



New South Wales

Legislative Assembly

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Sixth Parliament
First Session**

Wednesday, 8 March 2017

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 8 March 2017

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

The SPEAKER read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

[Notices of motions given.]

Notices

PRESENTATION

[During the giving of notices of motions]

The SPEAKER: Order! The motion of the member for Bankstown is too long. The member will resume her seat.

Bills

STATE REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2017

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 7 March 2017.

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (Epping) (10:10): Of all the issues that beset property purchasers, the payment of stamp duty and other duties is one with which all people who acquire property are well familiar. The amendments proposed by this legislation that affect the Duties Act seek to amend various parts of that Act to deal with anomalies that have arisen in the manner in which a duty has been assessed. One would readily know that in the event that someone purchases a property for, say, \$1 million, they would be likely to receive an assessment of close to \$50,000 in stamp duty attributable to that purchase. However, if one purchased shares in a company then it becomes more complicated because an assessment has to be made as to whether a company is a landholder company for the purposes of the Act and whether duty would be assessed on the basis of a land-rich or landholding company.

I turn to a case which exercised the attention of the Office of State Revenue relating to the sale of the Cross City Tunnel. The sale of the Cross City Tunnel was conducted in two parts. The first part involved a transaction that involved an assessment of duty of \$36,285,490. It also incurred a penalty, which I assume is a late payment penalty, of some \$5,442,823.50. Finally, there was interest payable for the duty that had not been paid, which totalled \$19,346,220.38. There were separate proceedings in respect of the replacement of a transfer which related to the replacement of a trustee and the commissioner made an assessment of that transfer. This is all in relation to the transfer of assets that were the subject of the transfer of the Cross City Tunnel, but the second assessment on the replacement of the trustee came in at \$20,431,000 with interest of \$10,893,000.

What has all this got to do with why we need to amend this Act hose held to be liable for the duty challenged the finding of the commissioner. A number of very complex issues needed to be resolved. The first was: Were the rights in respect of tolling part of the acquisition? The second was: What was the value of the asset being sold? The third was: What was the value of the land held by the entity that was being transferred? Generally it would have been assessed that an asset of this size would have been held by a land-rich company and the assessment made by the commissioner would have been reasonably accurate. The proceedings were heard by Justice Bergin in the Supreme Court, who made various determinations on the manner in which the section was to be interpreted.

I turn to the matter of whether duty was payable on the replacement of a trustee. The duty payable on the replacement of a trustee—if in fact that was being done—is \$50. So we are looking at a reduction in stamp duty from some \$36 million to \$50. That was the claim made by those who were assessed for the purpose of duty. The question turned on the issue of whether the replacement of the trustee was to the detriment or beneficial interest or potential beneficial interest of any person. That is lawyer talk. Lawyers would say that if the person receiving the benefit under the trust remains the same under the new trust then it is a mere replacement of a trustee and it is not just a scheme for the purposes of avoiding the stamp duty. Interestingly enough, Justice Bergin found that, because the trust received the money, there was no detriment to the beneficiary. Therein lies the problem. In fact, the determination of the court was that she revoked the assessment. The State of New South Wales lost an assessment of \$36 million in assessable duty by virtue of that determination. This legislation seeks to amend

section 54 to take out the provision that says "to the detriment of the beneficial interest or potential beneficial interest of the person" and replace those words with:

... so as to cause any person to cease holding the whole or any part of a beneficial interest (or potential beneficial interest) in that property.

It clarifies that this was a land transfer and the beneficial interest had been transferred by virtue of the fact that the beneficiaries of the trust ceased to hold the land. There was a consequent amendment in section 54 (3). The member for Ku-ring-gai yesterday correctly articulated the changes that had been made. But, again, the amendment to section 54 (3) is such that it replaces the notion of having to show that there was a detriment to the beneficiaries of the trust by merely showing that there has been a cessation of holding the interest in the land. That case has a number of very interesting components. The question of whether the ability to toll was a component of the valuation, for the purposes of assessing the value, was another matter that was the subject of consideration by Her Honour. She found that the tolling was a separate business that was not subject to the assessment.

One further part of the assessment that needed to take place was whether the debts of the company in connection with the running of the toll would also be taken into account in relation to the valuation. In fact, Justice Bergin found for the commissioner in that case by refusing to say that one would take into account the debts incurred by the company for the purposes of making the assessment. What this bill does in respect of those two discrete sections is to clarify what has been normal practice—and what lawyers would have understood for the past 30-odd years—by saying that a transaction by a land-rich company that has the effect of transferring land should be assessed at ad valorem duty and not be assessed on the basis that it was merely the replacement of a trustee.

There are some additional provisions which have been amended in relation to the Duties Act. They relate to landholder companies. This is a reasonably complex area of law, which lawyers get very agitated about because if there is ever a claim on their professional indemnity insurance it is likely to be in relation to the advice that they give their clients in respect of stamp duty assessments. With respect to landholder companies, there is a rate of tax for purchasing the shares in a company. I think one pays six cents per hundred dollars when you are buying company shares. That is the duty you pay in relation to a share transaction. [*Extension of time*]

It used to be a fairly common practice for companies to transfer shares instead of transferring land, and thereby get a lower rate of duty than the ad valorem duty which would attach to the sale of land. Provisions were introduced so that if a company was a land-rich company the transfer of shares could not be used as a tool to avoid the duty. What are the triggers for that? If someone is purchasing more than 50 per cent of the shares in a company and the company has more than \$2 million worth of property, those circumstances would trigger the land-rich provisions. So if you purchased shares in a land-rich company then you would pay duty on the value of the land and not on some artificial assessment of the value of the shares.

Lawyers, of course, get a bit tricky and ask, "What would happen if I enter into an agreement for the purchase of land—I might only hold \$1 million-worth of land—and then I transfer the shares? I do not hold \$2 million worth of property at that point but after I have transferred the shares I then become the owner of the \$2 million worth of property." This legislation means that the Government is onto the lawyers' tricks. It says that if you acquire the \$2 million for an agreement which took place within 12 months of the purchase of the property the company then becomes a land-rich company.

There is another trick with respect to put and call options. A put option is where I can require someone to buy my property; alternatively, a call option is where they can call on me to sell their property. Put and call options were vehicles which tended to be used for the purposes of defeating the land-rich provisions which were contained in the Act. The benefit of a put and call option would trigger a land-rich provision and duty could not be avoided by virtue of that provision. From time to time, the Commissioner will review the manner in which the Act is being used and the manner in which assessments are being made in relation to replacement of trustees. With respect to land-rich companies various assessments have been made by the Commissioner which identify problems in the assessment of duty and how the duty ought be assessed.

Of course, it would be preferable to have a scheme which makes this all very simple—to abolish stamp duty and to have a different scheme for raising revenue on behalf of the State—but this is what we have. The provisions, as they have been amended in this legislation, are for the benefit of every person in New South Wales. The amount of \$36 million could build a few classrooms, add extensions to hospitals or whatever. The State is deprived of that revenue by virtue of a determination about the replacement of a trustee, when in fact land was transferred which normally would have assessable duty payable on it. That determination has resulted in the State losing out. Interestingly enough that decision went on appeal to the Court of Appeal and the lawyers got tricky again.

Mr Adam Crouch: Unbelievable.

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Unbelievable. Of course, what happened was that the companies that were the subject of the assessment went into liquidation. I will highlight a number of other provisions. There is generally no duty payable on transfers between de facto partners or spouses who get divorced. That exemption did not apply in circumstances where the person getting divorced, or the relationship was in a breakdown, was bankrupt. The transfer by the trustee in bankruptcy of a property, pursuant to the breakdown of a marriage or a relationship, to the other spouse was assessed. The amendment to the Act now provides that the transfer by the trustee in bankruptcy is also subject to exemption. I praise the Minister for bringing these complex amendments. It is good legislation and it is good for the people of this State.

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (10:25): I am excited that you, Mr Temporary Speaker Evans, are in the chair after having had such a wonderful breakfast with you this morning to celebrate International Women's Day with so many talented women from our local area. I support the State Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2017, which makes various amendments to duties, land tax and payroll tax legislation to clarify liability, address avoidance practices and clarify or extend concessions. The main purpose of the bill is to keep the tax legislation effective and up to date as part of the routine administration of State taxation. The amendments improve equity, reduce red tape by removing uncertainty and improve administrative simplicity. As a former tax lawyer I know firsthand the importance of having digestible and easy-to-navigate legislation. I am sure all the other litigators in this place would appreciate the importance of having legislation that they can all work with. The member for Epping touched on that at length in his contribution to this debate.

The provisions making lessees of land owned by the Crown liable for land tax commenced in 1989 and were extended to lessees of council land in 1992. They were intended to create a level playing field between people who leased from the Crown and those who leased premises from private owners who were required to pay land tax in their outgoings. The Office of State Revenue attempts to inform lessees of potential liability through their client education program and information is published on the website of the Office of State Revenue and included in land tax brochures. The Office of State Revenue also writes to Crown bodies and councils to remind them to inform new lessees of any potential land tax liabilities, and to get the details of new leases entered into. Unfortunately some lessees slip through each year and are only identified after compliance activity, which is never a good outcome.

The amendment to require Crown bodies and councils to include a clause in all new lease agreements will benefit lessees in several ways. People who are aware of potential land tax liability can take the liability into account when negotiating lease payments, and the number of clients who fail to declare a land tax liability and who later have to pay up to five years of prior tax debt will be decreased. Inevitably, these are both good outcomes for our constituents. Another area of this legislation that is being amended is the payroll tax motor vehicle allowance. By way of background, the Payroll Tax Act exempts a motor vehicle allowance paid to an employee for business use of the employee's vehicle to the rate for a large car prescribed in Commonwealth income tax legislation.

The 2014-15 prescribed rate for a large car was 77¢ per kilometre. I understand that the Commonwealth has amended its legislation to replace the existing three-tiered scale of motor vehicle allowances with a single rate. With this in mind, the single rate for the 2015-16 and 2016-17 years is now 66¢ per kilometre. This amendment then adopts the Commonwealth's changes so that the same rate is applied for payroll tax purposes in this State. Again, this simplifies administration for employers and reduces red tape. These intended outcomes will make this provision much easier to navigate moving forward.

With respect to the payroll tax Living Organ Donors Program, recently the Commonwealth Government introduced a scheme to encourage people to donate a kidney or a partial liver. This scheme reimburses employers for the wages paid for up to six weeks leave taken by the donor employee, based on the national minimum wage for a 38-hour week. The amendments make it clear that these payments from the employer to the employee are exempt wages to the extent that wages are reimbursed by the Commonwealth. This will remove a potential disincentive for employers to approve leave for employees participating in the scheme.

Turning to duties, exemptions and concessions, in a rapidly changing commercial world it is necessary for taxing legislation to keep pace with changes to commercial practices and ensure that legislation does not have unintended effects on particular categories of taxpayers. With this in mind, there are three extended duties, concessions and exemptions that this bill amends. For simplicity I will outline them briefly. The first is the exemption for transfers of primary production land between family members, which already applies to transfers from family companies and trusts. The bill extends this exemption to include transfers from a self-managed superannuation fund to recognise the increasing practice of holding family businesses in self-managed superannuation funds. The second affects the nominal duties that currently apply where an agreement is completed by transfer to a person who is related to the purchaser. This is extended to transfers to custodians of self-managed superannuation funds, where the fund trustee was the purchaser. The third affects the exemption that applies to

transfers of property as a consequence of the break-up of a marriage or de facto relationship. This bill extends this to transfers to a trustee in bankruptcy of the parties to a marriage.

In addition to these extended duties, concessions and exemptions, the bill also provides two new exemptions. A new exemption is provided for transfers of fund assets arising from members moving to a MySuper fund, and a new exemption from duty is provided on the vesting of land upon the merger of credit unions and/or mutual banks. The effect on revenue of these concessions is understandably minor, as the transactions in question are either not common or the result of new developments where no duty liability previously existed. That being said, individual taxpayers will be relieved from paying significant duty liability in circumstances where that liability was not intended.

I have gone through a number of amendments in this legislation, so I will summarise why I will ultimately commend this legislation to the House. I reiterate that the main purpose of this bill is to keep tax legislation effective and up to date. It is a routine part of business for government. In fact, we did it in this place as recently as a year ago. I repeat: The amendments will improve equity, reduce red tape—none of us want practitioners to be unnecessarily concerned about red tape or for our constituents to face these unnecessary barriers as they get on with their daily lives—and it will ultimately improve administrative simplicity. That will always be the Government's goal. I mentioned at the beginning of my contribution that before becoming a member of Parliament I had gone through the odd one or two pieces of tax legislation. I can confidently say that this will be fantastic for tax professionals and I know the people that I have left at PwC Australia and Deloitte Australia will be very happy with it. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (10:35): I join the former speakers in this debate in acknowledging that today is International Women's Day 2017. I note that Mr Temporary Speaker, who is looking particularly resplendent this morning, is also wearing a purple ribbon on his lapel in support of this day. This morning I attended the International Women's Day breakfast, which was held at the new Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre. It was a wonderful turnout. Unfortunately, Stephanie Foster, the 2017 Terrigal Woman of the Year, was not able to attend. I was happy to attend on her behalf and I look forward to informing her about this morning's festivities. I wish all women in Australia and globally a very happy International Women's Day.

I turn now to the State Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2017. I state at the outset that I support the bill. I also pay tribute to the Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation, Mr Victor Dominello, and his incredibly hardworking staff. Yesterday the Minister introduced a ground-breaking piece of legislation in this place that will result in significant reductions in green slip prices for all drivers in this State, including taxidriver, et cetera. Minister Dominello is one of the most active Ministers in this Parliament. He and his staff are always available to explain legislation to backbenchers. Indeed, I have been briefed by him and his staff on multiple pieces of legislation. The members representing the electorates of Wollondilly, Oatley, Ku-ring-gai, Tweed, Epping, Miranda and Myall Lakes preceded me in this debate and they have all made excellent contributions to this debate.

The State Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2017 makes various amendments to duties, land tax and payroll tax legislation to clarify liability, address avoidance practices and clarify or extend concessions. As the member for Miranda said earlier, she practised as a tax lawyer before coming to this place—I will not hold that against her because I am led to believe it is a very honourable profession. I agree with her comments that reducing red tape will make it easier for not only the practitioners but also the ratepayers and our constituents. I am pleased that Minister Dominello has introduced these excellent solutions to the complex issue of State revenue.

The bill will amend the Duties Act 1997 to ensure that it applies to instruments that are in a digital form. In a rapidly changing technological world it is important that our legislation keeps pace with such advancements. The bill will also extend an existing concession to transfers of property to the custodian of a trustee of a self-managed superannuation fund where duty on an agreement has been paid. It will clarify when a concession applies upon retirement or appointment of a trustee. It will provide for exemption from duty for the vesting of land occurring as a consequence of the merger of credit unions or authorised deposit-taking institutions with mutual structures.

The bill will extend the existing exemptions from duty on transfers following the break-up of a marriage or de facto relationships to trustees under the Commonwealth Bankruptcy Act 1966. It will clarify landholder duty provisions in relation to the aggregation of interest tracing through to linked entities. It extends an existing anti-avoidance measure and prevents avoidance of liability for landholder duty through the use of arrangements that include put and call options.

The bill ensures that liabilities are disregarded in determining whether a person has a dutiable interest in a landholder. It extends existing exemptions from duty in connection with transfers between family members of land used for primary production to self-managed superannuation funds. It provides for an exemption from duty

connected with transfers of property between superannuation funds that are required by the Commonwealth's MySuper reforms. It will strengthen provisions applying to tax avoidance schemes that are of an artificial, blatant or contrived nature. It will extend the circumstances in which trustees, natural persons and private companies are treated as being associated for the purposes of tracing liability for duty through to subtrusts.

The next part of the bill amends the Land Tax Management Act 1956 to require a government entity that leases Crown land to make lessees aware of their liability for land tax. The bill also amends the Payroll Tax Act 2007 to make it clear that certain wages paid by employment agencies who on-hire their common law employees are exempt wages. The bill also amends various Acts to permit disclosures of information to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. I note that the Minister has joined us in the Chamber and I want to thank him again for another fantastic piece of legislation. After yesterday, everybody is thanking him about green slips. It was a fantastic day indeed.

In the brief time I have remaining—I know the Minister is here—I will quickly cover some of the issues I raised earlier relating to duty exemptions and concessions. In a rapidly changing commercial world, it is necessary for tax legislation to keep pace with changes to commercial practices and for us to ensure that such legislation does not have unintended effects on particular categories of taxpayers. The bill contains three extensions of duty concessions and exemptions. First, there is an exemption for transfers of primary production land between family members that already applies to transfers from family companies and trusts. The bill extends this to include transfers from self-managed superannuation funds. This recognises the increasingly common practice of family businesses being held in self-managed superannuation funds.

