience of people in my electorate; I know other people around the State have had similar experiences. I have a private member's bill before the House to excise an area in Wyong to protect the water catchment. The Wallarah 2 coalmine is proposed to go right underneath the water catchment that supplies water to 350,000 people. You would think it would be a no-brainer to protect that area but the Government is drawing this issue out, even though the members opposite made a hand-on-heart promise in the 2011 election to pass legislation, if necessary, to stop the mine. As soon as they got into government they rolled over with the mining industry so that we have to continue the fight.

I must admit that our side of politics has not covered itself in glory either. When I was elected for the 2007 to 2011 term, I fought my own side with respect to this mine until I was able to convince the then Minister, Tony Kelly, and Kristina Keneally to knock it back. But, unfortunately, Barry O'Farrell did not keep his promise and we are still debating the issue today. If one really wanted to assess the Government's commitment in this area one would look at the legislation that was passed last year, which saw the fines for people protesting against mines increase, with the addition of a possible jail sentence, and the fines for mining companies that do the wrong thing—cause environmental damage and lie—decreased to ridiculously low levels.

If a government is committed to ensuring that mining companies do the right thing it should ensure that they have not just social responsibility but financial responsibility. We know that from the Wallarah 2 Wyong coal project. These are \$120 companies and when they are finished they walk away; they walk off the land and there is no-one to chase in relation to rehabilitation and all those sorts of issues. The Government needs to fix that.

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (16:45): By leave: I make a contribution on behalf of The Greens in support of this petition calling on the House to implement rigorous assessment of coal and gas mining projects. I congratulate Lane Cove Coal and Gas Watch; the great team at Land, Water, Future; the Nature Conservation Council; the Lock the Gate Alliance; and the Knitting Nannas. As the member for Ballina, I am sure the people in the gallery can appreciate that I support the petition largely because of the Government's failure to consult with the community on coal seam gas exploration in my region.

The current system is failing communities. Despite the fact that large coal is being wound down across the country and the world, there has been a massive expansion in coalmining under this Government. There is an ongoing threat to water and food security from fracking and coal seam gas mining; there are no red lights in the

planning system; the environmental protection laws are inadequate; and climate impacts are being ignored. Communities are left in limbo over a number of projects that we know will probably never go ahead but are still looming over the future of communities. So, faced with, at best, a government with politicians who are unwilling to say no to the coal barons and support the transition to the green economy and, at worst, climate deniers, community efforts like this are required if we are to stop coal and gas projects that impact on our natural resources to the detriment of communities.

The Government has listened to the community and has bought back petroleum exploration licences, and the Government is to be commended for that. I think in my area the Government sees the error of its ways, but the recent news that Santos plans to drill and potentially frack 850 coal seam gas wells through the Great Artesian Basin flies in the face of that. We will see almost half a million tonnes of salt dumped in landfill, nearly 1,000 hectares of native vegetation destroyed, and the industrialisation of the Pilliga Forest and agricultural land around Narrabri. The Greens are, of course, unequivocally opposed to this crazy project and will do everything we can, both in the community and in Parliament, to stop it. But we should remember that community efforts alone are not enough. We saw at Standing Rock the incredible grassroots protest, and the response. Basically, we have seen all of that undone. We must not become complacent.

I say to the Government and to the Labor Party that we can no longer pretend that it is okay to keep approving massive new coalmines. If we are serious about playing our part in tackling global warming the first step must be to ban all new fossil fuel projects in New South Wales. The second step must be to move rapidly away from coal- and gas-fired power to renewable energy, and we also must develop a plan for the phase-out of the existing coalmining industry in New South Wales that includes the jobs of the workers.

Private Members' Statements

LIVERPOOL HOSPITAL EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) (16:48): I report to the House some truly bizarre Government decisions concerning the Liverpool Hospital, which is, of course, within the electorate I represent. The decisions that have been taken seem to me quite wrong. What is more, they have resulted in the substantial expenditure—or, as I would argue, mis-expenditure—of public money. The issue concerns two brothers, twins Craig and Cameron Zammit. They have been working as painters for some time at the Liverpool Hospital as part of what is called the engineering department. About eight years ago they obtained flexible work arrangements at the hospital, allowing them to work from 6.00 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. rather than the alternative hours of 7.00 a.m. to 3.30 p.m.

That was an entirely sensible arrangement. I cannot see how starting the painting an hour earlier and finishing an hour earlier could cause a problem for the hospital. It does not strike me as the sort of thing that would cause the Liverpool Hospital to grind to a halt, and for quite a few years it worked without any problems—which strikes me as hardly a surprise. Of all the issues constituents have raised with me about the Liverpool Hospital over more than two decades, two painters starting work an hour earlier was not one of them. Painting is hardly emergency response work at the hospital. It is not as if they are on call.

The purpose of working these hours was to be family friendly. Both Craig and Cameron were able to use these hours to pick up their primary school-age children from school. Cameron has two children. Craig has three. It is about work-life balance, about having a full-time job and still being a hands-on parent. People in this place do not know much about work-life balance, but I think we all support it in principle. Indeed various governments and government representatives have proclaimed its desirability as both policy and practice. In practical terms these hours meant the families did not have to pay for childcare. Working from 7.00 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. would require them to pay for child care. Some of the children, I should note, will remain in primary school until 2019.

This entirely sensible arrangement continued for many years. A new manager then arrived. The brothers were told that the arrangements were to be changed and they would now be working from 7.00 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. There seems to be no credible substantive reason provided for this. One view of management's reasons for adopting this position is that management had worked similar hours whilst being parents of young kids, so these workers would not have a problem. There seems to be no sensible reason for upending these longstanding arrangements and not providing flexible working hours to those two painters. Moreover, it also seems to be the case that NSW Health, certainly in this area, allows nurses and women in administrative roles to work flexible hours for family reasons. This has not been extended to employees in the all-male engineering department.

It is almost as though there is some bizarre assumption by the health district that male painters, who are members of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, are not interested in being hands-on parents. That is plainly false, and I suggest represents a view from people who know little of the reality of areas such as the one I represent. Moreover, this approach seems to contradict the publically expressed position of the Government. In early 2016, for example, then Premier Baird publicly committed to all public service jobs being

flexible by 2019 on the basis of: If not, why not? Flexible work arrangements are being pursued by the Public Service Commission. In December 2016 the commission released a discussion paper, entitled "Flexible working strategy". The discussion paper's executive summary asserts this:

Flexible working is about rethinking the needs of individuals, the team and the organisation to come to an agreement on when, where and how to work. Rather than a flexible role being a concession or exception, it needs to be a case of "if not, why not."

More flexibility will benefit the people that work within the sector, the teams and agencies they work within, and New South Wales more broadly. Flexible working, when implemented well, has a positive impact on employee health, productivity and retention, as well as improved workforce diversity and "bigger picture" contributions to society, such as travel time savings and supporting people into the workforce.

I could not agree more; so do the Zammit brothers and so did Premier Baird. The only lot out of step seems to be the current management of the Liverpool Hospital. Perhaps the hospital should read the Public Service Commission discussion paper. This almost incomprehensible decision has spawned a significant amount of litigation, finally resulting in a four-day arbitration in the Industrial Relations Commission. The brothers were able to keep their flexible working hours in place during that journey. The commission ended up deciding that it was up to management to work out how to manage employees.

An appeal has been set down for 13 April. The flexible working hours remain in place after the commission granted a stay on the decision pending the appeal. The hospital management seems intent on maintaining outdated and completely unhelpful gender stereotypes. Beneficial and desirable social change is impeded by adherence to such stereotypes. Often such stereotypes, as in this case, simply defy common sense. NSW Health should reverse its decision on this case and start behaving like real adults in the twenty-first century.