Secondly, nominal duty currently applies where an agreement is completed by a transfer to a person who is related to the purchaser. The bill extends this to transfers to custodians of self-managed superannuation funds where the fund trustee was the purchaser. Thirdly, an exemption applies to transfers of property as a consequence of the break-up of a marriage or a de facto relationship. The bill extends this to transfers to a trustee in bankruptcy of the parties to the marriage.

The bill also provides two new exemptions. A new exemption is provided for transfers of fund assets arising from members moving to a MySuper fund, and a new exemption from duty is provided on the vesting of land upon the merger of credit unions and/or mutual banks. The effect on revenue of these concessions is minor, as the transactions in question are either not common or are the result of new developments where no duty liability previously existed. However, individual taxpayers will be relieved from paying significant duty in circumstances where that liability had not been intended.

The provisions making lessees of land owned by the Crown liable for land tax commenced in 1989 and were extended to lessees of council land in 1992. They were intended to create a level playing field between people who lease from the Crown and people who lease premises from private owners, who are required to pay land tax in their outgoings. The Office of State Revenue attempts to inform lessees of potential liability through its client education program, and information is published on the Office of State Revenue website and included in land tax brochures, which is incredibly helpful to those lessees.

The amendment to require Crown bodies and councils to include a clause in all new lease agreements will benefit lessees in several ways. People who are aware of the potential for land tax liability can take the liability into account when negotiating lease payments, and the number of clients who fail to declare a land tax liability and who later have to pay up to five years of prior tax-year debt will be decreased. These are excellent amendments and they are a credit to the Minister and his outstanding staff who are, yet again, bringing forward much-needed amendments that will reduce red tape and make it much easier for the people of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Finance, Services and Property) (10:45): In reply: As all members have heard, the New South Wales Government is committed to having best practice revenue laws. The State Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2017 contains amendments that reflect that commitment. The main purpose of the revenue reforms in this bill is to keep the tax legislation effective and up to date as part of the routine administration of State taxation. I thank members who made contributions to the debate on this bill: the member for Cessnock, the member for Wollondilly, the member for Ku-ring-gai, the member for Oatley, the member for Tweed, the member for Myall Lakes, the member for Epping, the member for Miranda and the member for Terrigal. I will give a quick shout-out to the member for Epping, who approached me last night in relation to the content of this bill. He did his own research, and credit goes to him for that, and he pointed out the enormous contribution that this bill will make in additional revenues to the State. The member for Epping is an outstanding member and his constituents are fortunate to have him as their representative.

The amendments in this bill are the latest instalments in the Government's ongoing revenue reforms to keep the taxation legislation effective and up to date. The changes 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; and reduce red tape by removing uncertainty, increasing harmonisation with other States and Territories where possible, and improving administrative simplicity.

To summarise the many amendments contained in the bill I will deal first with amendments to the Duties Act 1997. A number of the amendments improve the effectiveness of the landholder duty provisions. Landholder duty is imposed on the acquisition of an interest in a company or a 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 the landholder duty legislation, which identified weaknesses that could result in uncertain interpretation or 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 ultimately to 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 land subject to 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 revenue base for duties. The bill strengthens the duties general anti-avoidance provisions. The current provisions were modelled on Commonwealth tax legislation, and Federal Court decisions in recent years have reduced the effectiveness of those provisions. The amendment is based on 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 duties 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 de facto relationship, and an extension of the exemption for transfers of primary production land between family members to include transfers from a self-managed superannuation fund. Other duties concessions include the application of 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 an 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 is now 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 Law Society of NSW standard form of contract for sale of land, which can be completed, signed and exchanged digitally. Just as an aside, recently we announced more reform around e-conveyancing, where we will be moving to a completely digital format in the not too distant future. The duties legislation is therefore being amended to clarify the administration arrangements for assessment of electronic documents.

The bill also includes a provision to make lessees more 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 that 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 this 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 this very worthwhile 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.

Many of the individual amendments in this bill could be described as minor or housekeeping amendments, and 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 and in these circumstances I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

BIOSECURITY AMENDMENT BILL 2017

Second Reading

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Lands and Forestry, and Minister for Racing) (10:54):

I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Good biosecurity management is critical to the protection of the economy, the environment, and the community from the negative impacts of pests, diseases, weeds, and contaminants. Traditionally, biosecurity has been associated with protecting our \$14-million primary industry sector, which accounts for about 20 per cent of Australian production. Biosecurity is much more than that. The NSW Biosecurity Strategy 2013-2021 was launched in 2013. This heralded the first step in a new approach to biosecurity management in this State. The strategy was developed with input from all areas of government, not only the primary industry sector, to reflect that biosecurity is important to all of us in all that we do.

Many pests and diseases impact upon production, but they can also have a devastating effect on other businesses, such as those related to tourism and the hospitality sector. For example, during the foot and mouth disease outbreak in the United Kingdom in 2001, the tourism industry in the Lakes District lost a whole season of income, and total losses to the country were estimated to be of the order of £8 billion. Failure to protect our aquatic environments from the introduction of new pests and diseases will reduce the value of aquatic tourism, fishing, and agricultural industries. It will also affect the functioning of aquatic ecosystems, which then impact on commercial and recreational fishing and the environment. The direct value of aquatic tourism and recreational activities in Australia is estimated to be about \$12 billion, which equates to 19 per cent of the total value of the tourism sector in this country.

Protection of our biosecurity and our distinctive ecosystems and natural environment is underpinned by good biosecurity practices. Pest animals and weeds are among our biggest threats to biodiversity and the natural environment. About 19 per cent of native terrestrial mammal species have become extinct since European settlement. Pest animals such as cats, foxes, rabbits, and wild dogs are considered to be the primary cause of many of these extinctions. Pest animals are also contributing to the decline in the number of many native animals, in particular, bird and reptile species, including approximately 40 per cent of New South Wales's threatened species.

More than 1,650 species of exotic plants have become established in the wild in New South Wales. At least 300 of these weeds are highly invasive and pose a substantial threat to biosecurity. A large number of them are escaped garden plants. Many weeds are widespread and beyond the scope of eradication or containment programs. The number and distribution of introduced species, including aquatic pests, becoming established in the natural environment is increasing. Pest populations usually have a higher reproductive capability, can colonise new areas rapidly, and recover quickly after targeted control programs have concluded. The absence of natural predators or environmental control measures often adds to this impact.

This Government takes biosecurity very seriously, and is doing much to minimise risks and threats in New South Wales. As I said, the NSW Biosecurity Strategy 2013-2021 was launched in 2013. The strategy includes four principles: first, that biosecurity is a shared responsibility; secondly, that biosecurity contributes to sustainable economic growth; thirdly, that biosecurity protects the environment and the community; and, fourthly, that biosecurity is underpinned by a responsive and consistent legislative framework. I have touched briefly on the first three goals. However, today is about the underpinning legislation. September 2015 saw assent given to the Biosecurity Act 2015, a most important piece of legislation. This Act will wholly and in part repeal 14 separate pieces of legislation that have been used to manage biosecurity risks in New South Wales. The development of this Act was a huge task that involved extensive consultation and collaboration with stakeholders.

The Act provides a flexible and modern approach to how we prevent, eradicate, minimise and manage biosecurity risks in New South Wales. Its implementation will support our \$14 million primary industries sector, provide greater capacity to mitigate and respond to risks that threaten our environment and cultural heritage, and protect jobs and industries across New South Wales such as trade and tourism. For the first time there are consistent tools and powers that will apply across the biosecurity spectrum, making it easier for everyone. Since the assent to the Act we have been working with stakeholders to develop the supporting regulations and policies that will underpin the Act.

It is also important to note at this point that during the passage of the Biosecurity Act 2015 this Government committed to establishing an independent Biosecurity Advisory Committee to provide advice on implementation of the Act. I am pleased to report that this committee was established in March last year and has met on at least 10 occasions and provided valuable insight and advice on engagement and communication with our stakeholders and appropriate management tools with respect to biosecurity matter based on risk. It was during this consultation that a number of omissions were identified in the Act that will affect its successful implementation. These are minor omissions and this bill merely seeks to ensure that existing arrangements and practices that support market access are not eroded and that there is strong governance around biosecurity activities. Whilst it is unfortunate that we overlooked these enabling provisions when developing the Act, the positive side is that they have been identified in consultation with stakeholders before the Act commences.

The first amendment provides a head of power to charge for the issuance of a biosecurity certificate. Biosecurity certificates are issued to certify that a plant, plant product, animal or other carrier is free of particular pests or diseases, has received appropriate treatment or has come from a specified area to satisfy market access and disease and pest control requirements. Biosecurity certificates underpin national and State-based plant health assurance arrangements that support market access. Biosecurity certificates are issued to certify that cattle travelling from tick infested zones in Queensland have been treated so the risk of tick infestation or tick fever in New South Wales is mitigated. Similarly, agricultural machinery or equipment that originates from areas infested with the high-risk parthenium weed in Queensland will have to be certified that it has been appropriately treated before entry into New South Wales.

Industry participants have a choice whether to become accredited to issue certificates, where appropriate, or to purchase that service from government or accredited third party certifiers. Current arrangements require a fee to be paid for certain biosecurity certificates that are issued by authorised officers, such as plant health certificates, to recover the administrative costs associated with the provision of a biosecurity certificate. The charging of such fees is consistent with New South Wales and other States' and Territories' principles for cost recovery.

The Act includes a head of power that allows for charging of fees for other activities such as registration to keep non-indigenous animals and bees, and accreditation. This amendment is consistent with the principles of the Act and current arrangements. Consultation occurred in relation to the charging of fees when the Act was developed and more recently as part of consultation on the proposed regulation to support the Act. The proposed charges have been developed following an analysis of existing fees and the resources required to deliver services under the Act. Fees will be no more than is reasonable to cover the cost and expenses incurred by the certifier.

I turn to the second amendment that will recognise that corporations in addition to individuals may be accredited as biosecurity certifiers or appointed as biosecurity auditors. Australia and indeed New South Wales has had a strong focus on quarantine which means that we are free of many of the significant pests and diseases that adversely affect agricultural production in other countries. Freedom from pests and diseases provides an enormous market advantage at the national and State level for our producers.

The Biosecurity Act 2015 provides the legislative underpinning for the Interstate Certification Assurance [ICA] scheme. This is a national system accepted by all States and Territories that allows accredited businesses to self-certify plants and plant products as meeting specific interstate quarantine restrictions. The scheme is based on quality management principles and provides a harmonised approach to the audit and accreditation of businesses throughout Australia and the mutual recognition of plant health assurance certificates issued by accredited businesses accompanying consignments of produce moving interstate. The Certification Assurance scheme is similar to the ICA and allows for intrastate—within New South Wales—trade or interstate trade between New South Wales and one or more States and/or Territories. The bill will amend the Act to reflect how these schemes operate at a practical level.

Currently individuals and other legal entities such as corporations self-certify their produce to meet trade requirements. This bill will ensure that corporations can also undertake this function, reflecting current practices, business structures and operations. Auditing is an important compliance tool to support market assurance schemes and support development of new markets. This amendment will also mean that legal entities such as corporations

that supply auditing functions can operate efficiently and effectively. The bill makes it clear that current practices will be able to continue in line with the national approach.

The third amendment will allow appropriately qualified persons approved by an accreditation authority to issue certificates and conduct audits. Under the existing market assurance arrangements I have just spoken about, when a corporation is accredited to issue biosecurity certificates or approved to conduct audits, other people such as staff of that corporation are also authorised to issue certificates or approved to conduct audits on behalf of the entity. Again this is a nationally accepted practice that provides for administrative efficiencies for business.

Without this bill, individuals will need to apply to the secretary to issue certificates or be approved to conduct audits on behalf of an accredited organisation. This will create red tape and increase costs not only for government but also for industry. At a practical level, for example, there are about 400 New South Wales businesses that are currently accredited to issue biosecurity certificates. Those businesses generally have between four and 10 of their staff approved to issue certificates on behalf of the business. Without the amendment that recognises these identified individuals, each person will need to apply individually to the secretary to be approved to issue these certificates.

I turn now to the fourth amendment. The Act supports approval of non-government entities to exercise functions of an accreditation authority in relation to the accreditation of biosecurity certifiers and appointment of biosecurity auditors. The Act provides a number of grounds for suspension or cancellation of a biosecurity certifier or biosecurity auditor by an accreditation authority. However, it does not include a power to prescribe circumstances in which it is mandatory for an accreditation authority to suspend or cancel accreditation of a biosecurity certifier or appointment of a biosecurity auditor. For example, the regulation could specify that where a biosecurity certifier has been convicted of an offence in relation to intentionally issuing a false biosecurity certificate for the movement of regulated goods they must have their accreditation suspended or cancelled.

These mandatory requirements will provide important support for decision-makers in controlling the behaviour of biosecurity certifiers who may put valuable markets at risk. Consistent with the above amendments to recognise corporations, the bill also makes it clear that the secretary may, in the circumstance where a corporation is approved as an accreditation authority, also approve appropriately qualified persons to accredit biosecurity certifiers and approve biosecurity auditors on behalf of that corporation. Biosecurity is a shared responsibility, so we must ensure that industry has the tools to play a strong role and conduct its businesses in a most efficient manner while managing the associated biosecurity risks.

I now turn to the National Livestock Identification System [NLIS]. Traceability of food-producing animals is a critical component of biosecurity. It supports our commitment to biosecurity and food safety, and provides a competitive advantage in global markets. For example, if we have an emergency animal disease outbreak, we must be able to trace the movement of stock to identify the source of the infection, the risk pathways, the potential impact, and the most efficient and effective actions to eradicate the disease. The National Livestock Identification System is run by Meat and Livestock Australia. As animals are bought, sold and moved along the supply chain, they must be tagged with an NLIS accredited tag or device. This is a well-established system for the identification and traceability of cattle, sheep and goats, and has legislative underpinning across all States and Territories. Consistent with current practice, this bill includes a power to issue evidentiary certificates to ensure evidence relating to identification codes can be used in relevant legal proceedings to enforce the NLIS.

The final amendment will ensure that we can respond quickly to changes in technology or new research. The proposed regulation includes detail as to what and when biosecurity matter is regulated and to whom the restrictions apply. The technical detail as to what has to be done or what are permitted activities before biosecurity matter can be moved is currently described in a draft biosecurity manual that was also the subject of public consultation. During the course of consultation, a number of issues associated with the operation of this manual have been identified. Instead of those activities being described in a manual, this bill provides a stronger legislative framework for those activities. Permitted activities will be prescribed in an order, known as the biosecurity order—permitted activities, made by the secretary. This order, for all intents and purposes, will act as a regulation and it can be disallowed by the Parliament. It removes any doubt about sub-delegation, but provides sufficient flexibility to respond to new research, innovation or changes to chemical registration.

This Government is committed to ensuring our governance arrangements are strong and, importantly, transparent. The Government has undertaken an extensive process of consultation in relation to the Biosecurity Act 2015 and, more recently, in relation to supporting regulations and permitted activities to support implementation of the Act. It was through this process that those omissions were identified, allowing us to fix them before the Act commences later this year. Engagement and consultation will continue with our stakeholders as we implement the Act. It is crucial that everyone understands their biosecurity duty and how they can help to reduce the negative impacts of animal and plant pests, diseases and weeds. We are serious about engagement and have completed an attitudinal research project that provides valuable data on how different stakeholder groups

understand biosecurity and how they like to receive their information. This will also help inform our communications as we go forward.

I recognise one of the true biosecurity champions of New South Wales, Dr Bruce Christie, who last night was awarded the David Banks Biosecurity Lifetime Achievement Award for his commitment to biosecurity. In summary, this bill introduces important amendments to ensure implementation of the Biosecurity Act to ensure it is successful and that industry can continue to participate efficiently in nationally agreed schemes. It recognises that biosecurity is a shared responsibility and that those who contribute to risk and those who benefit play an active role in maintaining our disease and pest management systems. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (11:14): I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Biosecurity Amendment Bill 2017. The Opposition will not oppose this bill. However, I reiterate one word of the Minister who introduced the bill in the other place, the Hon. Niall Blair. He referred to the need to tidy up this bill as "unfortunate". Sometimes members on this side of the Chamber try to save the Government from its own "unfortunateness". This bill consists of necessary tidy-ups because the 2015 bill was rushed through Parliament without sufficient consultation with the people on the ground and the stakeholders who will implement the requirements of the bill. Those people could have made the 2015 bill much better had they been properly consulted.

The bill now provides for the charging of a fee for the issuing of biosecurity certificates. This amendment reflects current practice and is in keeping with cost recovery principles, which is sensible. This issue should have been addressed in the original bill. The Opposition supports the change. The bill allows all legal entities to be accredited as biosecurity certifiers in their appointment as biosecurity auditors. This is in addition to individuals. This is consistent with the national approach and reflects what occurs in practice. The bill provides that the issue of biosecurity certificates and conduct of biosecurity audits are carried out by appropriately qualified individuals who are approved by the responsible accreditation authority. The fourth amendment of the bill prescribes mandatory grounds for suspension or cancellation of accreditation of a biosecurity certifier or appointment as a biosecurity auditor, which should be in place should a certifier or an auditor not be doing the right thing. It is hard to believe that that provision was missed in the original bill.

The next amendment ensures that the accreditation of biosecurity certifiers and appointment of biosecurity certifiers by an accreditation authority can be carried out by an individual approved by the Secretary of the Department of Industry, Skills and Regional Development and not only a corporation. The second last amendment in this bill provides for evidentiary certificates in respect of the National Livestock Identification Scheme. This ensures evidence relating to stock identification can be used in relevant legal proceedings. The House should recognise that livestock theft and rustling is alive and well in regional New South Wales and must be addressed. The National Livestock Identification Scheme is a system championed by members on this side of the House. It is proving to be a critical part of the biosecurity equation in New South Wales, and indeed nationally. The final amendment in this bill provides for the secretary to make an order that permits an activity that would otherwise have been prohibited by a mandatory measure or biosecurity zone. This is a sensible amendment because it provides far more flexibility that will be required with changes to research and technology.

The amendments in this bill address deficiencies and inconsistencies in the original bill. In future, the Government must ensure that all relevant areas are properly resourced to allow it to carry out its work with which this bill is designed. It will enable it to do the job properly. Therefore, cuts to staffing in departments such as national parks, Crown lands and Local Land Services will have a real and detrimental effect on the work of these agencies in their battle against weeds and pests. Such cuts must cease immediately if we are serious about biosecurity. Biosecurity is of critical importance to the health of the environment. It is critical to the productivity of our primary industries. It is essential that effective measures are in place at our ports and borders. Biosecurity is everyone's responsibility. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) (11:19): I support the Biosecurity Amendment Bill 2017 and note that the Opposition is not opposing this amending legislation. Despite the member for Cessnock's assistance, I think the Government is doing very well in coming up with its own wording. The development of the Biosecurity Act was an enormous task, encompassing some 406 provisions and completely or partially repealing 14 pieces of outdated legislation. During the drafting process a few minor but important enabling provisions were omitted. While only minor, these provisions were necessary to the efficient implementation and operation of the Act. The bill addresses each of these omissions.

The passing of this bill will ensure that the new Biosecurity Act can operate as intended and deliver maximum benefits to the public, industry and the community. The bill includes several minor amendments relating to the function and regulation of self-certification schemes and biosecurity certifiers and auditors. Effective governance, where roles, responsibilities and functions are clearly allocated, and all biosecurity players are accountable, is vital to the effective management of the biosecurity risks in New South Wales. Over the past

decade, a range of industry schemes have been established which enable primary producers to certify their own produce to satisfy market access requirements. Examples include the Interstate Certification Assurance scheme, and the Certification Assurance scheme. These schemes were developed to allow a business to self-certify its produce and to allow interstate and intrastate trade by meeting the destination's quarantine requirements.

The Biosecurity Act contains powers and offences that enable these schemes to be legally recognised and enforced. The provisions are also broad enough to recognise other industry certification schemes in the future, including animal biosecurity certification. The proper functioning of the certification scheme underpins all existing market assurance arrangements and is consistent with national policy and practices. For example, the longstanding Plant Certification Assurance Arrangements certifies that plants and plant products meet specific interstate quarantine restrictions. Under this particular scheme, individuals and other legal entities, such as corporations, self-certify their produce where they meet interstate and intrastate trade requirements.

There are approximately 400 New South Wales businesses accredited under the plant certification assurance arrangements, which enable between three and 10 people to certify plants and plant products on behalf of the business. However, the Act as it currently stands will only allow individuals, not entities, to be accredited as certifiers and auditors. The amendments contained in this bill will ensure that existing market assurance arrangements continue and that legal entities such as corporations may continue to self-certify their produce. It will also enable industry to play a stronger role and drive market assurance in other commodity areas.

Self-certification reduces red tape, a key platform of the Liberal-Nationals Government in New South Wales. One of the key aims in developing the new Biosecurity Act was to provide a contemporary piece of legislation that cuts bureaucratic red tape for industry. In the majority of instances it is primary producers who utilise these self-certification assurance arrangements. It is an attractive option for their businesses as it provides flexibility and is a cost-effective alternative to services that have traditionally been provided by Government.

Businesses do not have to self-certify, however. They can choose to purchase certification and auditing services from government or another third-party provider if this suits them better. This bill will also allow the Government to continue to recover its costs for biosecurity certificates, for those who chose not to self-certify and instead to purchase these services. In summary, the amendments included in this bill reflect the original intent and purpose of the Biosecurity Act—to allow industry to operate more effectively and efficiently, and to reduce their business costs.

The Upper Hunter electorate has significant agricultural industries and is affected by biosecurity issues. In fact, the Upper Hunter electorate is known for its world-class "mines, wines, equines and bovines". We have internationally renowned wine and equine industries. We have very strong cattle and dairy industries. So issues of biosecurity are very important for the Upper Hunter. In making these amendments the Government is cutting the red tape and making it easier for people to do business, which is very important for businesses and members of the community in my electorate. The same is true for many other rural electorates. On that basis, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (11:25): I support the Biosecurity Amendment Bill 2017. Before I begin my contribution to this second reading debate I put on the record my appreciation for all the men and women who work at Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute in the Wollondilly electorate. They deal with this issue of biosecurity and I thank them because the work that they do has saved farmers and animals in this State and right across the country. When horse flu broke out a number of years ago, Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute came up with a response which protected that industry. That institute does not only deal with animals; it also deals with crops and I know that those men and women have been doing important work in combating myrtle rust. I met a number of the scientists and researchers there. They do a fantastic job. It is hard to appreciate some of the things they do because they are at the forefront of the research. Speaking with some of the professors in the institute I learnt that they may even get called out on Christmas Day if there is a biosecurity threat anywhere around Australia. That is why I pay tribute to those men and women who, in very tough situations and in very short time frames, are responsible for that work.

The Biosecurity Amendment Bill introduces an important amendment that will allow a biosecurity order—permitted activities to be issued by the Secretary of the Department of Industry. The biosecurity order—permitted activities is an important feature of the new Biosecurity Act and Biosecurity Regulation. The order will essentially provide an instruction list that details the circumstances and actions required to allow particular biosecurity matter or carriers to enter or move through New South Wales. For example, an order may specify the treatment required before a plant can come into New South Wales, or the necessary measures to bring horses—potential cattle tick carriers—into New South Wales.

Agriculture is a vital sector of the State economy, adding around \$14 billion to our economy each year. The Wollondilly electorate is a gateway from the city to the bush, and agriculture is one of our top industries. The

information contained in the permitted activities order will provide certainty and protection for primary producers and agricultural markets. It will allow activity and trade to occur, while at the same time preventing, eliminating or minimising biosecurity risks. For example, if I am a cattle farmer based near the Queensland border, I need to know the measures I am required to take to import cattle into New South Wales. I take this opportunity to recognise the Temporary Speaker, the member for Tweed. He is 110 per cent for the Tweed and his electorate is on the border so he knows exactly what I am talking about. I also want to pay tribute to the member for Terrigal who has been very excited about these issues. It has been good working with him on these matters.

It is an important issue for my electorate. This knowledge is vital to minimising the spread of animal disease within our State and from across our borders. The order will contain all this information, as it is the go-to resource telling the cattle farmer what he or she needs to do. As the order provisions will be technical in nature, they will need to be regularly amended to respond to changing circumstances, new technologies or changes in chemical use. For example, the order would need to be updated following the deregistration of a certain chemical, or the publication of new research findings on better control methods. It is anticipated that the permitted activities order may need to be amended approximately six to 10 times each year to keep in step with technological advances. I mentioned the research that scientists in my electorate are undertaking in this area.

It is important that the order can be updated quickly to keep it contemporary and relevant and not hinder industry and jeopardise markets. To facilitate this, the bill allows changes to be made by an order issued by the Secretary of the Department of Industry. Amendments will also be subject to the normal parliamentary disallowance provisions. The New South Wales biosecurity risk is continually changing. We need to have flexible legislative tools that can respond quickly to those changes. The package of amendments contained in this bill will ensure that our biosecurity legislation and its supporting tools are up to date and effective. I thank the Minister and his staff who have worked very hard to bring this legislation before the House. I understand that city folk may not think about biosecurity risk in their day-to-day lives, but it is vital for the State's economy, rural jobs and rural industries. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Cootamundra) (11:31): I indicate my support for the Biosecurity Amendment Bill 2017. The bill will ensure that the Biosecurity Act 2015 can commence in the first half of 2017 with all of its key enabling provisions in place. This bill includes an amendment to address a small but important omission in regard to the operation of the National Livestock Identification System [NLIS], the well-known and long-standing national system for the identification and tracking of livestock. Over the years there have been attempts by States such as Victoria to replace the NLIS with electronic identification, known as eID, but we have resisted those attempts. The NLIS is as a whole-of-life identification system that aims to ensure that every head of cattle, sheep, pig and goat can be individually traced through its life, from birth through to slaughter. The system is run by Meat and Livestock Australia.

Under this system, cattle, sheep and goats wear readable ear devices printed with a property identification code that reports their movements between properties as they travel along the supply chain. This nationally consistent livestock traceability tool is critical in obtaining and maintaining our access to high-value export markets. It supports the nation's biosecurity, food safety, and product integrity. It gives confidence to our trading partners that we are in control of every head of livestock within our national and State borders. The NLIS assures the market that we are ready to manage any potential food safety or disease incident quickly and successfully. In the case of an animal disease outbreak that requires an area to be quarantined, the NLIS enables us to individually identify which animals are at risk, which property they are on or came from and which property should be subject to quarantine controls. For example, if we were ever to face a potentially devastating foot and mouth disease outbreak, such as those experienced in Europe, the NLIS would play a key role in tracing animal movements rapidly. Speed is the key to limiting the spread of that disease.

In addition to being able to identify animals, the system allows individual animals or properties to be assigned a certain status if a biosecurity or health risk may be posed. These may then be reported to processors to ensure that the affected animals are tested at slaughter. The necessary legislative underpinning for the NLIS will be included in the regulations made under the Biosecurity Act. These regulations will also provide for the continuation of property identification codes, which are in turn an integral part of the NLIS. This bill includes a power to issue evidentiary certificates to ensure evidence related to identification codes can be used in relevant legal proceedings. This amendment supports the NLIS. The National Livestock Identification System reflects our commitment to biosecurity, food safety and product integrity, and in doing so provides us with a competitive advantage in a global market. It ensures that the safety, quality and integrity of Australian product is maintained. The provisions in this bill support the vital traceability system that is the NLIS. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (11:34): I speak in support of the Biosecurity Amendment Bill 2017. The objects of the bill are:

- (a) to make provision with respect to fees paid for the preparation of biosecurity certificates,

- (b) to provide for corporations to be accredited as biosecurity certifiers and appointed as biosecurity auditors,
- (c) to ensure that the issue of a biosecurity certificate by a biosecurity certifier, or the conduct of a biosecurity audit by a biosecurity auditor, will be carried out only by an appropriately qualified individual who is the biosecurity certifier or biosecurity auditor or who is an identified individual,
- (d) to permit mandatory grounds for the suspension or cancellation of accreditation as a biosecurity certifier, or appointment as a biosecurity auditor, to be prescribed by regulations under the *Biosecurity Act 2015* (the **Principal Act**),
- (e) to ensure that the accreditation of biosecurity certifiers and the appointment of biosecurity auditors by an accreditation authority will be carried out only by individuals notified to the Secretary of the Department of Industry, Skills and Regional Development (the **Secretary**),
- (f) to permit the Secretary to issue evidentiary certificates to facilitate proof of matters relating to the National Livestock Identification System,
- (g) to provide for the Secretary to make an order that permits an activity that would otherwise be prohibited by a mandatory measure or by a regulatory measure implemented in relation to a biosecurity zone.

The Minister in his second reading speech advised that since the assent of the Biosecurity Act 2015, the Government has been consulting with stakeholders to develop associated regulations and other policies. During this consultation process a number of minor omissions have been identified, which will impact on the successful implementation of legislation. The bill seeks to address these issues. The Biosecurity Act 2015 provides a flexible, modern approach to how we prevent, eradicate and manage biosecurity risks in New South Wales. It does this by embedding the principle of shared responsibility and providing for a suite of management tools that may be utilised in proportion to the biosecurity risk. The Act also provides for the legislative basis for a number of national schemes focused on market access. It should be noted that the development of the Biosecurity Act involved the repeal of 14 pieces of legislation. During development of the supporting regulations, including extensive consultation with external stakeholders, some minor but critical omissions were identified, and the rectification of these omissions is necessary for the efficient implementation and operation of the Act.

Agricultural activity is the backbone of our regional and rural communities. That is certainly the case in the electorate of Myall Lakes. Mr Temporary Speaker Provest knows that Myall Lakes is the jewel in the crown of New South Wales. The mighty Manning River and the Manning Valley have the highest concentration of dairy farmers in New South Wales and supply one-third of the fresh milk to the New South Wales market. Just down the road we have the Great Lakes. Wallace Lake provides one-third of Sydney rock oysters for the Australian market and 80 per cent of blue swimmer crabs come from that mighty lake. It is therefore of great importance to the people of my electorate that we have the best biosecurity legislation in the world and it has the aim of implementing best practice. We not only have that dairy industry I spoke about; we also have beef. I am sure, Mr Temporary Speaker, that you would be an advocate for the fantastic Manning Valley Naturally beef.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): I concur with the member for Myall Lakes. Obviously he is a connoisseur of fine cuisine.

Mr John Sidoti: Especially when he doesn't pay!

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): I note the interjection from the member for Drummoyne.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: I also spoke about the fishing and oyster industries. I confirm to the Chamber that biosecurity is of vital importance to the people of Myall Lakes. The amendments contained in this bill will ensure that New South Wales is ready to safeguard its vital agricultural industry, and the regional communities it supports, from the risks of biosecurity threats. We must remain forever vigilant in protecting our borders from the risks of imported pests and diseases. At the same time we need to have mechanisms in place that assist the industry to operate efficiently across our borders. The provision for permitted activities orders contained in this bill creates a mechanism that achieves both of these requirements. Such orders will help to minimise biosecurity risks while allowing New South Wales operators to participate fully in national and international markets.

Cattle tick is the most significant animal health issue in the Australian cattle industry. This external parasite reduces cattle weight gain and milk production. Ticks transmit fever organisms that cause sickness and death in cattle, and they can infest other species such as sheep, horses and goats. Ticks are endemic in Northern Australia, including in our border State of Queensland. The cost to the industry is an estimated \$161 million each year. Control and eradication of this serious economic pest is crucial to the viability of the cattle and dairy industries in north-eastern New South Wales. If not subjected to regulatory action, cattle tick would spread through much of eastern New South Wales and could cost industry an additional \$30 million annually.

The strict livestock movement requirements set out in the permitted activities orders reduce the risk of cattle tick entering New South Wales from areas where they are endemic. Under the Biosecurity Act 2015, any

properties where cattle tick is detected are regulated until eradication of the parasite is complete. The risk of animal and plant disease and pest outbreaks is ever present. There have been several biosecurity outbreaks in recent years. New South Wales has a successful track record in responding to these outbreaks. For example, the response to the recent detection of red imported fire ants was completed ahead of time and under budget. Red imported fire ants are the most studied and notorious ant in the world due to the extensive economic and environmental damage they cause.

The Queensland Government has undertaken five eradication programs for red imported fire ants since 2001, and its battle is ongoing. In New South Wales, these ants were initially detected at a port facility at Port Botany in late November 2014. The only known nest site was destroyed within days of discovery and the Department of Primary Industries [DPI] undertook a nationally endorsed surveillance program to search for and eradicate any other colonies. New South Wales was awarded the 2016 Invasive Species Council Froggatt Award for our ability to rapidly respond to and eradicate this pest. Permitted activities orders—part of the Biosecurity Act—specify conditions for bringing tramp ant material from known red imported fire ant infested areas into New South Wales.