NOWRA SHOW 2017

Ms SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast) (16:53): I wish to inform members of the House about the Nowra Show. A couple of weeks ago I attended the Nowra Show, although it was extraordinarily hot on the day. We were delighted that the Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon. Malcolm Turnbull, MP, joined us at the show. The member for Kiama, who is at the table, was only able to attract the Premier to the Berry Show, but Nowra was able to attract the Prime Minister. It was a fantastic day because we were opening the new kitchen facilities at the Nowra Show, which were funded by a State Government grant. The Prime Minister was happy to open that kitchen facility. He talked to all the committee members and then wandered around the show in more than 40-degree heat. I thank him for his attendance

Mr Andrew Fraser: Did he do the washing up?

Ms SHELLEY HANCOCK: And he did the washing up. He met all the prize-winning cooks and looked at the cookery books as well as everything else. The Nowra Show is one of the fantastic regional shows in my electorate, and the Milton Show will be held in a couple of weeks. I never miss an opportunity to attend one of these shows because they are a very important platform for the agricultural sector to demonstrate to the rest of the community just what we do in our regions.

Mr Andrew Fraser: Hear, hear! Where their food comes from.

Ms SHELLEY HANCOCK: Exactly. The dairy industry and the farmers have their produce on show, together with the pickles, jams and jellies made by our good cooks—all the things that happen at any regional and rural show. These shows are an important part of the community. The showgirl event is very important too. People do not particularly like showgirl events but it is a way in which young women can be great ambassadors for the area. Entering that competition can really enhance their leadership skills. The member for Kiama enjoys the showgirl competition. He goes to every one of them and is photographed with all of them.

Mr Gareth Ward: Absolutely, and has been a judge.

Ms SHELLEY HANCOCK: And has been a judge. I congratulate Nowra Showgirl winner Liberty Nelson, runner-up Rachael Spreser and four other showgirl entrants Madelyn Johnson, Michelle Reid, Olivia Patterson and Annalise McDonald. They were all wonderful, as is each showgirl entrant every year. Before, after and during the show they were great ambassadors for the region, for our visitors and on that day for our Prime Minister. It is a great organisation but I congratulate in particular the show committee. It is comprised of a fantastic group of people headed up by Wendy Woodward. The many committee members work very hard from one show to next to ensure the success of the show.

This year there was a little controversy, which the member for Kiama touched on in a notice of motion this morning. Somebody, of course, had to make it political that the Prime Minister had visited the show. The Nowra Show Society made a determination that it would no longer have political stalls. That was fine; it was the society's decision. But one particular individual did not like it and decided to protest. I really took exception to that. Our shows are open to all individuals and politicians so long and as we do not have balloons, T-shirts and

political stalls, and that is the way it should be. I thank everybody who attended the show this year, particularly the sponsors and supporters of the show. It was great to be able to attract funding for the refurbishment of the ageing kitchen facility.

I thank the Shoalhaven City Council, the Nowra Show Society and local businesses, including Dunn and Williams Electrical and Air Conditioning, which is well known in the area; Coffee Fix; Choices Flooring; Curren Plumbing; Shoalhaven Garage Doors, which did a fantastic job with the kitchen facilities; and Dave Bennett, who we all know well, for their efforts in that great refurbishment. The hope of the Nowra Show Society is that the improved operational level of the kitchen to restaurant standards will provide greater opportunities for hiring. It is not just the show society that uses this kitchen: Many other community groups use it and we are very proud of it. I thank all those people. In a couple of weeks it will be the Milton Show; it is even bigger and better. I do not know who we will have. We already have had the Prime Minister and the Premier.

Mr Andrew Fraser: I'll come down.

Ms SHELLEY HANCOCK: The member for Coffs Harbour is offering his services for the Milton Show. I will keep him to that.

Mr Greg Warren: Why don't you get the member for Kiama to go and visit?

Ms SHELLEY HANCOCK: The member for Campbelltown can come. All members are welcome to the Milton Show. It is a beautiful town and a beautiful show.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (16:58): I thank the member for South Coast for her strident advocacy of the show movement, particularly agriculture, on the South Coast. I acknowledge that the Nowra Show was held on the 10 and 11 February 2017. I commend the member for her hard work and advocacy to secure a grant for the Nowra Show Society. Indeed, we were very pleased to be there with our mutual friend, Ann Sudmalis, and the Prime Minister on that day so that we could enjoy the Prime Minister's visit.

I have been volunteering at the show for the last 15 years. I agree with the Speaker's comments. She is far too polite to name the person who politicised the show. It was Fiona Phillips. Very unfortunately the failed Federal candidate for Gilmore, the failed State candidate for the South Coast and the failed candidate for the Shoalhaven City Council decided to create a stir rather than to volunteer and do something for her community—something for which she is being fast renowned. I congratulate the Speaker for her outstanding efforts in support of her show movement. Long may it be the case.

COFFS HARBOUR JETTY

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour) (16:59): I speak on an issue that has been ongoing in my electorate of Coffs Harbour for a number of years. On 13 February I received yet another email from Mike Davey of the Jetty Dive Centre. It reads:

Dear Mr Andrew Fraser,

It appears there is a new Bureaucrat in Sydney controlling the management of the Government properties here.

The temporary fence contractor was ordered to close the fence up on the railway land adjacent the jetty restaurant area again.

They now have it closed off at the front end of the block, with only an exit left open at the rear of the block, to allow cars to exit.

Please be aware of this situation. Is it possible to sort this situation out to permanently allow car park use?

I also noted not long ago, a fencing contractor measuring the area, and mentioned he was quoting for a permanent fence.

I hope you can give this issue your earliest attention.

This is an area of land known locally as "Whale Tail Land". The jetty strip is renowned for its restaurants and the Jetty Dive Centre, which Mike runs, and is a very successful tourist attraction. This piece of land has been vacant for as long as I can remember. It is a large block and it acts as overflow parking for the restaurants and other establishments and retail businesses at the jetty. The past Labor Government, in all its wisdom, decided to put a fence around it. We objected, and the fence came down. The fence went up again. We objected, and the fence came down. It went up again, with locks on the gate. We objected, and they unlocked the gates. I have written to everyone I could think of and we seem to get non-answers, such as:

The land was at one point or another owned by Transport. I have asked our Country Rail Network team to advise who owns it now (NSW Trains, ARTC or TNSW). Once that is clarified, then we will be in a better position to advise what can be done to turn it into a car park permanently.

On Tuesday this week I had discussions with Matthew Williams, the assistant director of the strategic project delivery, economic, skills and regional development division in the Department of Industry. It turns out that the Department of Industry or the Department of Property now owns that land. It has served as a car park for so long

that I have requested him, the Government and the Deputy Premier to make sure that it remains open. It is a minor thing in relation to other issues in the Coffs Harbour electorate. It is something that assists the businesses there, yet bureaucracy for the last six or seven years has been trying to close it. I can see no good reason for it being closed. The council has been trying to buy it. I do not want the council to buy it because it offered it to someone for sale at some stage and it has now come back into government hands.

I believe this is petty antics by government officials who have nothing better to do except waste time and money putting up fences to stop people from utilising parking space for their recreational use. To me, this is absurd. If I have to fight this day in, day out, week in, week out, month in, month out, year in, year out, I will get to this stage where I will take my own pipe cutter and take the fence out. All it needs is some tidying up for it to act as an overflow car park for all those businesses down there that do it so tough. They pay plenty of taxes to the State Government. The use of the land will not be changed for many years to come—I can guarantee that—but in the interim it should be known as a de facto car park for the businesses on the jetty.