Another example of our State's ability to rapidly respond to biosecurity threats is our response to the detection of the lupin anthracnose plant pest. Lupin anthracnose is a serious disease of the lupin pulse and has the potential to cause complete crop losses in susceptible varieties. It was detected for the first time in commercial crops in south-eastern New South Wales in October 2016 and an eradication program was promptly put in place. At this stage, all affected crops have been removed and a lupin anthracnose biosecurity zone has been established to aid the eradication effort.

The New South Wales Government, through DPI, continues to work closely with the affected growers and the wider farming community to address risks and develop management options to eradicate the disease. The Biosecurity Act and its supporting instruments, including orders for permitted activities, provide New South Wales with a flexible and responsive approach to managing biosecurity risks. This is vital for safeguarding our agricultural industries, our regional economies, and our rural and regional communities. By protecting rural and regional communities and the food they produce, we are protecting all the residents of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Visitors

VISITORS

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): I welcome visitors to the gallery, especially the women, on this International Women's Day.

Bills

BIOSECURITY AMENDMENT BILL 2017

Second Reading

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (11:45:0): I warmly welcome the ladies in the gallery to the Parliament. I hope they enjoy their day here on International Women's Day. I will contribute to the debate on the Biosecurity Amendment Bill 2017 along with my colleagues the member for Bathurst, the Opposition member for Cessnock—I note his comment that the Opposition will not be opposing this bill—the member for Upper Hunter, the member for Wollondilly, the member for Cootamundra and the member for Myall Lakes, from whom we just heard. Many people on the Central Coast may not realise the importance of biosecurity to the people of New South Wales. We do not have the same expansive farming sector as the members for the electorates of Cootamundra, Myall Lakes and Upper Hunter. In fact, I think the member for Upper Hunter's driveway may be bigger than my electorate. But the reality is that some of the smallest pests can create the greatest danger to our biosecurity.

We do have a farming community on the Central Coast. Farmers on the plateau region of the Central Coast, just on the left-hand side of the M1 approaching the Gosford exit, grow an extensive range of food products. There is chicken farming, a small dairy farm and quite a lot of produce grown in that area. A lot of that fresh produce gets sent to Sydney on a daily basis. It is supplied to many restaurants across New South Wales and indeed across Australia. Our growers on the plateau have regular markets and they are acutely aware of biosecurity. A few years ago there was an outbreak of chicken flu on the Central Coast. The whole area was quarantined and there was carnage in the chicken farming industry on the Central Coast. In a matter of days that sort of carelessness can cause millions of dollars worth of damage to a thriving industry. Biosecurity is an incredibly important issue, not just for rural communities such as those in Cootamundra and Myall Lakes and for

thriving smaller cottage industries of farms and growers such as we have on the Central Coast. I note the member for Tamworth has entered the Chamber. Those regions are in his electorate

I have visited quite a number of these farms and growers on my trips around the Central Coast—some of the hydroponic growing of vegetables and fruit is truly impressive—and all of them are very conscious of biosecurity around the Central Coast region. They are very protective of the conditions they have for growing their produce and farming their livestock. The biosecurity reforms in this bill commit the Government, industry and the people of New South Wales to working together to protect the economy, environment, and community from the negative impacts of animal and plant pests, diseases and weeds that have, as I have discussed, affected Australia, including the Central Coast. The Biosecurity Act 2015 enshrines in New South Wales law the principle that biosecurity is a shared responsibility. It is something we all have to take on board. New South Wales was the first State to commit to this principle in the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity in 2012, as the member for Cootamundra outlined.

The Act and its supporting documentation operationalise a shared management and partnership approach. Accordingly, the Act was developed in close consultation with many stakeholders across a wide area. The consultation process has been ongoing since 2015, with 37 discussion papers released and more than 250 submissions received. I must pay credit to the Minister's staff, who put in an immense amount of work on this bill and the preceding amendments. I pay full credit to the Minister and his staff for their diligent work on this bill and these amendments. All of the amendments will help to inform how biosecurity risks are managed under the Act.

The discussion papers covered a range of topics, from proposed management approaches for specific animal and plant pests and diseases, and weeds and contaminants, to fertiliser application and the management of heavy metals. These are things that the average person would not realise could have an impact. I know the electorate of the Tweed has an extensive farming and rural industry. Again, most farmers are incredibly sensitive to their environments. They are the greatest custodians of biosafety and biosecurity. My cousin is a pig farmer in South Australia. I know from spending time with him that a staggering amount of biosecurity work goes into pig farms. Pigs can be very susceptible to diseases carried by humans and farmers must ensure that they get the best possible quality pork. Happy, safe and healthy pigs deliver the best quality produce. That is the case in many fields of animal husbandry.

Mr John Sidoti: Get some pork on your fork.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Absolutely. That is probably the closest the member for Drummoyne will ever come to a pig farm. Following extensive consultation the Biosecurity Amendment Bill identifies and addresses the remaining minor omissions that were in the original Act and ensures that the Act is fit for purpose and ready for commencement. With these amendments in place, we will deliver a comprehensive, integrated approach to biosecurity management that takes into account a range of stakeholder concerns. The Biosecurity Advisory Committee has been instrumental in developing the reform package. As I said, this Government is all about consultation. There was extensive consultation on the original Act as well as these amendments. The independent committee was established to oversee the process of developing and delivering the biosecurity reform package. The committee has representation from across government, industry and community stakeholders including the Game and Pest Advisory Committee, NSW Farmers, Nature Conservation Council NSW, the Office of Environment and Heritage, Local Land Services and the Department of Industry.

I notice the Deputy Premier has entered the Chamber. Obviously, there are extensive biosecurity measures in place in his electorate. His constituents are lucky to have a member such as the Deputy Premier looking after them. He will continue to fight for his electorate and ensure that our farmers get the best possible biosecurity outcomes for their primary producing. The committee has helped to deliver an Act and reform package that responds to a range of community concerns, including the environmental and social concerns associated with biosecurity management. The Biosecurity Act moves New South Wales away from a biosecurity-centric approach to the management of the risks of pests, diseases and weeds and towards a holistic, risk-based approach that considers economic, social and environmental issues. Our farmers have been working this way for decades. They have been the bastions of biosecurity.

This bill supports a Biosecurity Act that delivers a comprehensive approach to biosecurity management. It is a regulatory framework that protects our strong economy, safe and healthy food supply and unique natural environment. Once again I give full credit to the Minister for making these amendments to an outstanding piece of legislation and to his staff for working tirelessly in putting them together. I also give full credit to the farmers and primary producers of New South Wales who are working with the Minister to ensure that we have the best possible biosecurity measures in place. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (11:54): I support the Biosecurity Amendment Bill 2017. People might ask, "What is general biosecurity duty?" The Biosecurity Act establishes a number of biosecurity duties that a person has and provides a framework for shared biosecurity risk management between governments, industry and the community. The general biosecurity duty supports the principle of shared responsibility. Simply, this means doing what is reasonable to prevent, eliminate and minimise biosecurity risks. The general biosecurity duty is outcome focused. It recognises that in many circumstances the person with the general biosecurity duty is best placed to decide what is reasonable and practicable to do to prevent, eliminate or minimise the biosecurity risk. The general biosecurity duty provides flexibility for how biosecurity risks are managed and means everyone is doing the responsible thing to prevent, eliminate or minimise biosecurity risks. The Biosecurity Act includes strong enforcement tools, including significant penalty provisions for wilful or reckless acts under section 23 of the Biosecurity Act. A person who fails to discharge his or her general biosecurity duty is guilty of an offence.

People might ask, "How do the new biosecurity legislation and regional strategic weeds management plans improve weeds management?" The general biosecurity duty means all landowners, both public and private, and other people who deal with biosecurity matters must use the most appropriate approach to managing biosecurity risk in specific situations. This information is available on the Local Land Services website, www.lls.nsw.gov.au. I encourage anyone in agriculture or who has an interest in biosecurity—and we all do—to familiarise and update themselves with the new rules and regulations. The more flexible outcome-focused approach overcomes the deficiencies of the current Noxious Weeds Act that has resulted in perverse outcomes, such as the use of inappropriate control techniques to meet regulatory requirements. The plan clearly defines priorities and community expectations for weed control based on risk and impact and provides reasonable options for management of priority weeds.

Benefits of the new biosecurity legislation include that the Biosecurity Act provides greater flexibility and improved capacity in the response, management and control of biosecurity risks. It provides for a range of tools and powers that can be used to support risk-based decision-making and management and allow for increased efficiency and decreased regulation. The Act provides greater flexibility and choice for those who do the right thing for biosecurity. For the minority of people who do the wrong thing, the Biosecurity Act includes strong enforcement tools, including significant penalty provisions, especially for wilful or reckless acts. Another question people might ask is, "How do I know what the main weeds are for my area?" The regional priority weed list can be seen in appendix 1 of regional strategic weed management plans. It identifies the priority high-risk weeds for each region. If people visit the website I mentioned they can click on their appropriate area and identify the high-risk weeds. The management requirements for weeds—whether that includes specific regulatory measurements, State level priorities or recommended measures to discharge the general biosecurity duty—are also listed in appendix 1 on the Local Land Services website.

People might ask, "What if a local problem weed is not on the regional priority list? Does that mean do nothing?" Landholders should still take appropriate action to manage the weed because a general biosecurity duty applies to all weed species regardless of whether they are listed in the plans. Another landholder question was, "How do I know if my weed management measures are adequate?" Appendix 1 on the Department of Primary Industries [DPI] Local Land Services [LLS] website includes the regional strategy management plan details and the expected outcomes and recommended measures for controlling weeds listed in the appendix. If a landholder is achieving the outcomes and demonstrating compliance with a general biosecurity duty, weed management measures are adequate. If the weed is not listed in appendix 1, the general biosecurity duty still applies. Appendix 2 of the plan includes other species of concern, and may provide guidance if the weed is not listed in appendix 1. Landholders can also find best-practice guidelines and other information for control of various species online at the DPI website, where they will find the relevant information for their area. If landholders have questions, they are free to contact their local weeds officer, Landcare group, or the nearest LLS office.

People have asked whether the local control authority weed officer's role has changed. Local control authorities—usually local councils—are responsible for the implementation of priority weed control, including conducting inspections, providing education, training and resources for both the public and staff, and enforcing the Biosecurity Act. Local control authority weed officers will be appointed as authorised officers under the Biosecurity Act by their local control authority. That appointment will allow the officers to exercise the functions of an authorised officer for weeds within the area of operation of their local control authority.

How will the weed management outcomes be enforced? Under section 23 of the Biosecurity Act, a person who fails to discharge the person's biosecurity duty is guilty of an offence. However, a guilty verdict in court does not itself result in prevention, elimination or minimisation of the risk. The preferred approach to achieving the desired outcome if the general biosecurity duty is not discharged is for an authorised officer to issue a biosecurity direction. This prescribes the action that the person must take to achieve the desired outcome, and normally would include a time frame for those actions to be taken. A person who fails to comply with a biosecurity direction is

also guilty of an offence, and an officer may arrange for the work to be done and for the cost to be recovered from the person. Again, these indications and the information relative to their area are available on the LLS website.

How are biosecurity or weed risk determined, and by whom? A regional weed prioritisation process was undertaken during the development of the New South Wales weed risk management system. This system provides a standard, nationally accepted and transparent process to help make decisions about the introduction, prioritisation and declaration of weed species. The prioritisation process was carried out using an expert regional panel on behalf of the regional weed committee. The panel brought together practitioners with long-term, on-ground experience with high-priority species, including local experts previously involved in weed advisory committees. If landholders are looking to obtain information about any of the questions they have concerning the changes to weed priorities, obligations, and the roles of government and local control authorities, they can go to the LLS website www.lls.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity and click on their regional area. Comment is still welcomed on the Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan, which will be on public exhibition until 29 March 2017.

The passage of the Biosecurity Amendment Bill will fully equip the Biosecurity Act to protect our economy, environment, and community from pests, diseases, weeds, and contaminants. A critical part of the biosecurity reforms introduced by the Biosecurity Amendment Bill is an overhaul of weed management. Agricultural industries in New South Wales add more than \$13.9 billion to our economy each year. The financial impact of weeds on agriculture alone is estimated to be \$2.5 billion in lost production and \$1.8 billion in control activities annually. New South Wales agricultural businesses incur the majority of those costs. Weeds affect production levels and increase labour, machinery and chemical costs. Weeds also impose significant costs on the environment and the community that are additional to the costs on business. Weeds are highly invasive and pose a substantial threat to biodiversity. [*Extension of time*]

This legislation is important, particularly to the agricultural industry and what the regional strategic weed management plans mean for individual landholders. At least 300 of the 1,650 species of exotic plants established in the wild in New South Wales are weeds. Many of these weeds are so widespread that they are beyond the scope of eradication or containment programs. Weeds threaten about 40 per cent of our vulnerable and endangered species, and 89 per cent of our endangered ecological communities. They also trigger human health impacts, such as hay fever and allergies.

The Biosecurity Amendment Bill adopts a flexible approach to weed control, where the response taken to manage a particular weed will be proportionate to the risks it poses. The general biosecurity duty provides the legislative underpinning to deal with all weeds posing a biosecurity risk. In addition, there are several tools established in the legislation that can be applied to manage particular weed species. Again, all of this information is available on the LLS website. These include: listing significant weeds as prohibited matter in part or all of the State; establishing control zones and measures to manage weed species through targeted eradication programs; creating biosecurity zones to reduce the spread of weed species on a regional basis; and declaring an emergency order to respond to current or imminent weed risks.

There are now 27 species listed as prohibited matter, three proposed biosecurity zones, and four proposed biosecurity orders established for particular weeds under the Act and draft regulations. This is relevant to our transport industry when trucks are travelling from farm to farm, and particularly interstate. Whether it involves carting cattle, poultry, sheep, pigs or any other agricultural component, those involved must comply with their biosecurity duty so that they do not spread a foreign weed into an area that has not been contaminated.

Regional strategic weed management plans are also a critical part of the weed management framework. These plans set out the regional priorities, strategies and actions for coordinated management of weeds across Local Land Services regions over the next five years. The plans are consistent with the New South Wales Weed Risk Management System, which is based on a well-established, nationally adopted standard of risk assessment. Landholders in the electorate of Tamworth are acutely aware of their biosecurity duties. Regional strategic weed management plans for the 11 Local Land Services regions will be on public exhibition until the end of March. The plans have been developed in close consultation with regional stakeholders and communities. They promote a spirit of collaborative leadership and innovation, and also clearly explain the weed management responsibilities and obligations of land managers.

Effective management of weeds is vital to ensuring the ongoing prosperity of our primary industries and to protecting our State's rich biodiversity. That is particularly important in areas that have critical clusters such as poultry, cattle, pig, and sheep production alongside grain production. A fully operational Biosecurity Act provides an important opportunity to streamline and modernise the way weeds are managed in New South Wales. I encourage landholders not only in the Tamworth electorate but also right across New South Wales to access the relevant and latest information for their area and to keep updated. They can access that information on the website www.lls.nsw.gov.au. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES (Barwon) (12:09): I speak in debate on the Biosecurity Amendment Bill 2017 and commend the member for Tamworth for his coverage of the technical issues in the bill. I commend him and his local community, in particular, landholders and Local Land Services—we share part of the Local Land Services in the north-west part of the State—for their work. The bill is pretty self-explanatory but in the broader context of agriculture and biosecurity in general some issues are worth noting.

It is fantastic that we have covered the biosecurity issue in a number of ways but the legislation is only as good as the people who are there to implement its principles and regulations. Whilst many of the amendments relate more to giving direction than to giving advice, this is the first time this State has had a comprehensive biosecurity structure in place—from the responsibilities of landholders through to government agencies and people who are there to give advice and administer, regulate and audit the Act. This is the first time that such a comprehensive approach to biosecurity has been taken in this State.

I compliment the Department of Primary Industries [DPI] staff and the Local Land Services [LLS] staff who continue to work on issues associated with the Sir Ivan fire—and indeed issues in other parts of the State as well. Stock losses there have been extensive. A number of stock, particularly cattle and sheep, had to be agisted and relocated to other parts of the region. Local Land Services staff and our veterinary staff through DPI have also been involved in putting down hundreds of sheep and cattle—an adjunct to biosecurity and animal welfare. The loss of stock including sheep and cattle in that area is approximately 5,000 or 6,000. Some stock experienced post-fire difficulties, in particular, their inability to stand as their feet had been burnt. Many of those animals were also unable to feed or water themselves. DPI staff are doing that difficult work and LLS staff are working with landholders to ensure there is no biosecurity risk.

The New South Wales primary industries sector has been valued at approximately \$13 billion to \$14 billion and this year that figure will be exceeded. We have had exceptional seasons in rural New South Wales after a four- or five-year drought and our winter wheat crop has been the largest crop in regional New South Wales for many years. Wheat prices were not fantastic but that was more than made up for by the volume of the wheat harvest, and chickpeas sold for a significant price. At one stage we were getting about \$1,000 a tonne for chickpeas. So the crop cash flow in the rural sector is extremely strong. We also received some of the best domestic and export prices for beef, with the rural sector bouncing back on that side of the ledger. Lamb prices held up and wool prices kicked back as well. In the cropping and livestock industries the \$13 billion to \$14 billion net turnover will be exceeded.

It is important that we protect these industries. Some of the biggest threats to cropping and livestock relate to weed control, which I will talk about briefly in a moment. One of the exciting emerging industries in the far west of the State is one that was always deemed a pest industry—that is, the goat industry. On a number of occasions the Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation and I—the former Minister for the Environment and Minister for Heritage—have discussed the goat industry. In western and far-western New South Wales there are significant returns from the goat industry. Ten years ago the average price for a 25- to 30-kilogram goat in western New South Wales was \$10. We could not give them away. The average price for the same size animal is now \$150 to \$200.

Commercial returns turned something that was deemed a pest and a biosecurity risk into an opportunity and alleviated many of the biosecurity risks and overgrazing issues that were being faced in the far west of New South Wales. We have been able to encourage that industry to grow and to thrive. There is now a growing demand overseas for goat meat which has helped to ameliorate the biosecurity risk. Biosecurity does not always involve giving advice, regulating, auditing and looking over people's shoulders to ensure they are doing the right thing; sometimes it is about responding commercially to an opportunity that arises, such as the goat industry.

New South Wales has also been able to take advantage of the free trade agreements that have been developed between Australia and our overseas counterparts. Our agricultural export industry is increasing in places such as China, Korea, Japan and Indonesia. How do we protect our growing agricultural export industry? Based on sovereign risk and our ability to maintain biosecurity integrity in this State and this country, agriculture has a good future. In Japan a person can buy a kilogram of beef in a supermarket, scan the barcode using a phone and trace the origin of that beef back to Australia. Overseas demand for Australian agricultural produce has continued to grow because of our strong biosecurity regulations. If biosecurity issues emerge, we have the wherewithal to address them.

DPI NSW and Local Land Services have also been able to lean on cooperative research centres [CRCs]. Many of the developments in the biosecurity area and in this bill are as a result of research emanating from cooperative research centres in this country. The weeds CRC undertakes a number of trials and gives advice to governments, landholders and industry. Interestingly, there are also pest and wild animal cooperative research centres. The rabbit infestations that Australia experienced on a number of occasions were dealt by introducing a virus. We just released a new virus for additional rabbit control.

We do the same thing to control wild dogs and we are taking a consistent approach to the control of pests. The Biosecurity Amendment Bill 2017 strengthens our ability to keep safe and secure and grow a multibillion dollar industry in this country. It will enable us to penetrate overseas markets and our biosecurity arrangements will hold us in good stead. I commend the bill to the House.

Visitors

VISITORS

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): I welcome to the gallery students from the Redeemer Baptist School, North Parramatta.

Bills

BIOSECURITY AMENDMENT BILL 2017

Second Reading

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) (12:20:0): I support the Biosecurity Amendment Bill 2017. A number of members, in particular country members, referred to the importance of this bill. However, it is important for us all. All members are aware of the value of primary industries in this country. It has been said on many occasions that Australia rides upon the sheep's back. Primary industries in New South Wales add more than \$13.9 billion to our economy every year: wheat contributes about \$2 billion; beef cattle, \$2.3 billion; horticulture, \$1.2 billion; and wool, \$890 million. We are all aware of the importance of primary industry to this State and this nation. One-quarter of people in regional New South Wales are employed in primary industries which is why biosecurity is vital to protect our valuable export markets. Australia's export market to China alone is worth \$1.4 billion—New South Wales has a 28 per cent market share. We see value in protecting such an important industry.

We need strong biosecurity laws and regulations because Australia is renowned for its quality produce and it should be protected. The New South Wales primary industry sector has a gross value exceeding \$13.9 billion and it generates amazing financial benefits. The financial consequences of temporary or prolonged market closures due to pest or disease outbreaks can be extensive and significant. For example, it is estimated that a 12-month outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease would reduce Australia's gross domestic product by between \$10.3 billion and \$16.7 billion over 10 years, which is substantial. A biosecurity event would not just have a negative impact on our primary industries; it would also cause flow-on effects in industries such as processing, transport and tourism. During the 2001 foot-and-mouth outbreak in the United Kingdom, the tourism industry in the Lakes District lost a season's income. Total losses to the country were estimated to be in the billions of dollars.

Failure to protect our aquatic environments from the introduction of new pests and diseases will reduce the value of aquatic tourism, fishing and many other industries. The direct value of aquatic tourism and recreational activities in Australia is estimated to be \$12 billion, which equates to around 19 per cent of the total value of the tourism sector for Australia. So we can see the effects of not having strong biosecurity laws. Effective management of biosecurity risks helps to protect our biodiversity and our distinctive ecosystems and natural environments. Pest animals and weeds are among the biggest threats to the biodiversity and natural environment of New South Wales. Around 19 per cent of native mammal species in New South Wales have become extinct since European settlement. Again, strong biodiversity and biosecurity laws are important. Pest animals are also contributing to the decline of many other native animals, in particular birds and reptile species, including approximately 40 per cent of New South Wales' threatened species.

More than 1,650 species of exotic plants have become established in the wild in New South Wales and at least 300 of these weeds are highly invasive and pose a substantial threat to biodiversity. A large number of these are escaped garden plants. Many weeds are widespread and beyond the scope of eradication or containment programs. The number and distribution of introduced species, including aquatic pests, that have become established in the natural environment grows at an ever-increasing rate. I support this bill for many reasons. We have critical industries to this country, we are producing crops that are vital to this State and this country, and it goes without saying that the strength of our biosecurity regulations will ultimately affect the way we compete internationally.

I will not repeat the comments made earlier by my colleagues. However, I will touch on another event that is relevant to this bill—the Australian Biosecurity Awards that took place last night. The Australian Biosecurity Awards recognise individuals, groups and organisations in industry and government that show a real commitment to working collaboratively with the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources to support and promote Australia's biosecurity and the systems that uphold it. On 7 March 2017 Lyn O'Connell, Deputy

Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, presented the awards at the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences Outlook Conference Dinner.

A number of award recipients were announced throughout the evening, including the winner of the prestigious David Banks Biosecurity Lifetime Achievement award. That award recognises an individual that has made an outstanding contribution to biosecurity integrity in Australia over a number of years. This year, the David Banks Biosecurity Lifetime Achievement award was presented to Bruce Christie, New South Wales Department of Primary Industries. Mr Christie has been protecting Australia from pests and diseases for more than 35 years. His outstanding leadership and commitment to his work has inspired countless industry stakeholders and public servants to contribute to the nation's biosecurity.

Bruce Christie graduated as a veterinarian in 1979. He began working with the New South Wales Government in 1982 and has been actively contributing to the nation's biosecurity ever since, initially as a veterinarian dealing with animal health and production issues and then across the broader biosecurity spectrum of animal and plant pests, diseases and weeds. Bruce was the chief veterinary officer of New South Wales from 2003 to 2009. In 2004 Bruce was appointed to the position of Director, Animal and Plant Biosecurity. In 2009 he was appointed to the position of Principal Director of Biosecurity. In 2011 he was appointed as the first Head of Biosecurity in New South Wales and he is currently the Deputy Director General to Biosecurity and Food Safety in the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries. In these roles, Bruce has led and successfully managed many responses to important pests and diseases, including the eradication of equine influenza from New South Wales.

The New South Wales equine influenza team was awarded the New South Wales Premier's Public Sector Gold Award in 2008. Bruce was awarded the New South Wales Department of Primary Industry outstanding service award in 2007 and the Equine Veterinary Association award for services to the Australian horse industry in 2009. Bruce was also awarded the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries Outstanding Service Award in 2007 and the Equine Veterinary Association Award for Services to the Australian Horse Industry in 2009.

Bruce has had a significant impact on the delivery of biosecurity practices in New South Wales, particularly through his leadership in the development of the New South Wales Biosecurity Strategy 2013 to 2021 and the New South Wales Biosecurity Act 2015, both of which emphasise the need for everyone to recognise that we have a shared responsibility to protect Australia's biosecurity status. Bruce is also a national leader in biosecurity, representing New South Wales on the National Biosecurity Committee and chairing a number of national biosecurity working groups. During biosecurity emergencies, he is the delegate for the Director General, New South Wales Department of Primary Industries on the National Management Group, and he supports the Director General DPI and the New South Wales Minister for Primary Industries in negotiations with interstate and Commonwealth counterparts.

His ongoing contributions at a professional and personal level have led to positive biosecurity outcomes internationally and nationally. As the Director General DPI Biosecurity and Food Safety, Bruce now leads a biosecurity agency that has demonstrated that, with its partners, it is able to manage multiple major biosecurity and food safety incidents. I commend the bill to the House and I congratulate Bruce for his ongoing support and leadership.

Visitors

VISITORS

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith): I recognise and welcome veterans in our public gallery today. They are here to attend the Saluting General Monash function this evening. I thank them for their service to the country and for putting forward a commendable idea—to have General Monash posthumously promoted to Field Marshal.

Bills

BIOSECURITY AMENDMENT BILL 2017

Second Reading

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (12:31:0): It is wonderful to see those gentlemen in the gallery; they do this country proud. I speak in this second reading debate on the Biosecurity Amendment Bill 2017. It is a very important bill, especially for northern New South Wales, because northern New South Wales is under threat of invasion from the heart of Queensland. The threat of invasion comes not from One Nation

members; no, it is from cane toads. Cane toads have a severe impact on our ecosystem—our fauna and flora. They are ugly little critters that belong in a Harry Potter movie. Anyone who is in the Clarence Valley tomorrow or on Friday will be able to participate in a cane toad muster. A lot of volunteers get together and comb the region, collecting cane toads and euthanising them humanely in an effort to eradicate the pest that has come down from Queensland. It is a prime example of the importance of biosecurity and why it is important to be careful about the species that we introduce into this country.

The Northern Rivers is known for its clean, green image. That helps in our efforts to export Northern Rivers products around the world, including milk to China. The Northern Co-operative Meat Company, which operates out of Casino, exports meat across the world, mostly to Asia. The Clarence River Fishermen's Co-operative exports a lot of seafood. Yamba prawns, in particular, are world renowned. If we are to maintain that clean, green image we need to ensure that biosecurity is front and centre in any agricultural pursuit. Primary industries in New South Wales add more than \$13.9 billion to our economy each year. Wheat contributes \$2 billion, beef cattle \$2.3 billion, horticulture \$1.2 billion, wool \$890 million, and the dairy industry contributes \$612 million. Primary industries directly employ almost 90,000 people in New South Wales. Approximately one-quarter of people in regional New South Wales are employed in extended primary industries.

Biosecurity is vital to protect our valuable export markets. The market in China alone is worth \$1.4 billion, of which New South Wales has a 28 per cent market share. New South Wales's primary industries sector has a gross value exceeding \$13.9 billion each year and accounts for about 20 per cent of Australian agricultural production, all of which is protected by maintaining our biosecurity status. This is an island continent, and we need to protect what comes into this continent to ensure that we deal with any potential diseases to maintain that clean, green image that is the envy of the world.

The financial consequences of temporary or prolonged market closures due to pest or disease outbreaks can be significant. For example, it is estimated that a 12-month outbreak of foot and mouth disease would reduce Australia's gross domestic product by between \$10.3 billion and \$16.7 billion over 10 years, which is equivalent to a 1 per cent to 2 per cent reduction in gross domestic product for one year. A 12-month-long incursion of the wheat disease Karnal bunt would result in a loss of \$350 million, a national outbreak of citrus canker would result in a loss in the order of \$400 million, and an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza infecting people as well as birds could cost over \$10 billion.

The people of New South Wales, along with others around the world, share a heightened awareness of the constraints facing world food production. Modelling indicates that global food production will need to double between now and 2050 to meet expected demand. It is clearly important that we do everything we can to protect our food production capacity from pests, diseases and weeds that negatively affect productivity. This includes protecting our stored and dried food products and our agricultural and fisheries resources. A biosecurity event does not have a negative impact just on industry; there will always be flow-on effects to related industries such as processing, transport and tourism. For example, during the foot and mouth disease outbreak in the United Kingdom in 2001, the tourism industry in the Lakes District lost a whole season of income and total losses to the country were estimated to be in the order of £8 billion.

Failure to protect our aquatic environments from the introduction of new pests and diseases will reduce the value of aquatic tourism, fishing and aquaculture industries, and will affect the functioning of aquatic ecosystems which then impact on commercial and recreational fishing, and the environment. We saw an example of that recently with the effect that white spot disease has had on prawns after it came into this county. It is very difficult to eradicate and is very costly for aquaculture and fishing industries.

The direct value of aquatic tourism and recreational activities in Australia is estimated to be \$12 billion, which equates to 19 per cent of the total value of the tourism sector for Australia—\$64 billion in 2009-10. Effective management of biosecurity risks helps to protect our biodiversity and our distinctive ecosystems and natural environment. Pest animals and weeds are among the biggest threats to biodiversity and the natural environment in New South Wales. Around 19 per cent of native terrestrial mammal species in New South Wales have become extinct since European settlement. Pest animals, especially cats, foxes, rabbits and wild dogs, are considered to be the primary causes of most of these extinctions. Pest animals are also contributing to the decline of many other native animals—in particular, bird and reptile species—including approximately 40 per cent of New South Wales's threatened species.

Over 1,650 species of exotic plants have become established in the wild in New South Wales. At least 300 of these weeds are highly invasive and pose a substantial threat to biodiversity. A large number of these are escaped garden plants. Many weeds are widespread and beyond the scope of eradication or containment programs. The number and distribution of introduced species, including aquatic pests, becoming established in the natural environment is increasing. Pest populations usually have a high reproductive capability, can colonise new areas

rapidly and recover quickly after targeted control programs have concluded. The absence of natural predators or environmental control measures often adds to this impact.

Government, industry, industry associations and professional bodies, research providers, universities, museums, non-government organisations, individuals and the community as a whole all have a role to play in the management of biosecurity risks. Governments at the national, State and local levels all have important roles to play in biosecurity risk management. Pests, diseases and weeds do not recognise local government areas or State borders so biosecurity activities must be carried out within a national framework. All levels of government must collaborate closely to deliver positive outcomes. New South Wales is a signatory to a number of national agreements including the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity, the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement, the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed and the National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement. The biosecurity staff training project was initiated by the biosecurity legislation reform project team in order to deliver training in the new biosecurity legislation to biosecurity staff, other government agencies, industry and community. [*Extension of time*]

The New South Wales Biosecurity Act 2015 was assented to in September 2015 and is expected to come into effect in early 2017 with supporting subordinate legislation, policies, procedures and guidelines. It will partially or wholly replace 14 existing pieces of legislation. The Act's provisions constitute a significant departure from current biosecurity management and regulatory practices. Everyone in New South Wales who is impacted by biosecurity, including businesses, producers, industry and community groups and individuals, will be affected by the changes. In particular, officers who are currently authorised to perform compliance and enforcement functions established under biosecurity legislation need to be thoroughly trained in the provisions of the Act, subordinate legislation and associated policies and procedures. This includes over 500 authorised officers from organisations including NSW Department of Primary Industries [DPI], Local Land Services, local councils and New South Wales police.

It is important that officers authorised under the new Act are able to implement it confidently and effectively from its commencement. In addition, because a key principle of the Act is the education of the public about biosecurity, authorised officers and other staff must be able to assist and advise the public of their obligations and responsibilities. The Act is based on the principle of shared responsibility between government, industry and community, and provides opportunities for self-regulation by industry groups, primary producers and businesses. It is expected that making training in relevant parts of the Act available to these groups will help them make the most of these opportunities. Recent in-depth attitudinal research conducted by New South Wales DPI across primary industries and the broader community will assist in ensuring the delivery of this training reaches its target audience in the most appropriate ways, ensuring the principles and duties under new legislation are widely understood.