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (17:03): I bring to the attention of the House a serious matter that occurred in my electorate last year. It involves a person with mental health issues, a motel proprietor, the actions of the NSW Police Force and the subsequent conduct of the New South Wales Ombudsman relating to this matter. I note from the outset today that I am conscious of the efforts of our NSW Police Force and the tremendous work it does in the community and throughout the State. The NSW Police Force is presently placed in a difficult situation when it comes to managing mentally ill individuals as there are no additional mental health resources available for the NSW Police Force to utilise. This is especially true in Western Sydney.

On 12 August 2016 at 11.30 p.m. a police vehicle was recorded on the Voyager Motel's closed circuit television [CCTV] monitor depositing a male person dressed in his pyjamas in the car park. It then left the premises. The motel is located in Minchinbury. The male person entered the reception area of the motel and requested accommodation. The male person did not have any form of identification with him and the motel proprietor, Mr Kasiewicz, was unable to accommodate him without identification. Mr Kasiewicz observed the man as being disorientated, in his sleepwear and showing signs of being mentally unsound. Mr Kasiewicz attempted to assist the man by trying to locate a family member, but failed to do so due to the agitated state of the male.

Mr Kasiewicz then telephoned the Mount Druitt Police Station and explained the situation. It was at this point he was advised that the officers who dropped the man in the car park were from the St Marys Local Area Command [LAC]. Mount Druitt police advised they would send a car to collect the male. At 1.00 a.m. the male was becoming more and more agitated. Mr Kasiewicz made the decision to return the man to the St Marys police station. On arrival at the police station it was apparent that the officer at the reception was aware of this gentleman. The officer demanded to know why he had been returned to the station. Mr Kasiewicz explained that without proper identification he was unable to accommodate the man. Mr Kasiewicz was then detained for 20 minutes and advised that he would be charged if he did not take the male back to the motel. Mr Kasiewicz advised me that after some fraught discussions he was allowed to leave the station.

On 16 August 2016, at Mr Kasiewicz's request, I made representations to the New South Wales Ombudsman, with a copy being sent to the Minister for Police, Troy Grant, and to the former Minister for Mental Health, Pru Goward. That was four days after the incident. I requested from the Ombudsman that the CCTV footage from the police station be retained as part of the investigation. This did not occur. At the conclusion of the investigation the Ombudsman advised that the CCTV footage was not saved as police station CCTV recordings are retained for only 31 days and the request to retain the footage was received 33 days after the incident—two days late. The Ombudsman's investigation concluded that the incident seemed to have arisen largely from miscommunication and misunderstanding between Mr Kasiewicz and the St Marys police station. The Ombudsman was satisfied with the manner in which the St Marys LAC handled the complaint and no further action will be taken by the Ombudsman's office.

I am raising this matter in Parliament as I believe that this incident highlights the deficiency in resources available to the NSW Police Force when dealing with persons displaying mental health issues, but are assessed under the Mental Health Act as not requiring sectioning. The above incident highlights the consequences of that lack of resources. Police are forced to take action in areas they are not adequately equipped to deal with. It was not appropriate that the mentally ill person was abandoned in a motel car park in the middle of the night.

It was not appropriate that the St Marys LAC shifted the problem to the Mount Druitt LAC and it was not appropriate that my constituent, Mr Kasiewicz, was detained—potentially because he had not been able to accommodate the man. I call on the Minister for Police and the Minister for Mental Health to put procedures in place and provide resources that will assist police officers to deal with mental health patients, including what to

do and where to take them. A motel car park in the middle of the night is definitely not the answer to this serious mental health issue.

MULGOA HSC DISTINGUISHED ACHIEVERS

Ms TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Women, and Minister for Ageing) (17:07): I acknowledge and commend Mulgoa's best and brightest—our community's 2016 Higher School Certificate [HSC] distinguished achievers—and celebrate and recognise their hard work, determination and dedication. To attain an HSC mark of 90 or above in a course of study is a remarkable achievement. It reflects the incredible work ethic and commitment to studies of each and every student. I acknowledge the staff and teachers that provided them with the necessary skills, knowledge and tools of learning and inquiry as well as the parents and carers.

Over 130 students from the Mulgoa electorate reached this educational status. I commend and recognise the tremendous talent that is the basis of development for future community leaders. They are future innovators who will challenge the status quo to become captains of industry and entrepreneurs. Their success is indicative of the high-quality educational opportunities afforded to students in the Mulgoa region. Students from the length and breadth of my electorate were acknowledged by the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards [BOSTES] as distinguished achievers. The schools include the Caroline Chisholm College, the Cecil Hills High School, the Christadelphian Heritage College Sydney, the Emmaus Catholic College, the Erskine Park High School, the Glenmore Park High School, the Nepean Christian School, the Penrith Anglican College and the Thomas Hassall Anglican College.

The principals, staff and teachers of those schools should feel incredibly proud. Recently I was privileged to hold a morning tea in my electorate office in honour of their achievements at which each high-achieving student was presented with a letter and a personalised certificate. During my discussions with these talented young men and women, I was deeply encouraged by their passion and enthusiasm for their studies, for learning and for our future. Our State and nation are well and truly in good hands.

In particular, I had a friendly conversation with two young men, Ben and Thomas, who spoke to me about how much they were looking forward to furthering their studies and building upon their skills and knowledge when they commence university this month. I was thoroughly impressed with their maturity, the value they placed in their education and their willingness and hunger to learn more. Also Thomas' explanation of data science and the study with which he will be engaged as part of his field went above my understanding. I also met a beautiful young woman who recently has been accepted into a unique field of defence—the artillery division. Congratulations to that young woman. We will be seeing much more of her.

All members understand and place a great emphasis on the powerful, fundamental and transformative power of education. Education is the cornerstone of much of our society. It equips our children and grandchildren with the necessary tools with which to respond to the challenges of the twenty-first century with confidence, vigour and conviction. Moreover, education has the profound ability to shape and reshape the options and opportunities of young people. Education, after all, is the great equaliser. It ensures that individuals are afforded the ability to go above and beyond their social and economic status and boundaries.

I am deeply passionate about and committed to striving and advocating for the best educational opportunities and resources for New South Wales, especially for my community of Mulgoa. Two years ago the St Clair High School in my community suffered a catastrophic fire in which 80 per cent of the school was burnt down during the school holidays. There was an insurance payout but I worked very hard with the then Treasurer, the Hon. Andrew Constance, to ensure that I could secure an additional \$3 million to completely revolutionise that school for the twenty-first century. They are about to commence rebuilding very soon. I conclude my remarks by quoting one of my favourite poets, William Butler Yeats. He said:

Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.

To all those distinguished achievers in Mulgoa and beyond, I express my congratulations and best wishes—sentiments that I am sure are shared by all members in this place. I am confident that as learners they will achieve and accomplish much if they continue to persist in working hard and striving to reach their goals. On a personal note, I encourage all students. Their background does not determine their future. They should set their goals high, dream big, work hard, be calculated risk-takers and we will see them in the future.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) (17:13): I speak about an issue that has affected many within my electorate, and I am sure many other members have faced similar problems. I refer to the State Environmental Planning Policy (Affordable Rental Housing) 2009. I believe it was introduced in 2008 and amendments were made subsequently in 2009. At the time, it was introduced to increase supply and diversity of affordable rental

and social housing in New South Wales. It was initially a great idea with the intent of providing additional housing in different styles but it has created all sorts of issues as a result of a number of factors which I will discuss. Apart from deviating from the general rules of planning, it offers and provides floor space incentives to encourage investment in particular types of accommodation.

Nowhere have I seen accommodation that can be set up under any category of zoning—R1, general residential; R3, medium-density residential; R4, high-density residential; B1, neighbourhood centre; B2, local centre; and B4, mixed use. Someone can buy a property and, without any notice, find that a boarding house has been set up next to their principal place of residence or their business. This is unheard of. It is creating all sorts of issues. I recently met with residents in Concord West, near the Concord West railway station. They are feeling the impact of boarding houses that have been erected next to their place of residence. When someone builds a house there are parking requirements, but the parking requirements for boarding houses are virtually non-existent. There is one car spot for every five rooms.

Is this the path we want to take—where a single room in a boarding house has a surface area of 12 square metres and a double room has a surface area of 16 square metres? The maximum room size is 25 square metres. Is that where planning is heading? Will people be allowed to build this style of accommodation anywhere? I have no problem talking about affordable housing, but people do not want to talk about it too much in case they are accused of being for or against it. Boarding houses are not affordable housing when they charge \$300 to \$350 for a room. Multiply that by the number of rooms—in my area some have 20 to 30 rooms—and this becomes a lucrative exercise.

The average cost of a house in Concord West is \$1.5 million, with a rental potential of \$1,000 a week. If someone can get \$3,500 a week in rent, I put it to members that the cost of that house will go up. The bigger issue is that that will set a precedent and more people will buy property with the intention of running it as a boarding house. There are unfair advantages to this. The housing supply market is very different now from the way it was in 2009. I am waiting to speak to the Minister for Planning about this issue because it will affect many people, particularly in the inner west, where I live. Apart from the unfair advantage, there are additional bonuses. A person could end up with a 0.5 ratio, which means they can build on half their land, while a boarding house can be built over three-quarters of the land. That will greatly affect the streetscape.

Two factors should be looked at to amend this State environmental planning policy. The planning needs to be looked at. The parking requirement should be changed to include at least one car space per room. The unfair advantage of a boarding house being exempt from land tax also should be addressed. It is unheard of. If we are to continue to encourage this style of accommodation there will be all sorts of issues in every electorate. I look forward to receiving a response from the Minister. I will work with the Minister to try to address the inequity in the system.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (17:18): I too put on record my concerns about affordable housing in the form of boarding house developments. The associated parking limits force more people to park their cars on local roads, blocking streets and adding to congestion. That has been a major issue in my electorate. The name of the member for Rockdale appeared recently in an article on the front page of our local paper, the *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader*, in which he is fighting against this type of development in his electorate. I acknowledge that. This is a major issue in electorates in metropolitan Sydney. I share every one of the concerns raised by the member for Drummoyne: the lack of parking, the high rental cost and the fact that land tax is not paid on this type of development.

LIGHT RAIL PROJECT

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale) (17:19): I bring to the attention of the House an issue affecting constituents of mine who operate small businesses within the city of Sydney, particularly on George Street in the central business district [CBD]. More than a year ago construction started on the new CBD and South East Light Rail. While much has been said in this place and elsewhere about traffic grinding to a halt, sadly, very little has been said about the difficulties faced by the small business owners who have had scaffolding erected only feet from their shopfronts, and the despicable way in which they have been treated by this Government. I do not need to go into the appalling mismanagement by successive Ministers of the tendering, contracting and construction costs, and the initially ill-conceived pre-2011 opposition thought bubbles that have gone into the light rail project. Enough already has been said about the poor value for money we are getting for this project.

The Liberal Party, which is the party that supposedly wants to represent small business, has been absolutely ignorant of and unresponsive to the plight of the lessees and small business operators along the George Street construction corridor. I have reports from several owners of cafés, retail outlets, restaurants and other commercial enterprises, many of whom have been a productive part of our CBD business community for decades. Although they have premium rental commitments they have seen their sales fall by upwards of 50 per cent over

the past 12 months. Those opposite always are keen to inform us about the strength of the New South Wales economy. I can say on behalf of many of those small business owners that they are being financially crippled as a direct result of this Government's mismanaging and misguiding the construction works of this project.

How can Minister Constance expect a CBD cafe to continue operating with the noise and dust from the streetscape being torn apart? If those opposite really cared about small business, the Premier Berejiklian and Minister Constance, who have had responsibility for this project, would have made a genuine effort to work closely with small business owners to ensure that the construction of the light rail produced a zero net effect to their financial standing. Instead, I can report that small business owners and leaseholders have been stonewalled by Government spin doctors, who insist that this temporary pain will result in greater future gains. What complete and utter garbage.

The Government is great at setting up sideshows and stunts that it claims are supporting small businesses, but those gestures are so trivial that they are meaningless. They are nothing more than an insult to those poor proprietors. If either of the responsible Ministers ever had to run a business in their lives, they would know that many small businesses live or die month to month. Furthermore, many of those businesses have limited tenure on their leases and far too many are paying out on a lease that, if there is any benefit following the construction of the light rail, they will be paying much higher prices to remain in the same location. Essentially, they are paying for the pain and losing the gain. Our business community requires certainty. This disastrous project was dumped on their front door with little to no consultation.

Mr Mark Coure: That is not true.

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER: It is true. It has an inadequate business case and there is no fair compensation for the substantial amount of revenue those businesses have lost. It is appalling. The CBD and South East Light Rail website states that this project was developed in consultation with councils, businesses and local communities. I challenge the Minister or the Premier to inform this House which of the shopfront businesses along George Street they consulted with and who supported them. Construction is already underway and the city is set to be in chaos for at least two more years, but it is not too late for the Government to talk to the individual businesses involved, and to establish hardship payments and a reasonable compensation model on a case-to-case basis. If it does not, those long-term business operations will be lost to our city forever. This is no way to run a government and the people and business owners of our city and this State deserve much better than this rubbish.

SMART AND SKILLED FUNDING

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) (17:24): Constituents within my electorate have raised with me concerns about an article that was published in the *Daily Advertiser*, and I understand in national media, relating to Labor's claims that up to 3,000 disabled students may be at risk of having their Smart and Skilled funding cut. This is completely and utterly wrong, untrue, and quite simply false. Not one student is at risk of having their funding cut as a result of the Government's suspension of providers who fail to meet minimum standards under the Smart and Skilled program. I will inform the House why not one student with a disability has, or will have, funding cut in the Wagga Wagga electorate and others as a result of the suspension or termination of a training provider. Under Smart and Skilled the funding follows the student—and anyone who does not understand this needs only go to the website <https://smartandskilled.nsw.gov.au>.

It is an absolute disgrace that these outrageous claims have been openly and wantonly perpetuated by Labor. They were completely unsourced and unchecked claims. Under freedom of information processes, they say, documents somehow showed that thousands of disabled students studying courses at colleges across New South Wales face an uncertain future after the Government suspended funding to their training providers—not true. The documents released do not show that at all. In fact, they make no reference at all to students with disabilities. Additionally, course funding has not been suspended.

The providers' right to enrol new students is all that has been suspended. We have a particular focus on students with a disability—exempting them from fees and providing additional loadings to providers to help meet their needs. Such irresponsible reports, which Labor has placed on media outlets and social media, places undue stress and concern on people with a disability and their families. Smart and Skilled was introduced with tough quality measures to address serious issues impacting the provision of vocational education and training, including in the Commonwealth Vet Fee-Help scheme. In fact, the Australian Government now has remodelled its national scheme based on the same approach we have taken with Smart and Skilled.

We maintain a zero tolerance policy for any provider that delivers poor quality training, that does not practice strong ethics, or that is not responsive and accountable. That is outlined very clearly in our quality framework. We will work only with high-quality providers and are quick to terminate those that fail to meet our standards, while always providing affected students with alternative options to continue their studies with minimal

disruption. Since Smart and Skilled was introduced in 2015, 18 providers—just 4 per cent of all providers—have had their Smart and Skilled contract terminated. To emphasise that I point out that Labor provided greater levels of support to private trainers, with barely any checks and balances.