An average production loss cost of \$151.5 million is estimated for New South Wales across seven pest species. Production losses associated with rabbits have the largest average cost impacts for both New South Wales and Australia. Wild dogs, foxes, introduced birds and pigs cause moderate impacts. In the case of goats there is a considerable commercial harvesting industry, particularly in western New South Wales. Consequently, production loss costs are likely to be offset by the net value of the feral goat harvesting industry. Carp impose cost through the displacement of native fish species in recreational fisheries. This cost is estimated to be around \$9 million per year in New South Wales.

Beef and wool production are the most severely impacted industries in New South Wales, with annual production losses around \$30 million to \$35 million per year in each of these industries. In total, all industries are calculated to suffer losses of \$110 million across the State. A total of \$768 million was spent on pest management across 150,000 Australian broadacre farms in 2006-07. Total broadacre farm pest animal costs are estimated to be \$17 million in New South Wales and \$46 million nationally. It is estimated that \$5 million was spent on introduced bird control in viticulture industries of New South Wales in 2013-14 and \$20 million nationally.

There are also enormous costs associated with weed control. It is estimated the annual economic cost of weeds to New South Wales is \$1.8 billion, not including the significant impacts to environmental and social amenity which have not been monetarily quantified. New South Wales agricultural businesses incur the majority of these costs, more than \$1.3 billion per annum, due to lost productivity, and labour, machinery and chemical costs. Weeds also threaten around 40 per cent of vulnerable and endangered species in New South Wales and 89 per cent of the State's endangered ecological communities. As I have outlined, biosecurity is important for New South Wales and I therefore commend the bill to the House.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (12:46): The Biosecurity Amendment Bill 2017 is a significant piece of legislation. Its importance to the State, and Australia as a whole, cannot be underestimated because primary industries are a huge contributor to the economy of this State and the nation. It is therefore very important that the measures in this bill are implemented and that this bill is passed by both Houses of this Parliament. If the

amendments in this bill are not implemented, there will be a detrimental impact on the biosecurity of New South Wales. Primary industries in New South Wales add approximately \$14 billion to our economy each year, with wheat production contributing more than \$2 billion, beef cattle contributing a similar amount, horticulture contributing \$1.2 billion, wool contributing just under \$1 billion and dairy contributing over \$600 million. Future growth projections show that the contribution of primary industries will only grow as New South Wales is seen as the food bowl for not just Australia and the Pacific but also Asia.

I have had a fair bit to do with many Australian-owned and operated and Chinese-owned and Australian-operated primary industry operations throughout New South Wales. These businesses are growing at a rate of knots in response to increased demand from countries such as China. Predictions are for a growth in the number of middle-class people in China to over 800 million by 2030. The emergence of a growing middle class results in demand for better quality food, better health care and better education. Australia, and particularly New South Wales, can play a huge part in meeting that growing demand. The current annual contribution of primary industries to our economy is projected to grow over time. That is good news for primary industries in our State, and that is why it is important that the Biosecurity Amendment Bill 2017 is passed by this Parliament.

Approximately one-quarter of people in regional New South Wales are employed in extended primary industries, and biosecurity is vital to the protection of our valuable export markets. Exports to China alone are worth \$1.4 billion, and I am sure that will only grow over time. The New South Wales share of that \$1.4 billion is 28 per cent. The New South Wales primary industry sector generates annual gross production worth over \$13.9 billion, representing about 20 per cent of Australian agricultural production, all of which is protected by maintaining our biosecurity status.

As we have seen in other parts of the world, the financial consequences of temporary or prolonged market closures due to pest or disease outbreaks can be significant. The impact is felt not only within the primary industry sector but by the whole economy. For example, it is estimated that a 12-month outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease would reduce Australia's gross domestic product by between \$10 billion and \$16 billion over 10 years. We have of course seen such outbreaks overseas. Many years ago in Great Britain—almost a decade ago, I think—an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease crippled the United Kingdom and crippled other European economies. So we have to get it right, and the measures in the Biosecurity Amendment Bill 2017 are aimed at doing just that: getting it right.

As another example, it is estimated that the result of a 12-month-long incursion of the wheat disease Karnal bunt would be a loss of \$350 million. A national outbreak of citrus canker would result in a loss in the order of \$400 million. There are any number of other possible pest or disease outbreaks that could have a crippling effect on our primary industries and the overall economy of New South Wales and Australia. That is why the Biosecurity Act 2015 was introduced. It provides a flexible and modern approach to the prevention, eradication and management of biosecurity risks here in New South Wales. The Biosecurity Act is not to be confused with the Biodiversity Conservation Act, which passed Parliament in November last year.

This amendment bill provides a suite of management tools that can be utilised to deal with biosecurity risk here in New South Wales. The key proposals in the bill include creating a head of power to allow the charging of fees for biosecurity certificates; allowing all legal entities, in addition to individuals, to be accredited as biosecurity certifiers and appointed as biosecurity auditors; ensuring that the issue of biosecurity certificates and the conduct of biosecurity audits is carried out by appropriately qualified individuals approved by the responsible accreditation authorities; permitting mandatory grounds for the suspension or cancellation of the accreditation of a biosecurity certifier, or of the appointment of a biosecurity auditor, to be prescribed in regulations; and providing for evidentiary certificates in respect of the National Livestock Identification System. These changes will ensure that current market assurance programs can continue and that strong governance and compliance arrangements are in place. This is extremely important. I acknowledge the great work of Niall Blair—even though he has been the Minister for Primary Industries for only a short time. [*Extension of time*]

What would be the impact if these changes to the Biosecurity Act were not made? I am sure this is of interest to all members currently in the Chamber—including the member for Wyong, who is nodding—and to others, including in particular our National Party colleagues. But it is also of concern to people in my electorate, who see this as an important issue even if we do not have a large farming sector. The Biosecurity Act 2015 would not be able to operate as efficiently and effectively as intended and a significant cost and red-tape burden would be imposed on the industry were the measures in this amendment bill not to pass. The governance and compliance arrangements that support market access would not be as strong as they should be and some of our markets could be compromised. We certainly do not want that. That is a view shared on both sides of the Chamber, and I believe the Opposition is supporting this bill.

Primary producers comprise the majority of the businesses that utilise Interstate Certification Assurance arrangements. Without the passage of the measures in this bill, there would be increased red tape for those

certification businesses which would cost, it is estimated, over \$300,000 per year. In addition, the cost of government biosecurity management services would not be recovered. Passage of this bill will allow fees to be charged to recover the cost of issuing biosecurity certificates as per current practice. That would be the cost of not passing this bill. Those of us on this side of the House see the importance of beefing up—pardon the pun—our biosecurity across the State. This bill contains important amendments to legislation that was only passed in 2015. Since that time we have seen the implementation of a whole range of strengthened biosecurity practices.

On behalf of the Government, therefore, I certainly support this legislation. As we have heard previous speakers say, improving biosecurity is important for our environment; for beef, wheat, cattle, wool, dairy and primary industry generally; and for the wider economy, including through direct employment. There are 90,000 people directly employed in primary industry in New South Wales. That number could probably be doubled—or even doubled again—to get an estimate of the number of people who are indirectly employed by primary industry. The economic cost of weeds to New South Wales is estimated to be \$1.8 billion, a figure I found quite extraordinary. That does not even include the significant impacts on the environment and on social amenity, the costs of which have not been quantified. This is an important bill and I support it.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (12:58): I make a contribution to the debate on the Biosecurity Amendment Bill 2017. Biosecurity means protecting the economy, the community and, importantly, the environment from the negative impact of pests, diseases and weeds. The Biosecurity Amendment Bill includes several measures that ensure individuals and other legal entities will have clear and accountable roles, responsibilities and functions. With these amendments, the Act will be ready to deliver effective management of biosecurity risks to protect our biosecurity, our biodiversity, our distinctive ecosystems and the natural environment.

Pests, animals and weeds are among the biggest threat to biodiversity and the natural environment in New South Wales. Pests such as foxes, cats, rabbits and wild dogs are considered to be the primary cause of extinction for many of our native mammal species since European settlement. Pest animals also contribute to the decline of many other native animals, particularly birds and reptile species, and approximately 40 per cent of New South Wales threatened species. More than 1,650 exotic plants have become established in the wild and at least 300 of these weeds are highly invasive and a threat to our biodiversity.

This legislation is obviously important for the whole of New South Wales, but has special meaning for my electorate of Tweed. The Tweed is at the forefront in the battle against the cattle tick. There are fairly stringent controls on moving animals across borders, but unfortunately a number of years ago there was a cattle tick outbreak in my electorate. One of the few remaining local dairy farmers lost his entire breeding herd, which was worth about \$280,000. A neighbour had let his property run down and then rented it to people who purchased a couple of cows from Queensland. The cows were not checked and brought in cattle ticks. It was devastating, and the young farmer never recovered. He and his wife had started manufacturing boutique cheese with their dairy herd. He is now off the land. I accompanied Department of Primary Industries [DPI] vets who examined the herd. I have run my hands around a cow's udder looking for cattle ticks. They are minute, but I assure members that they carry an incredible amount of poison.

In the past three or four months, the Queensland equivalent of the DPI discovered fire ants at Nerang. Nerang is about 20 kilometres north of the New South Wales border. Fire ants are prevalent in the suburbs of Brisbane and can be found further north but in the past three or four years they have been slowly and surely working their way south. The Queensland department took the action necessary to eradicate the fire ant nest, but the ants remain a great concern. That is why this legislation is so important. My constituents often visit the markets at Nerang. They might buy a lovely pot plant and inadvertently carry fire ants into New South Wales. A number of years ago the DPI discovered fire ants around the port of Botany. The department recently won an award for that discovery. I commend the department and thank its officers for keeping us safe.

Myrtle rust is another pest. On the Far North Coast there is a fairly substantial tea tree oil industry, and several plantations are located in my electorate. The oil is not just used in Australia; it recently achieved medical accreditation in Europe. I believe myrtle rust came to the Central Coast from South America. It was spread through a nursery and since then has affected the entire industry. It can have devastating effects. There have been several outbreaks in the Tweed but to date these have been contained through extreme vigilance. That why this Act is so important. I think the Tweed is the State's last barrier against the cane toad—although I know they have been found as far south as Sydney. Cane toads are in plague proportions in the Tweed—I refer not to Queensland State of Origin supporters but to the amphibians. Unfortunately, the Tweed also has a large population of camphor laurel trees. For those members who may not know about camphor laurels, once they get into your paddock—

Mr Mark Taylor: You're shot.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: You are shot, because they keep coming up time and time again. They turn prime agricultural land into wasteland. We have been working on a proposition regarding camphor laurels, and I hope to see the relevant legislation amended. I can clear camphor laurel on my property, I can woodchip it and I can use it on my property. However, a cogeneration plant at Condong in my electorate has been seeking to burn camphor laurel chips to generate electricity, but unfortunately the Forestry Act as currently drafted does not permit this. I can chop down camphor laurel trees on my property but if I move the logs past my front gate they are deemed to be a forestry product and I must make an application to transport them. There is some red tape, but we have had discussions with the relevant Ministers and I am hopeful of a positive outcome. It would greatly enhance camphor laurel removal and eradication. The Tweed is blessed with five World Heritage listed national parks, including the Green Cauldron where camphor laurel and a number of other invasive plants have been discovered. National Parks and Wildlife Service officers do a good job, but it is pretty wild and woolly country and so the battle continues.

Believe it or not, the Tweed has a plague of wild dogs. This time last year some people were attacked on one of our beaches. Unlike other beaches in New South Wales, most Tweed beaches border either national parks or large bushland areas. I know that the department has been working to eradicate wild dogs, and I applaud James McTavish, the NSW Cross Border Commissioner, for his efforts to resolve the problem. The dogs come out of Queensland national parks and down the escarpments at the back of Cobaki and Piggabeen. I know that some significant attempts have been made on both sides of the border to contain them. Once these pests get a foothold, the effect on our agriculture and stock can be absolutely devastating.

As I said, about 300 weed species are highly invasive. A large number of weeds are escaped garden plants and many are now widespread. I compliment the Tweed Shire Council for its strong weed identification and eradication program but, more importantly, for being environmentally conscious. The council holds open days when it gives away native plants, such as lilly pillies, to local residents. Some 40 per cent of my constituents have lived in the Tweed for less than five years. They come to the area from Sydney, Melbourne or elsewhere and their knowledge of local invasive species—what is a weed and what is a nice plant—is often very limited. [*Extension of time*]

I appreciate the extension of time, Mr Temporary Speaker. I also appreciate the support of my colleagues. I am known as being 100 per cent for the Tweed, and I always get 100 per cent support from my colleagues. It makes me feel so good. Pest populations usually have high reproductive capabilities and can colonise new areas rapidly, recovering quickly after targeted control programs have concluded. The absence of natural predators and environmental control measures have often added to this impact. A perfect example of this is the disastrous impact of the cane toads, as I mentioned. They were brought into New South Wales in the 1930s. Cane toads have spread across the Northern Territory and Western Australia, and can now be found as far south as Port Macquarie and even Sydney and beyond. They compete with our native amphibians and produce a toxin that is deadly to reptiles.

Interestingly, the New South Wales Government is funding a revolutionary research program that aims to stop cane toads wiping out native predators such as the spotted-tailed quoll. By feeding native predators cane toad sausages laced with a nauseant, species such as lace monitors, land mullets, quolls and other reptiles learn to avoid the deadly toads. The veterinarians at the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary in Queensland have done great work with our native raptors in undertaking training and identification programs involving animals that are released into the wild. It is interesting to note that raptors have extraordinarily good memories. I recently watched one of the veterinarians feeding the cane toad laced sausages to birds. He said that he had repaired a sea eagle's wing five years ago and it still attacks him every time he goes near it. This is a valuable bill. I commend the Minister and his department, and praise them for their ongoing efforts to protect biodiversity in New South Wales.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Lands and Forestry, and Minister for Racing) (13:10): In reply: The New South Wales Government supports a collaborative national approach to biosecurity risks because they are not restricted by jurisdictions or borders. The Commonwealth Government is responsible for keeping pests, diseases and contaminants out of Australia, but we all have a responsibility to work together to deal with them once they are here. The Commonwealth Government has enacted a new biosecurity Act that forms the basis of a more flexible and outcomes-based national biosecurity framework. New South Wales supports this legislation and will continue to work with the Commonwealth Government on its implementation. New South Wales, along with the Commonwealth and the other States and Territories, is a signatory to the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity and the three national emergency agreements dealing with the animals and plants and the environment that underpin them.

I thank all members for their contributions to this debate: members for Upper Hunter, for Terrigal, for Wollondilly, for Cootamundra, for Myall Lakes, for Tamworth, for Barwon, for Drummoyne, for Clarence, for Oatley, for Tweed, and for Cessnock. I also welcome the Opposition's support for this important bill. The Biosecurity Amendment Bill 2017 amends the Biosecurity Act 2015. The amendments were identified during the

ongoing consultation process undertaken with key stakeholders. I thank the Biosecurity Advisory Committee for the work it has undertaken in this space, for the community information sessions it has held, for its meetings with various stakeholders, and also for alerting the Government to the need to make some minor amendments.

The purpose of the bill is to address a number of key, but minor, enabling provisions that were overlooked in the drafting of the original legislation. These amendments will ensure that business can be carried out efficiently while complying with national and State-based market assurance. Management arrangements to support risky activities can also be amended in line with new technologies and innovations. This is a sensible bill that has been introduced following close consultation with those who would be impacted if the amendments were not enacted. Biosecurity supports our economies, both State and regional, provides protection for our environment, and plays a key role in supporting our communities. Biosecurity is not an issue only for governments; it is a shared responsibility.

The Biosecurity Act and this bill provide the tools and powers to support a strong system. The Act will be supported by education and advisory material that will provide clear guidance about what people must do to prevent, eliminate and minimise biosecurity risks. I thank the Minister, the Hon. Niall Blair, for the incredible work he has done in this space, and his staff for the work they are doing to make a difference for the people of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Community Recognition Statements

CRONULLA LOCAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General) (13:14): I congratulate 2017 Cronulla Local Woman of the Year Alison Todd of Caringbah. Alison Todd has been volunteering with Cancer Council NSW for 26 years. Having lost her husband, her father and a very close friend to cancer, Alison passionately believes that volunteering can make a significant difference in the lives of cancer sufferers and their families. Alison has tirelessly supported the Cancer Council's fundraising and community awareness campaigns. Since 2005, Alison has given more than 100 presentations to business and community groups as part of the council's Community Speakers Program.