The Australian Labor Party handed over \$200 million to 500 private providers in 2010. This New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government committed \$117 million through 440 non-TAFE providers in the last financial year aligned to strict criteria and review processes. Under our program, a suspended provider has the opportunity to rectify non-compliances, which could be minor, and is able to continue training students who are already enrolled; but they cannot enrol additional students in government-funded Smart and Skilled training until any issues related to the suspension are assessed to the department's satisfaction.

Naming suspended providers for minor breaches—issues which could be easily rectified—could needlessly damage a provider's reputation and cause students undue or unwarranted concern that could be detrimental to their studies. If serious allegations are substantiated, we can proceed straight to termination. If a provider is suspended and subsequently terminated then Training Services NSW works with students to ensure they are not disadvantaged and that they are placed with a quality provider to enable them to complete their qualification—again, the funding follows the student and they are not ever placed at risk. The Government provides Fee-Free training for students with disabilities, along with other eligible disadvantaged or vulnerable students. The Opposition's failed attempt at pointscoreing at the expense of the most vulnerable in our community is a disgrace and it should apologise. This Government supports people with disabilities and has done more than the Opposition ever did. We are very proud of our record and we will continue to support people with disabilities in this State.

TRIBUTE TO PETER LYNCH

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (17:26): I inform the House of the tragic death of the man behind the multimillion dollar redevelopment proposal for the Evans Head Airpark and who was instrumental in the establishment of the Evans Head Aviation Museum, Peter Lynch. Evans Head is a beautiful coastal town in my electorate of Clarence. Peter and his partner, Endah Cakrawati, were killed when the plane Peter was flying crashed into the Swan River during Australia Day festivities at the Perth foreshore this year.

Peter was born in Caringbah on 14 February 1964. He was the second child of Dr Gilbert Lynch and his wife, Judy. Peter attended local Catholic schools, then studied mining engineering at the University of New South Wales, graduating in 1988. After moving to Queensland to work on coal projects for BHP Billiton, he met his wife, Laura, who was a geologist. The couple had three children. Peter was a leading mining executive with more than 30 years of experience in the resources industry. When he died he was chairman and managing director of Australian Stock Exchange listed Cokal Limited. He previously held senior positions with significant mining houses across Australia.

Peter loved flying and that is how he came to find Evans Head—a place he fell in love with. He became a regular visitor to Evans Head and, because of his natural enthusiasm, he also became an inspiration to the community. He recently took part in the Great Eastern Fly-In in his Grumman Mallard aircraft. In a statement the Great Eastern Fly-In Committee described Peter as a man of vision. He certainly was. The entire Evans Head community was saddened at the news of Peter's passing because he was well loved and respected for his passion for aviation and his deep feeling for the coastal town. He was respected by the close-knit flying community as well as the broader community because of his vision for an airpark at Evans Head and, because of that, he was very influential in the establishment of the Evans Head Aviation Museum.

Peter was one of the four founders of the museum and one of three investors who funded the restoration of the Bellman Hangar in 2013. The Bellman Hangar houses one of six F-111s available for museums in Australia. As I said, it was Peter's passion for flying that led him to Evans Head where he fell in love with the place and its aviation history. He always appreciated the Second World War history of the site, and that is what drew him to wanting to establish the airpark. However, it was more than just the aviation history of Evans Head that Peter fell in love with. He was a great family man and he enjoyed his holidays in the small coastal town with his three children. He was a great supporter of the Evans Head Surf Life Saving Club.

Peter and two other businessmen established Evans Head Airpark Pty Limited because of their enthusiasm for aviation and their desire to see the heritage-listed Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome not only preserved but also contributing significantly to the economic viability of the region once again. The \$21 million plan to construct a residential airpark at Evans Head held huge potential and opportunities for Evans Head and would certainly put the coastal town on the map. The multistage project would consist of 85 residential lots, a four- to five-star boutique hotel and convention centre, 23 commercial lots and a brand new aviation museum. Aviation enthusiasts buying into one of the 85 lots would have a flyer's paradise at their doorstep, being able to

taxi their planes from private hangars on their property straight onto the aerodrome tarmac in a lifestyle akin to fairway-style estates for golfers.

Peter was also community minded and would incorporate within his airpark estate a new aviation museum and community centre in the western precinct. The larger future museum facility will house the expanding collection of the Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome Heritage Aviation Association and will be available to other local community groups, such as the Evans Head Living Museum. The new facility will serve as a centre for multiple community-based groups, ensuring a close relationship with the aerodrome. Peter was very much a part of the Evans Head community and will be sorely missed. Vale Peter Lynch.

CBD AND SOUTH EAST LIGHT RAIL PROJECT

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (17:33): I raise in the House again—as I have done repeatedly and consistently for more than three years—my concern about the CBD and South East Light Rail Project. I remind members that Infrastructure NSW did not support the project. In fact, it recommended against it as not being justified. I also remind members that the Government announced it would implement the project at a cost of \$1.2 billion. That cost is now at or about \$2.1 billion.

The Government having made the decision, I took the view, as did the member for Maroubra, that it was important—as this project went through our electorates—that it worked, and that it was done in a proper way to maximise whatever benefit could arise from its construction. The Premier accused the member for Maroubra of saying that he wanted the light rail project to terminate at Maroubra. He may have done so, but I met with the then transport Minister, now Premier, to convince her that it should terminate at Maroubra Junction. I did that because the location in front of the Lionel Bowen Library in Anzac Parade was a far better place for the terminus than a location across the road from Souths Juniors, which creates the inability to move people from that location to the Kingsford central business district. It was an error—it is an error—to terminate it there.

I told the Government—as did the Randwick council, which tried to get the best out of this project—that there was not sufficient room for the route along Alison Road and for the stop in front of the Randwick racecourse. I suggested that the route should go along the middle of Alison Road. After letting the contract, the Government chose to move the route to the northern side of Alison road, which resulted in the removal of 140-year-old trees—an act of lunacy. I tried to convince the Government to move the light rail project one metre to save the 140-year-old trees in Anzac Parade, but the Government would not listen. I told the Government—as did the Randwick council—that land behind Doncaster Avenue, where it was proposed to put the stabling yards, was land that floods. The Government would not listen. Every suggestion I made to the Government to make changes to the project was completely ignored in the face of detailed work done by the Randwick council.

The last debacle—this is not part of an integrated transport project—was the release by the Randwick council of the report by EMM Consultants showing that the light rail process, because the Government would not listen, will carry fewer people over longer travel times than the bus service that had been enjoyed by people in my electorate. Strangely enough, this had been asserted by Rosemary McKenzie from the Kensington West Kingsford Precinct committee, which had done those calculations three years ago. Now the Government will spend \$2.1 billion and will have to run express buses along the route where it has always run them in Anzac Parade, which will have been reduced from six lanes to four lanes.

Last week the member for Rockdale and I met with a business owner from George Street, Sydney, who was complaining bitterly about the impact of the construction of light rail at that location. It has cost her business something in the order of 50 per cent in sales. She is losing money. She says that there is no rental assistance with respect to her business and she says that the work is proceeding at a rather leisurely pace. I would have thought that, in the middle of the CBD, the Government, as part of its contractual arrangements, could have finished at that location and got out of it to allow these businesses to continue to trade. I understand the member for Rockdale has made some reference to the treatment of those business owners. Infrastructure NSW would not have built this light rail. The Government decided to spend \$1.2 billion, which has blown out to \$2.1 billion. The Government has failed to listen to the advice of anyone who tried to make this light rail project work to some extent. As a result, the project will be a disaster for the Government and for people in my electorate.

TRIBUTE TO ANASTASIA SEETO

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Finance, Services and Property) (17:39): I praise the labours of an extraordinary woman, Anastasia Seeto, who is a constituent and long-time resident of Ryde and who retired recently from a remarkable career as a public servant in the legal sector over nearly 47 years. Thirty-five of those years were spent serving as a Crown prosecutor. To date, that is a record for years of service in this role. Anastasia was also the first Chinese female immigrant to be appointed to the role of Crown prosecutor in 1982 and she continued to serve until her retirement in January 2017. Anastasia was born in 1944 in Fiji, the third

of five sisters to Chinese parents. She married Lawrence Seeto, migrated to Australia in 1965 and the couple celebrated the granting of their Australian citizenship in 1969. They have raised two sons and now enjoy being part of the lives of their five grandchildren.

Working at the Supreme and District courts, Anastasia dealt with cases of all kinds, some of which included murder trials. Offering counsel to the High Court, the Court of Criminal Appeal and the Court of Appeal, Anastasia worked through criminal prosecutions involving fraud, sexual assault, armed robbery, drug trafficking and other issues. Anastasia has been able to share her findings and knowledge of criminal law, justice and reform by producing papers that were presented at international conferences around the globe throughout her career. Most notably, in 1996 she was invited to deliver a paper in Canada to the International Society for the Reform of Criminal Law on family conferencing and Aboriginal juvenile offenders in New South Wales. In 2007 Anastasia delivered a paper on the New South Wales Young Offenders Act 1997 to the same society.

Years of dedication to the public service saw Anastasia maintain her passion and relentless determination. She has fought for much that affects Australians in New South Wales and beyond on a day-to-day basis. For example, she successfully advocated on behalf of women for a change to the payment structure of the Superannuation Act in 1980 and 1981. Anastasia's success is a direct result of hours of diligent, hard work. Anastasia's service was not limited to the workplace. She and her husband, Lawrence Seeto, have been active members of the Ryde community via their loyal support of funding global and local initiatives through the Rotary Club of Eastwood.

Lawrence shares Anastasia's compassionate and unyielding zest-for-change attitude. Together, they have consistently strived to garner knowledge and influence by working on notable projects such as the current global Rotary project, the eradication of poliomyelitis and malaria through Water for Life in Third World countries. Anastasia and Lawrence also share their time together assisting with administrative and annual reports for the Denistone East Community Tennis Courts Committee. Anastasia's lifetime achievements prove the significance that hard work plays in contributing largely to not only an individual's job but also their community.

I commend Anastasia for her extraordinary service to New South Wales in the public sector alongside that of her service to her community in Ryde. She has been a tireless advocate, and has encouraged those around her to do the same, for social justice issues not only here but also globally. I am proud to call Anastasia a constituent of the Ryde electorate because people such as her truly make this world a better place. Through pursuing a reputable career and by consistently giving back to her community—and the world around her—Anastasia has shown what it means to be a leader of exceptional quality who inspires others. I wish Anastasia all the best in her next chapter in life and send her my gratitude for all that she has done in her capacity as a public servant, and for her work in our community.

UNIVERSITY CAMPUS SEXUAL ASSAULTS

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (17:42): I walk into this Parliament each and every working day with a sense of pride and humility—humility because of the enormous privilege each and every one of us holds as representatives of our communities and, amongst other things, immense pride to be one of the 33 women elected to this, the Fifty-sixth Parliament. It is the highest number of women elected in the history of the New South Wales Parliament. Although I am sure it will be disputed, it is a fact that election to this place as a woman is harder than it is for a man. It is a simple fact that there are more barriers for women seeking election, and even more so for women who are further marginalised by race, sexual orientation or disability.

It is also a simple fact that once they get here, even in this place, women face sexism and discrimination, whether it is the member for Castle Hill saying we would never get anything done here if women were given additional bathroom space in the Parliament, or the appalling questions asked of our new Premier by her party room on the day she was elected to lead New South Wales. It cannot be denied that women in this place are subject to the same rank sexism and discrimination that women across this State experience each and every day. Women in New South Wales experience discrimination in the shameful persistence of the gender pay gap. They feel discrimination in the Government's failure to invest properly in childcare services or to deliver adequate maternity leave. Women feel it in the inexcusable way that we fail to protect those exercising their right to a termination. Women feel it in the closure of women's refuges, in the gendered violence we see in our homes, and in the failure to protect young women from sexual harassment and rape on our university campuses.

"Let us Talk About It", a recent National Union of Students report, indicates that up to 72 per cent of female students experienced sexual harassment, assault, unwelcome sexual behaviour, stalking or rape at university. Astoundingly, 94 per cent of those women did not report the incident. That young people feel safe at university or TAFE should be a given. Still, we have seen high-profile incidents at residential colleges, including the near-death of a female student at St John's College after drinking a toxic cocktail of shampoo, dog food, tabasco sauce and rancid milk. And there is also the unseen: the stories of abuse and harassment we have not

learned about. Women have been subjected to the most horrific, degrading and dangerous behaviour possible, and have been let down by university administrations, by residential college boards and by governments that refuse to act.

Women on campuses across New South Wales have had enough, and NSW Labor stands with them. This week, I joined the shadow Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault and the Shadow Minister for Women in launching a new campaign to end sexual assault on campus. Students are calling for mandatory consent training for staff and residents of residential colleges. They are calling for a move towards a standard sexual assault reporting model that recognises the rule of law. They are also calling for specialised services for victims of sexual assault on campus. These are all seemingly obvious provisions that one would think were already in place—but they are not. I say to those women and to the countless young people who have been victims of sexual assault and rape on our campuses, NSW Labor stands with you. You are not alone. We see the pain you have experienced. We see your courage and your determination. We will do our very best to match that courage and determination.

We in this place would also do well to show courage and determination when it comes to protecting a woman's right to choose. Like many women across New South Wales, I was dismayed to hear the new Minister for Women express that she is pro-life in her very first statement in that role. A number of women in my electorate contacted me to let me know of their concern. In almost all cases, they did not object to the Minister's personal right to an alternative view—and nor do I. What they did object to, however, was a Minister opposed to a woman's right to choose being appointed the Minister for Women.

While the Minister has indicated she will not move backwards on this issue, it is not enough. The fact is we have to move forward. Women seeking a termination in New South Wales are forced to run a gauntlet. Protesters are allowed to gather around the entrance to clinics, often waving placards with images of aborted foetuses in their faces. These women, in a moment of intense vulnerability, are not protected by our laws. The truth is they are looking to women in this place to protect them and to act in their interests. We owe them nothing less.

KIAMA ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (17:47): Like many members of this place, I enjoy celebrating Australia Day in my community. Having spent time in the Middle East over Christmas, I cannot emphasise how lucky we are to live in this wonderful country of ours. This year I attended a number of Australia Day community events including a Rotary Club of Berry barbecue breakfast at Berry Showground, with special guest speaker and my great friend and local lawyer Paul Ell; a flag-raising ceremony at the Kiama Downs Surf Life Saving Club, with my good friend Councillor Mark Way and club captain Josh Douglas; a citizenship ceremony in Hindmarsh Park with our wonderful new Mayor of Kiama, Mark Honey; and Kiama Show Society's official opening night reception at the Kiama Pavilion.

I acknowledge the following citizens who received Australia Day Awards for their outstanding contributions to our region. I congratulate Citizen of the Year Colin Rathbone, who was recognised for 30 years with the Kiama and District Sport Association, Kiama Red Cross and Friends of Blue Haven. The Kiama Young Citizen of the Year was Imogen Bakewell, who was also the 2015 Youth Member for Kiama. As the 2014-15 Captain of Kiama High School, Imogen helped organise many fundraising and social events and leadership workshops as well as successfully lobbying for improvements to student facilities. Former Kiama Councillor Howard Jones received the Kiama Council Achievement Award for Service to the Environment.