Alison helps to coordinate local fundraising activities as part of Daffodil Day, and has worked hard to gain support for the Cancer Council's successful Saving Life 2015 campaign, which saw the removal of co-payments for highly specialised chemotherapy drugs and other highly specialised drugs used to treat a range of chronic diseases. She is currently actively involved in the I Care For Palliative Care campaign, which aims to ensure that every person with a life-limiting cancer receives the best specialist palliative care when needed. As the member of Parliament liaison officer for the Cronulla electorate, Alison engages constructively and regularly keeps me informed about the council's programs and campaigns. Alison is a tremendous asset to the Cancer Council, and her unwavering dedication and tireless fundraising efforts over more than a quarter of a century are inspiring.

NORTHERN NSW HERITAGE CUP

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (13:14): The inaugural Northern NSW Heritage Cup was held by Northern NSW Football on 3, 4 and 5 March. The Heritage Cup involves selected clubs within the Northern New South Wales premier competition—clubs that have been in existence for more than 100 years. The clubs involved were: Cessnock City FC, established in 1907; Edgeworth Eagle FC, established in 1892; Wallsend Football Club, established in 1887; Weston Workers Bears Football Club, established in 1907; Adamstown Rosebud Football Club, established in 1889; Lake Macquarie City Football Club, established in 1912; Maryland Fletcher Football Club, which represented the Minmi Rangers Football Club, established in 1884; and West Wallsend Football Club, established in 1881. A hard-fought grand final saw Adamstown Rosebud Football Club prevail as winners over Edgeworth Eagles Football Club in a penalty shootout. Congratulations to all teams.

BATHURST LOCAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Lands and Forestry, and Minister for Racing) (13:15):

I acknowledge the achievements of the outstanding women of New South Wales and the immeasurable contributions they make to their communities. I acknowledge in particular the Bathurst electorate Local Woman of the Year, Laurie McMahon of Oberon. Laurie is an extraordinary citizen who over many years has committed and dedicated much of her time to making her community a better place. From her involvement in services to the scouting movement and to the local hospital board, Laurie McMahon is always the first to volunteer her services and to support and assist others. Her dedication to Camp Quality is outstanding, and she adheres to its policy of creating a better life for every child living with cancer in Australia. Both Laurie and her wonderful husband, Ray, could not be prouder of their endeavours to help them achieve that.

By supporting Camp Quality and travelling across the area to sell raffle tickets to raise both funds and awareness of the plight of others, Laurie McMahon is a wonderful reflection of a remarkable community member. She and Ray established and developed the Oberon and District Historical Museum, and to this day both of them continue to do many hours of volunteering at the museum, and are the drivers behind the success of this invaluable community resource. There are many accolades that could be bestowed on Laurie McMahon, and I congratulate her on being named the 2017 Local Woman of the Year.

TRIBUTE TO JAMES BENNETT, OAM

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (13:16): I pay tribute to James Bennett, who continues to achieve extraordinary things for people with impaired vision despite his own disability. Mr Bennett, from Fennell Bay, was last month acknowledged with an Order of Australia Medal [OAM] for his services to people who are blind or who have low vision. James and his trusty guide dog, Brogan, are a regular sight around Lake Macquarie as they go about their business of making the world a better place for so many. He has been a board member of Guide Dogs NSW/ACT since 2011. He is a regular guest speaker at schools and at community group meetings on behalf of Guide Dogs NSW/ACT and other groups in the disability sector.

James is also a member of the Aged and Disability Services Advisory Panel for Lake Macquarie City Council, and a member of two national advisory panels. Since 2007, he has been the lead auditor and technical expert contracting to three major certification bodies in the disability services sector. I take this opportunity to congratulate him on his OAM and thank him again for the extraordinary contributions he makes to Lake Macquarie and broader community.

CENTRAL COAST CRUSADERS BASKETBALL TEAM

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (13:18): The Central Coast Crusaders Youth Women League basketball team are a fantastic local sporting group playing out of the Terrigal Scholastic Sports Stadium in my electorate. On 3 March I had the pleasure of attending the Crusaders' season launch at Club Terrigal. It was great to see the energy and enthusiasm shown by the ladies, who are all passionate about basketball. Soon after the launch the team came up against the Hills Hornets in a tight-fought match. I am pleased to say that the Crusaders took up my challenge and triumphed 64 -51 over the Hornets. I congratulate Shakera Reilly, Aly Willmot, Charlie Evans, Rachel Williams, Emily Matthews, Alessandra Gasparotto, Katia Losalini, Jamei Pate, Lucy Chapman, Taylor Ferris, Riley Evans, Paris Forcadilla, Evie Nicol, Emma Tunstead, coach Eddie Witmore and team manager Hannah Venn-Brown. It was a great effort by the Crusaders to win the match. Well done to the girls. I remind the Minister that this is what success looks like.

NEWCASTLE LOCAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle) (13:19): I recently announced Melissa Histon as the 2017 Newcastle Local Woman of the Year. Melissa is a professional photographer and founder of the website *thesistacode.com*. She is dedicated to sharing stories and images of inspiring women and organisations that are actively doing what they can to improve the plight of oppressed, disadvantaged and mistreated people around the world. She aims to uplift, inspire and share the love. She is also the founder of the Got Your Back Sista charity. Last year, the charity held an event, "I say NO to domestic violence", which saw more than 500 people in the Hunter community come together on 3 September at McDonald Jones Stadium to make a stand against domestic violence.

She made a collection of still images and videos to be used in a social media campaign, television commercials and print advertisements encouraging others to take a stand. I was honoured to be with Melissa this morning at the Women of the Year Awards with her husband, Craig; her mother, Debra; her father, Allan; and her sister, Rochelle. They are rightfully very proud. She is an inspirational woman who fights to empower and celebrate women. Newcastle is lucky to have her in our community.

TRIBUTE TO DAN WASSELL

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (13:20): This afternoon I pay tribute to the endeavour and community spirit of one man from my electorate of Seven Hills, Dan Wassell. Dan is in charge of The Restore op-shop on Best Road, Seven Hills—just a stone's throw from my electorate office. The Restore is a social enterprise that offers not only affordable clothing to those in need but also important legal and social counselling services on site. Since opening in 2014, The Restore has already done an outstanding job in getting local people back on the right track and into stable employment. Last week I visited The Restore to check out Dan's new plans to open a cafe inside the shop, which will sustain and improve the important services being provided. Dan is currently pursuing crowd funding to raise \$22,000 to complete the kitchen. I am sure that all members will join me in supporting The Restore and the community-mindedness of Dan, who hopes that the cafe will upskill even more locals in the Seven Hills community.

ORANGE LOCAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (13:20): On this International Women's Day I recognise Karlie Irwin. All who know Karlie are aware that she has a 20-year background of dedicated and passionate work in community services. Karlie saw a gap in the provision of services to the people of Orange who suffered domestic violence and homelessness. In 2015 Karlie responded by establishing the charitable organisation named Pay It Forward Orange, which she operated from her home garage, providing dignified support to those in need by distributing donated goods. The demand for her assistance grew following referrals from the Department of Family and Community Services and Housing Plus.

In 2016 Karlie moved the operation into a larger office and warehouse premises, which now operates with the assistance of volunteer and income-supported employees. Furniture, white goods, clothing and food are provided to those most in need. Karlie has assisted thousands of Orange residents during this time. Pay It Forward Orange now seeks to reduce homelessness through initiatives to skill youth and to assist persons maintaining tenancy through affordable maintenance. Karlie was most justifiably recognised for her contributions to community by being named the 2017 Orange Local Woman of the Year.

TS VAMPIRE ANNUAL INSPECTION

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (13:21): I congratulate Lieutenant Adam Antonini, commanding officer of TS *Vampire*, on another fantastic annual inspection held on Saturday 4 March. Each year I am honoured to be invited to attend the inspections and delighted to see the young cadets perform their march past. TS *Vampire* was delighted that this year they were able to share the experience with Lieutenant Commander Penny Gardner, ANC, Flotilla Commander, South East Queensland Flotilla, and have her inspect the ship's company and the drum corp. To see the cadets march with such pride and honour is a magnificent experience. They do an enormous amount of good in our local community.

MIRATH IN MIND

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (13:22): I was delighted to attend the recent Mirath in Mind Education Committee Dinner held in Georges Hall on Friday 17 February 2017. Mirath in Mind is a not-for-profit organisation that promotes awareness of Lebanese and Arabic culture, heritage and the arts in Australia. This was the fifth consecutive celebration dinner organised by Mirath in Mind, with the focus in 2017 to be placed on musicals, the film industry and theatre. I congratulate and acknowledge the executive committee of Mirath in Mind for organising another successful event in 2017, including the president and founder of Mirath, Chadia Gedeon-Hajjar; vice president Marie Joseph Abi-Arrage; secretary Fayrouz Fares; treasurer Bouchra Beydoun; and members of the education committee including Dr Rosemary Suliman, Laura Chahine, Gina Harb, Norma Maroun and Siham Asfour.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE YOUNG CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (13:23): Today I to acknowledge Christina Emmanouel of Illawong, who has been named the 2017 Sutherland Shire Young Citizen of the Year for her work with youth and disability services. Christina has been a passionate advocate of youth and disability services after overcoming a movement disorder as a teenager. She has been volunteering at St Vincent de Paul for the past three years as an advanced trained leader of kids and teens respite programs. She also volunteers with Camp Quality as a companion to kids with cancer and she is an active volunteer with community initiatives, including the Nagle Centre for Youth and White Ribbon. Christina's work has changed the lives of so many young people and people living with a disability. She is a true local hero, giving a voice to those who may not be able to advocate for themselves. Her passion and dedication to our local community is an inspiration to all. She truly embodies the shire spirit of lending a hand to help those in need. I extend my warmest congratulations to Christina on this well-deserved award and thank her for her invaluable contribution to our local community.

TRIBUTE TO SHARON AND CHRIS FLYNN

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (13:24): I am pleased to recognise two special people in my electorate who have recently opened their hearts and home to four young children they have fostered through the Barnardos Find-a-Family program. Sharon and Chris Flynn from Rooty Hill have undergone numerous interviews and courses to become foster parents for Barnardos. Barnardos found them fit to have up to four children in their care. During the process they were asked whether they would be willing to take siblings into their home as it is important to keep siblings together whenever possible. Of course they agreed without hesitation. Sharon and Chris have four adult children of their own who have supported them in their journey to become foster parents. They are a remarkable family. Sharon and Chris accepted four sibling boys, the eldest of whom is eight years of age. These four boys are extremely fortunate that they are able to stay together as a family. I am sure the House will join me in recognising the hard work, generosity and kindness of these two wonderful members of my community.

KIAMA LOCOMOTIVE 100TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (13:25): Today I acknowledge another great Illawarra institution. This Sunday, 12 March, will mark a special anniversary for the Illawarra Light Rail Museum in Albion Park. It will be the 100th anniversary of the *Kiama* locomotive, and a community celebration is taking place at the museum. The theme of the day will see dedications to the memory of Brian Holmes, a late Kiama resident and museum member. There is also a family connection with the *Kiama* locomotive. Two people coming to the celebration will be Marie Millard, who lives in Blue Haven Village in Kiama and whose grandfather used to drive the loco when in service at Kiama, and another Dunmore resident whose father used to drive the loco. I acknowledge my friend Brad Johns from the Illawarra Light Rail Museum, who has put a lot of time and effort into organising this wonderful event on Sunday, as well as all the work that has gone into restoring this wonderful piece of locomotive history.

SEAHAM PUBLIC SCHOOL 2017 PARLIAMENT

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (13:25): It was an honour to attend the official opening of Seaham Public School's 2017 Parliament. All the students demonstrated respect for each other and their school, and all parliamentarians performed their duties with great success. I particularly acknowledge: Prime Minister Bryce Brown; Leader of the Opposition Archie Lilley; Sport and Recreation Minister Kye Andrews, and shadow Charlie Codrington; Technology Minister Declan O'Donnell, and shadow Ash Wade; Education Minister Breanna Mason, and shadow Clare Moir; Health Minister Will Isley, and shadow Ben Moroney; Student Welfare Minister Matthew Edwards, and shadow Francis Kime; Functions and Finance Minister Veronica Nunan, and shadow Bridie Gillon; Environment Minister Claire Penfold, and shadow Kanye Knox; Speaker of the House Tahlia Jarvie, and deputy Jaxon Pratt; Hansard reporters Charlotte Warburton and Charlotte Fawcett; and Serjeants-at-Arms Harper Collins and Rebecca Drew. I thank the Governor-General—also known as the principal, Mr Craig Partridge—and I congratulate all the students and staff of Seaham Public School on their commitment to democracy in our public education system.

AVEO LINDFIELD GARDENS THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (13:27): Located just 15 kilometres from Parliament House, Aveo Lindfield Gardens is a well-positioned retirement village overlooking bushland and parts of Middle Harbour. Last week I was fortunate to share an afternoon tea with its wonderful residents to mark the milestone occasion of the village's thirtieth anniversary. Among those present were Aveo executives James Wiltshire and Angela Buckley, while the local village manager, Cheryl Simshauser, and her team were welcoming hosts. Janet Brierley and Molly O'Brien are two local residents who have lived at Lindfield Gardens for almost the entire 30 years. Appropriately, they helped cut the birthday cake. The village has a wide range of internal facilities, conveniently complemented by other Lindfield neighbourhood attractions only minutes from the tranquil residential setting. I congratulate all those who have contributed to maintaining such a great community of senior Australians over the past 30 years. I wish Aveo Lindfield Gardens and its residents all the best for many years to come.

ALZHEIMER'S AUSTRALIA MEMORY WALK AND JOG

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Counter Terrorism, Minister for Corrections, and Minister for Veterans Affairs) (13:29): I inform the House of a fantastic initiative run by Alzheimer's Australia, the Memory Walk and Jog, which will be held across the country this Sunday 12 March. Eighteen walks will take place across Australia as the community unites to race against dementia. I am particularly proud of Baulkham Hills local Janelle Mann, who this Sunday will walk the 7½ kilometres with her dad, Ian. Janelle and Ian have helped fight against dementia since 2014, when both of Janelle's grandparents, Amy and Clifford, sadly passed away after their diagnoses in 2003 and 2006 respectively. The Memory Walk and Jog for

Western Sydney will be held in Penrith and will raise funds and awareness to provide support and education to those living with or around those with dementia. On behalf of the people of Baulkham Hills, I congratulate Janelle and all those involved who will unite this weekend to rally against this very cruel disease.

CHARLESTOWN LOCAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (13:29): Today I recognise Lynda Little, Charlestown's Local Woman of the Year. Lynda manages The Place; a community centre at Charlestown. The Place is a financially sustainable social enterprise enabling participant-led community activity. The mission of The Place is to provide a safe and welcoming venue that engages and supports a diverse community and responds according to local community needs. The income generated from local businesses hiring rooms in The Place directly supports its work within the community, including the provision of information and referral services. The Place offers a number of regular activities and workshops, including over-50s exercise classes, playgroups, cooking classes for people with disabilities, and yoga. As well as being the inaugural manager of The Place, Lynda is an active member of the Hunter Regional Neighbourhood Centre Forum and the Local Community Services Association, the State peak body for community development organisations. I commend Lynda and her staff for their tireless efforts in supporting the community and people of Charlestown.

TRIBUTE TO SCOTT JONES

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation) (13:30): I recognise Scott Jones, captain of Mount Kuring-Gai Rural Fire Service and president of the Hornsby Touch Football Association, for his outstanding charitable work in Papua New Guinea. In 2014, alongside Bill Slade, Peter Jones and Peter Lloyd, Scott hiked along the Kokoda Trail. In recognising the significance of sport to the local communities in Papua New Guinea, the group donated a substantial amount of Hornsby Touch T-shirts and footballs to the Efogi village orphanage.

Scott created a Boots4PNG program in August last year to improve the chances for kids in Papua New Guinea to be involved in touch football, an already popular sport over there. This initiative strived to collect more new and old touch-football shirts, boots and playing gear. Through the program more than 80 pairs of boots and shirts were collected, showing the commitment of the local community to such a worthy cause. Through Scott's correspondence with representative teams from Port Moresby Touch, the donated equipment was able to be dispersed among the children in remote villages. Scott's work has forged close bonds between the local community here and the Port Moresby community in Papua New Guinea. I thank Scott for his incredible work and for demonstrating the initiative to start up such a positive program that brings out the best in people in the Hornsby area.

KEIRA LOCAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (13:31): It gives me great pleasure to honour Nyree Saxby, the 2017 Keira Local Woman of the Year. Nyree has been a tireless advocate for the Saving Chloe Saxby organisation. Chloe Saxby, Nyree's daughter, is a young child with vanishing white matter disease. It is a crippling disease and for the past five years I have worked closely with this family to raise awareness and raise funds to ensure that Chloe gets the support, treatment and care she needs. Nyree and her entire family are wonderful advocates for not only this organisation but also many others. They work extremely hard under what can only be described as extremely difficult circumstances. It gives me great pleasure to acknowledge Nyree and her family and to say that the Keira electorate is very proud of Nyree Saxby.