The Youth Achievement Award went to award-winning photographer Ryan North, a wonderful young man with a very bright future. David Evans and Tamara Campbell received the Australia Day Community Arts Award for their work developing and running the Kiss Arts festival—a wonderful celebration in Kiama. Vince Hardman of Kiama, a surf club member for more than 40 years, received the Australia Day Sports Award in recognition of his pioneering work creating the South Coast Surf Life Saving radio room and communication operations. Jean Elaine Pratt received the Community Achievement Award for more than 50 years of volunteer work.

In the Shoalhaven, I congratulate Citizen of the Year June Stevens of North Nowra on her many years of volunteering and community service aiding families in the Shoalhaven. June is a wonderful and warm person and I am so proud of all her achievements. Dick Manwarring was recognised and awarded Citizen of the Year Highly Commended for his dedication in raising money for local cancer facilities—I note the Speaker acknowledged him in this place last week. Young Citizen of the Year went to Ava Del Tufo for her unwavering dedication and wholehearted enthusiasm to assist with social issues and community initiatives. Shoalhaven Sports Person of the Year was awarded to Ashleigh Hewson for being an outstanding sports representative for the Shoalhaven,

promoting women's sports at all levels, particularly rugby union. Shoalhaven Junior Sports Person of the Year was Tarje Whitford for his contribution and consistent performance in rugby league.

In Shellharbour, I congratulate Citizen of the Year and President of Shellharbour St Vincent de Paul Society Anna Leschnik, and Young Citizen of the Year, Warilla High School student Piper Rye on his work for organisations, including the KidzWish Foundation. A number of local residents were also recognised in the Australia Day honours list, including Ron Dryburgh of Albion Park, who was awarded an Order of Australia Medal [OAM] for his distinguished contribution to Albion Park Men's Shed, Albion Park Anglican Church and the Albion Park-Oak Flats Probus Club. He is a great friend to the community and a dear friend to me.

I congratulate top Illawarra scientist Professor Gordon Wallace, AO; North Wollongong academic Bill Lovegrove, AO; local Thirroul general practitioner, Dr Ann Ellacott, OAM, on her service to medicine; community health and education; Wollongong Rotarian Patrick Roberts, OAM; and former BlueScope boss, Noel Cornish, AM. Noel has been a wonderful mentor to so many, including me, and he is deeply deserving of this award. I am pleased to acknowledge Highlights on Mental Health and Illawarra's Top Model founder Robyn te Velde, OAM. Robyn is such a force of energy and I am so pleased with her recognition.

My friend Ray Vincent, OAM, of Coolangatta, has been recognised for his service to the local community, including Apex and Shoalhaven Heads Apex Cottages for Kids, which was established in 1991 and provides respite accommodation for families of chronically ill or disabled children through the Apex Foundation. Ray is a dedicated community man and this recognition is not before time. I extend congratulations to all those who were recognised on Australia Day for their great contributions to our community. They are the essence and flavour of our region. They embody the values of Australian mateship and dedication to others. They also embody altruistic service that makes Australia the best country in the world. We salute their volunteer service and thank them for their dedication. I am so proud of all of these great citizens who come from my community, the Kiama electorate.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (17:52): I congratulate the member for Kiama on his outstanding work. Citizenship and community awards were given on Australia Day not only in Kiama but also in all electorates throughout New South Wales and Australia. Communities are stronger because of the great work undertaken by many volunteers and many of us hold community award ceremonies every year. Volunteers across our country are unsung heroes because of their services to local communities. They do not seek recognition or awards; they volunteer their time because of their community spirit. I thank all those award recipients.

NSW NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (17:53): I address the impact on my electorate of cuts to National Parks and Wildlife Service rangers and field officers. The Blue Mountains electorate is predominantly a World Heritage listed national park, with a small sliver of built-up areas running through the middle. The national park plays a crucial role in the local economy and the day-to-day lives of my constituents. I was alarmed to learn, through answers to questions on notice, that the Baird-Berejiklian Government made significant staffing cuts that will gut the organisation of the expertise and capacity it requires to do its job. I have been contacted by National Parks and Wildlife Service staff, who wish to remain anonymous, who detailed to me the extent and ramification of the cuts.

At the time of that leak, 50 redundancies had been pushed through by this Government, affecting area managers, senior rangers, rangers and administrative support. According to my sources, this included some of the most qualified and experienced firefighters, and they will not be replaced. This will have a direct consequential impact on the Blue Mountains community during bushfire seasons—both due to the loss of experience and the capacity to mitigate bushfire risk before high-risk periods and during bushfires like the 2013 disaster. During those fires, sections of remote national park were burned and contributed to the spread of the bushfires, which claimed more than 200 homes.

In the months since this leak, I have done some digging of my own and discovered that the number of redundancies has blown out to 114. According to answers to my questions on notice, the number of rangers has been slashed from 266 in 2011 to just 217 in 2016. Right there, almost one-quarter of the rangers have been cut over the six years of this Government. Likewise, the number of field officers has also been slashed. In 2012 there were 750 field officers across the organisation; at the end of 2016 there were 672. That is 78 jobs cut, and the field officer workforce decimated. Make no mistake, I am told this has been the most unprofessional, shambolic restructure in the history of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. It is a blow to the capacity of the National Parks and Wildlife Service to manage our conservation areas, provide service to park visitors and protect our communities from bushfire. In addition to these cuts, the number of national park areas has been reduced from 60 to 50, which means that the reduced number of staff who remain employed by the National Parks and

Wildlife Service are forced to work harder and over a wider area, reducing the quality and breadth of service provided.

The restructure has been bereft of genuine consultation with both staff and unions, I have been told. Information dissemination has been appalling, with the future of many staff unknown for up to four years. This has created an environment of low morale, declining productivity and fear amongst staff. They tell me this is the worst state the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service has been in, in its almost 50 years of existence. In addition to this I have been informed that the Government is seeking to cut costs by dumping weekend rosters and moving staff back to a Monday to Friday working week, leaving wide sections of national park without staff at peak weekend visitation times.

Staff are concerned that park infrastructure will be degraded without supervision during weekends and that park rangers' time will be spent repairing the damage during the week. There is also a push to diminish the status, expertise and qualifications required to attain the position of ranger and dumb down the profession by removing the need for higher education qualifications in those highly specialised roles. Why would the Government do this to the State's premier conservation agency? Because it means it can pay the staff less. It is deliberately dumbing down our national parks rangers and threatened species officers. It is an appalling way to run a government agency. It demonstrates for all to see the contempt with which the Liberal Government views the environment and those who seek to protect it. As the letter from my well-placed source said:

To think they are doing this at a time of climate change and environmental degradation of the planet is just deplorable.

There seems to be no thought given to anything but saving money.

Well, actually, it is the people's money and they deserve to have it invested in the long-term health of our planet for the generations to come.

To this end, I call on the Berejiklian Government to reverse these cuts, respect the work that the National Parks and Wildlife Service does and take seriously the need to protect and conserve our national parks and conservation areas.

COFFS HARBOUR DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour) (17:58): Tonight I speak about an issue that is extremely important to the Coffs Harbour electorate. Some 40 years ago a firm by the name of W. E. Smith Engineering decentralised to Coffs Harbour from Sydney and made heat exchange vessels that went all over the world. It was the first large engineering works to decentralise from a major metropolitan area to a regional area. The son of the founder of the firm, John Smith, who passed away late last year, saw the benefit in moving his firm to regional New South Wales. In its heyday it employed in the vicinity of 120 or 125 people to manufacture heat exchangers. It is difficult to believe it could be done in a regional area.

Due to a series of transactions and ownerships that firm recently went into liquidation. There were 82 people employed by that company. I met with them and with Australian Workers' Union representatives. Through the Department of Industry we are currently trying to find jobs for them on the North Coast, within driving distance of Coffs Harbour. Dorrigo and Bellingen are no longer located in my electorate. A firm located in that area called Regional Architects Pty Ltd is run by Nick Young and Dan Stevens. They have developed and patented a construction system second to none. It is a system of gluing boards together to make pods from which motels could be constructed.

I have forwarded to the Minister for Industry a development proposal that includes the W.E. Smith site. Nick and Dan are presently negotiating with the owner of the site. The project would enable them to employ 72 skilled workers from the previous business, but they need Government assistance. They have a proposal to build a wildlife centre and eco accommodation area on the Link Road, Coffs Harbour, bordering Boambee Creek. The project includes a childcare centre that will provide seven jobs, a restaurant and cafe supplying seven jobs, a seniors development living area supplying seven jobs, a factory supplying 72 jobs, a gallery, cultural centre and education ecotourism area on the creek, an accommodation centre which would employ six people, a wildlife hospital supplying seven jobs, and the opportunity to have a koala sanctuary. Their plans are magnificent.

They need start-up assistance to buy the W.E. Smith site, which is renowned as a koala habitat. It would form a corridor to Hogbin Drive, which is where the eco centre and cafe would be located on Boambee Creek. It is what the region requires. A member opposite spoke of the lack of National Parks and Wildlife Service funding. This project proposes a service that is not in the purview of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. It provides an educational opportunity for young people and will provide up to 160 construction jobs. A residential aged care centre is proposed as part of this huge project that will take millions of dollars to build. I ask the Government to provide this company with grants or low interest loans under the regional development plans that will allow a development that will replace the 82 jobs recently lost to the region. It is vital that it is considered

immediately. I believe it ticks all the boxes—from regional development and employment through to ecotourism. I commend Nick and Dan for the great job they have done thus far.

TRIBUTE TO DIANNE MURRAY AND SEAN O'CONNOR

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (18:04): I will use the time of the State Parliament to acknowledge two very different people who have been tremendous and extraordinary in their own ways. I start by acknowledging Dianne Murray, who is retiring from TAFE NSW after serving 31 years in the organisation. Dianne was appointed in 2006 as Institute Director, TAFE Illawarra, following an extensive career as a teacher and manager in both schools and vocational education and the training sector.

Prior to being the institute director, Dianne was the deputy director at the South Western Sydney Institute. Dianne has been involved in the development and management of international programs in the People's Republic of China for more than 10 years and was appointed by the Tianjin municipal government as its vocational education adviser. Dianne has extensive experience in providing leadership to support improvements in organisational performance and the provision of support services for education and training services and initiatives. Her commitment to TAFE Illawarra built the business performance of the organisation through engagement with staff, open and honest communication, and support for individuals to challenge themselves by responding to customer needs in innovative ways.

In the past six years, \$30 million has been invested in facilities at the Wollongong and Shellharbour campuses, which has positioned TAFE as a high-quality vocational training provider. During Dianne's time as institute director, TAFE Illawarra became BlueScope's trainer of choice and the institute's first bachelor degree in early childhood education and care was offered at the Shellharbour campus for domestic and international students. Other achievements included the introduction of the Indigenous Police Recruiting Our Way Delivery program, hosting WorldSkills Australia Global Skills Challenge at the Wollongong campus and winning the Australian Business Award for Environmental Sustainability. As institute director, Dianne's focus was always on continuing to change people's lives, building strong communities and contributing to a healthy and thriving Illawarra economy. I thank her for her distinguished service and commitment over three decades to education and training.

Whilst we are talking about departures, it gives me no joy to acknowledge the departure of the chief of staff of the Speaker, Mr Sean O'Connor, who has accepted a senior post with the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory. The Parliament has been extremely fortunate to have someone of Sean's calibre serve the Speaker and members in his important role. I know I speak for members on both sides of the House when I say that Sean is universally respected for his diligence, professionalism and dedication to all members of this House. Sean came to work in this place following a long tenure in the private sector. He has a passion for public service and admiration for democratic process that will serve him and the people of the Northern Territory tremendously well.

Sean was recently with me on a delegation I led to Israel and Palestine. Not only was he incredibly organised but he kept the entire delegation on time. Whenever I wanted to do anything that was somewhat off the schedule, the phrase "How about no?" was a frequent response. Sean and his partner Paul leave this State in the knowledge that they have made a great contribution to this Parliament and will continue to build a very bright future. It is wonderful to have friends in politics—people say that it is not possible, but in Sean and Paul I have had two wonderful friends. They will continue to be my great friends. They will be missed by not only Madam Speaker but all of us. On behalf of this side of the House and indeed of the Parliament, I thank him for his service to the Parliament and to the people of New South Wales and I wish him and Paul all the very best for what I am sure will be a bright and promising future.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): Before I call the next speaker I acknowledge Sean's presence in the gallery this evening. As a Temporary Speaker I also thank him for his service and good humour, and for the professionalism with which he has helped me through this role. I wish him and his partner all the best in the Northern Territory. Our loss is absolutely their gain. Thank you very much.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (18:07): It would be inappropriate if I did not add on behalf of the Government to the comments that you have made, Temporary Speaker, and that the member for Kiama admirably made. Indeed, the comments that the Speaker made today in Parliament met with acclaim from all members of this House. Again on behalf of the Government I wish Sean well for the future—I am sure it will be bright.

CHINESE NEW YEAR

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) (18:08): On Sunday 12 February I had the great fortune of being invited to attend the Blessing of Cabramatta at Freedom Plaza as part of the Chinese Lunar New Year festivities.

The event was hosted by the Chinese Associations of Greater Western Sydney as part of the wider Lunar New Year festivities in my electorate. The day began with the Blessing of Cabramatta by the abbots and monks from the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society whereby they endowed the city with their blessing and sought good fortune, prosperity and happiness for the year ahead. A number of speeches by members of the official delegation were then presented. Mr Vincent Kong of the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society, who has recently been awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia [OAM] for his service to the community, and Mr Kiet Luong of the Chin Lien Chinese Association spoke on behalf of the organising committee wishing the community of Cabramatta a blessed new year.

This was followed by a firecracker display at the arch at Freedom Plaza. Firecrackers are believed to ward off evil spirits and celebrate the coming of a new year in a positive environment. The large crowd that had amassed by the gates was then treated to a spirited performance by the Australian Chinese Teo-Chew Association's celebrated lion dancer. The lion dance is to ward off evil spirits and beasts and to bring happiness to the people. This event concluded with the distribution of lucky envelopes to members of the official delegation by the God of Fortune. The red envelopes are believed to promote good fortune and prosperity for the coming year and to bestow good luck on the recipient.

The Lunar New Year also heralded the beginning of the Year of the Rooster in the Chinese zodiac. This is my zodiac year. Roosters are believed to be afforded good luck by the colour red. I was extremely thankful to receive good wishes from the community for my zodiac year. I was going to wear a red tie today, but it had food marks on it so I wore a purple one instead. So much for the lucky red colour. It is always wonderful to attend these events, where members of our communities join together to celebrate significant days in their lives. The more we celebrate and learn about one another, the more we allow the insights and understanding we glean to strengthen the ties that bind us all, to the benefit of everyone in the community. I thank a valued member of the community, James Chan, OAM, and his team for organising this event as part of the wider Lunar New Year celebrations in my electorate of Cabramatta. It is a great privilege to represent such a multicultural electorate, where celebrations of our diversity such as this strengthen community cohesion. May everybody have a happy New Year. Gong hei fat choy!

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 18:11 until
Tuesday 7 March 2017 at 12:00.**