TRIBUTE TO JAN CONSOLI

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (13:32): Jan Consoli is the outgoing president of the Empire Bay Progress Association and a dedicated local volunteer in my electorate. She recently stood down after 15 years of dedicated service to the association. Jan was instrumental in pushing for the Empire Bay Hall to become wholly owned by the local community through a trust arrangement, making it one of only a handful in the country owned in such a way. Ms Consoli was also successful in obtaining New South Wales government grants to extend and renovate the hall, a great community space that now hosts a wide range of activities including dance classes, various seniors groups and association meetings. It is people like Jan Consoli who enrich not only the communities they live in but also society as a whole. On behalf of everybody in Empire Bay and the Terrigal electorate, I sincerely thank Jan for her service.

CRICKET ILLAWARRA

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong) (13:33): I congratulate Mark Johnston and Cricket Illawarra on hosting the first Sheffield Shield match in Wollongong on 25 to 28 February. Staging this match at North Dalton Park was a great boost for cricket in the Illawarra. A draw between New South Wales and Tasmania was not the

result that any Blues fans wanted, but it showed that Wollongong is ready to host more first-class matches. In fact, North Dalton Park is now considered to be one of the best cricket grounds in New South Wales outside of Sydney.

The weather was not great that weekend but the investment in ground improvements paid off, with the deluge of rain on Saturday night draining quickly, allowing play to begin on Sunday. I congratulate the ground staff on their fine work and everyone from Cricket Illawarra on volunteering their time and helping to organise the match. It might have been 125 years since Lord Sheffield's English tourists played Illawarra on their tour, but we have proved that we should not have to wait more than a century to host our next first-class match.

TRIBUTE TO SUSAN LEE

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (13:34): I pay tribute to the advocacy work of my constituent Susan Lee of Winston Hills. Susan is a tireless proponent of a number of health awareness issues and has corresponded with my office on a number of occasions over the past two years. Last week, I joined Susan at the Cancer Council's "I Care for Palliative Care" campaign launch for Western Sydney, held at Rotary House in Parramatta. In our community it is vitally important that we have people like Susan ensuring that those devastated by the advanced stages of cancer can maintain their quality of life in a way that is meaningful to them. The Cancer Council does a great job in providing support for families and carers and is worthy of the support of this House. I note also that today is International Women's Day, and it is only right that I recognise the incredible work of a woman who, like so many other women in the Seven Hills community, puts the interests of others above her own. I thank Susan and all the hardworking women in the Seven Hills electorate.

KATOOMBA RSL CLUB FIRE

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (13:35): On 24 February 2017 my community was absolutely shocked when news came through that the Katoomba RSL was on fire. Sadly, it was mostly destroyed. The club's generosity over many decades, whether through the support of the Clubs Grants program or the provision of a venue for fundraising events, has not gone unnoticed. The loss of the club will be felt by the wider Blue Mountains community for some time. I offer my heartfelt condolences to Brian Turner, David White, Brigitte Mosely, Nick Darias, the RSL executive team, the regulars, the fabulous staff and all of their families. It is amazing that nobody was injured as a result of the fire. Nick and his team did an incredible job ensuring everyone got out safely. I know there will be many difficult weeks and months ahead for all involved with the Katoomba RSL. With its closure, the Upper Mountains has lost its designated emergency evacuation centre. I have written to Ministers Grant and Elliott seeking their assistance for the rebuild and re-establishment of our club. I thank the Blue Mountains City Council for its support.

WOLLONGONG STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE HEADQUARTERS

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (13:36): On Monday 6 March I was very pleased to join with the New South Wales Minister for Emergency Services to tour the new State Emergency Service [SES] State headquarters in Wollongong and to officially welcome the new SES commissioner Mark Smethurst. Brigadier Smethurst joined the army in 1982 and was chief of staff of the Special Operations Command commanding the counterterrorism operations for the Melbourne Commonwealth Games in 2006 and for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in 2007. He has commanded the special operations forces for the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan. The appointment of Mark Smethurst will ensure sound leadership of the New South Wales SES and the further development of the organisation to help meet the challenges faced in times of crisis and support the broader emergency management response and cooperation requirements in New South Wales.

I was also pleased to join with Minister Troy Grant to officially hand over a new \$650,000 foam firefighting truck to Dapto fire station to assist its brigade with operational events. I also look forward to seeing the official opening of the new statewide SES headquarters in Wollongong, which is currently under construction. The State headquarters is and will always remain proudly in the Illawarra.

CAMPBELLTOWN WOMAN OF THE YEAR DAWN KERSHAW

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (13:37): I am delighted to congratulate Dawn Kershaw on being named Campbelltown's Woman of the Year for 2017. Dawn has lived in Bradbury for many years and was a foundation member of the Airds-Bradbury Community Change Maker program. As a Community Change Maker, Dawn established a craft group based at AB Central in Airds, where members sew clothing and comfort bears to be sent overseas for disaster relief. Dawn has had extensive involvement in the community beyond the craft group for many years, including with the fruit and vegetable co-operative, Bush Care, the Fisher's Ghost Parade and many other things including simply mowing her elderly neighbours' lawns. On a personal level, Dawn has had a bit of a rough time since her husband passed away three years ago. It warms my heart to hear Dawn describe this honour as "just the boost [she] needed". I congratulate Dawn and the countless women working every

day to make Campbelltown such a great place, particularly on this day, International Women's Day, when we acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of women in all our communities and the society in which live.

Bills

SPORTING VENUES AUTHORITIES AMENDMENT BILL 2017

Returned

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith): I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning the abovementioned bill without amendment.

I will now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.15 p.m.

Visitors

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome the students and teachers from Chatswood Intensive English Centre, who are guests of the Premier and member for Willoughby. I welcome Tanya Powick, the Oxley recipient of the Local Woman of the Year award, who is a guest of the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, and member for Oxley. I acknowledge the Hon. Orlandino Greco and the Hon. Franco Sergio, who are members of Regional Government in Italy. They are accompanied by adviser Michael Porcaro, regional adviser of Calabria in Sydney Tony Mittica, and Joe Arduca. They are guests of the member for Drummoyne, the member for Cabramatta and the member for Fairfield. Welcome to you all. I also welcome members of the East Maitland RSL club, who are guests of the member for Maitland.

Notices

PRESENTATION

[During the giving of notices of motions]

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

Question Time

PENALTY RATES

Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (14:22): My question is directed to the Minister for Women. What is her response to community concerns that reducing penalty rates in retail and hospitality will disproportionately affect women in this State?

Ms TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Women, and Minister for Ageing) (14:22): Madam Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has the call and will be heard in silence. Members will cease interjecting. Opposition members will come to order.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: In the spirit of International Women's Day, I say to all women, including those opposite, "Happy International Women's Day!" International Women's Day is a crucial day in the calendar of democratic societies because it is an opportunity to pause the general run of life and consider the achievements of all of us in this place and the people we represent in our communities. It is also an opportunity to consider how far we have come. There is an exhibition in the foyer that talks about how far women have come in this place.

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

Ms TANYA DAVIES: International Women's Day is also an opportunity to pause—as we are doing now—to consider how far we still have to go. I am proud, as the Minister for Women in the Berejiklian-Barilaro Government—

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: We have two motions accorded priority today on International Women's Day, which is appropriate, and I certainly support that.

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

Ms Jodi McKay: This question is specifically about penalty rates. I ask the Minister to please answer that question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has the call. There is no point of order. The member will resume her seat.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: The New South Wales Government, under the leadership of Premier Gladys Berejiklian, is committed to improving gender equality and the lives of women in this State.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting. The member for Port Stephens will come to order. The member for Canterbury will come to order. The member for Strathfield will come to order.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: As the Minister for Women in this place, I am personally committed to continuing to hear, firsthand, of the challenges and the obstacles that women face right across this State.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will come to order. The member for Port Stephens will come to order. The member for Bankstown will come to order. The member for Strathfield will come to order. If they continue to interject they will be removed from the Chamber.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: We come to this place from diverse experiences. I began my working life as a young woman at the age of 13 working—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Rockdale is being rude.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. It is important that we bring our experiences to this place, and I would be very keen to hear about penalty rates.

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

Ms TANYA DAVIES: As I was saying, we come from varied backgrounds, and I began my working life selling chicken and chips in Newcastle on very low wages.

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

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I worked hard on evenings, weekends and Sundays to raise money to buy my own car.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Bankstown to order for the first time. I remind her that she may be removed from the Chamber again today. I call the member for Bankstown to order for the second time.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: That car was not handed to me on a silver platter. Despite the significant progress we have made in many areas of gender inequality it continues to be a major concern, and rightly so, for women across their public and private lives. According to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency, in May of last year the New South Wales gender pay gap stood at 17.1 per cent.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Port Stephens that this is not a debate. I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the first time. I call the member for Londonderry to order for the first time.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: That gap is down from 19 per cent.

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. Stop the clock. I call the member for Newtown to order for the first time. If the member for Canterbury continues to interject she will be removed from the Chamber. The Minister has the call. The Clerk will restart the clock.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: I ask the Leader of the Opposition to request a two-minute extension of time for my answer. The Premier has committed to 100 per cent of jobs in New South Wales government sector roles to be flexible by 2019, and we are well on our way to achieving that goal. Since 2012 the Women in Trades initiative has successfully leveraged industry and local councils to assist women in male-dominated roles.

Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (14:29): I ask a supplementary question. I thank the Minister for her answer, and I note that in five minutes she did not mention the words "penalty rates". What is the Minister's reaction to the penalty rate cut that will affect for the worse the pay packets of hundreds of thousands women in this State, and what is she going to do about it?

The SPEAKER: The supplementary question counts as another question from the Opposition.

Ms TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Women, and Minister for Ageing) (14:30): I think every intelligent person in this place and those who are listening to this debate will realise that these questions are matters for the Federal Government. The Leader of the Opposition, as a member of the State Parliament, is asking these questions in the wrong place. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to investigate Federal matters then he should seek a Federal seat. In this place we are 100 per cent focused on

delivering the services to meet the needs of the people of New South Wales. We are delivering frontline services and improved roads and hospitals that directly help young people, women, the ageing population and everyone else in our community. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to harp on about Federal matters then he should seek a Federal seat and refer to my previous answer.

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

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM—LITERACY AND NUMERACY TESTING

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Cootamundra) (14:31): My question is addressed to the Premier. How have New South Wales schools performed in the latest National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy [NAPLAN] tests?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:31): I note the member for Cootamundra's commitment to education. I wish her and everyone in this Chamber a happy International Women's Day. I am glad to say that today is a phenomenal day for schools in New South Wales. I am delighted to report to the House that the 2016 data on the My School website, which was released today, contains outstanding news about education in New South Wales. The New South Wales mean score is above the national average for all but one test domain and year level. New South Wales ranks first of all the States in spelling for all year levels. New South Wales continues to have the highest overall participation rate. The New South Wales mean scores for year 3 reading, spelling and grammar and punctuation remain higher than the first year of NAPLAN testing in 2008. I am also pleased to say that New South Wales has smaller gaps in NAPLAN performance between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students than the respective national averages.

Of course, being International Women's Day it would be remiss of me not to mention the outstanding achievements of some of our girls schools. Included in the long list of New South Wales schools with mean NAPLAN scores that are substantially above the national average across all testing domains and cohorts are Cheltenham Girls High School, Hornsby Girls High School, North Sydney Girls High School, Sydney Girls High School, St George Girls High School and Willoughby Girls High School. Among the independent schools for girls that have done really well are Abbotsleigh, Ascham School, Roseville College, Loreto Kirribilli and Meriden. We also know that these positive results have been achieved in schools across the State.

I acknowledge the comprehensive schools among the best performers, including Seven Hills North Public School, Gympie Technical High School, Northern Beaches Secondary College in Balgowlah, Lithgow Public School and Castlereagh Public School. I take this opportunity to congratulate all the students, teachers, principals and staff at the schools for achieving such amazing results. I especially welcome students of the Chatswood Intensive English Centre, who are here today. I know they are completing their studies in English to progress their education. We wish them the very best in their studies. As a product of the public education system in New South Wales, I know the importance of access to a good education system, and I am grateful to the teachers I had in the public system who supported and inspired me always to do my best. I know many in the gallery today and all of us in this Chamber respect and appreciate the value of our teachers in classrooms across New South Wales.

This Government is committed to providing quality education in New South Wales, so that every student—no matter their circumstances, where they live, or their background—has the opportunity and the choices to reach their full potential. Our aim is to increase the proportion of New South Wales students in the top two NAPLAN bands for reading and numeracy by 8 per cent, and increase the proportion of Aboriginal students in the top two NAPLAN bands for reading and numeracy by 30 per cent.

We are already committed to record infrastructure investment in education. I take this opportunity to thank the former Minister for Education, Adrian Piccoli, and the current Minister for Education, Rob Stokes, for these outstanding results. We appreciate the ongoing needs of students and parents, especially as we will have a spike in student enrolments in coming years. I am pleased to say that nearly an extra \$1 billion has been allocated over 2016-17 to 2019-20 to build more than 1,100 state-of-the-art classrooms, bringing total schools capital spend to \$2.6 billion, up more than 50 per cent from the forward estimates of the 2015-16 budget. Education infrastructure received a huge boost, and I am pleased to say we are delivering on that spending boost.

We are now delivering new or upgraded schools in many parts of the State, and I take this opportunity to mention a few of them: Point Clare, Glenmore Park, Bowral, Harbord, Brewarrina and Moree East. These communities and others receiving much-needed upgrades appreciate their schools getting the attention they deserve. We have also more than doubled the funding for backlog of maintenance from \$160 million to \$330 million over two years to address priority maintenance needs in schools. [*Extension of time*]

Recurrent funding for education in 2016-17 is \$13.72 billion, up by \$950 million from last year—that means almost an extra \$1 billion for day-to-day education expenses. Since coming to government, we have continuously spoken about how much we appreciate our hardworking teachers. This Liberal-Nationals

Government has welcomed an additional 3,800 teachers to the frontline of our education system. New South Wales was the first State to sign up to the Gonski education reforms. We look forward to the complete rollout of these reforms.

This Government is pleased with the recent reforms in education that we have announced. In relation to the Higher School Certificate [HSC] we replaced the 16-year-old syllabuses to update the knowledge and skills students will develop for the workforce and further study. The new syllabuses have a back-to-basics focus, and I must say I have been overwhelmed by the positive feedback from teachers, parents and school communities about our focus. I thank communities for that positive feedback. We have also invested in our literacy and numeracy strategy as well as ensuring that there is more quality training for teacher education students in literacy and numeracy.

Mr Jihad Dib: What about the kids who did not get band aid?

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Lakemba that this is not a debate.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We have to attribute some of these great NAPLAN results to the Local Schools, Local Decisions plan.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: This plan gives more schools authority to make local decisions about how best to meet the needs of students. [*Time expired.*]

REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (14:38): My question is addressed to the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight. How is the New South Wales Government supporting regional economies through better roads, rail and services?

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley—Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight) (14:39): I thank the member for Tweed for that question. As always, he is 100 per cent for regional New South Wales and his community—a very fine member. I also acknowledge a visitor in the press gallery, a former colleague from the ABC who used to work from here, Michael Rowland. I have always wondered what television presenters wore in the afternoon. Now I know. I have never seen him without a tie.

The SPEAKER: What is he wearing? I love Michael Rowland. I watch him every morning.

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY: It is a dapper blue T-shirt. Back to some great news, I acknowledge the work in the Tweed to improve the capacity of the workforce of regional New South Wales. There is a great TAFE centre in the Tweed and the construction facilities at Kingscliff TAFE are amazing.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Rockdale will cease interjecting. Perhaps he has somewhere else he would rather be—the bar or elsewhere. The Minister has the call.

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY: The Pacific Highway upgrade is creating huge growth in apprenticeships across the State. The Kingscliff TAFE on the North Coast provides training on the side of the highway, using shipping containers converted into mobile learning spaces. They are delivering training in civil construction to support jobs on the Pacific Highway upgrade. It is a \$20 billion project in total, which we are coming to the end of. There are only another three to five years to go on that incredible project. The number of young people who have been able to work and train during the construction is inspiring. The member for Clarence knows about the workforce currently required within his patch as we upgrade the section from Woolgoolga to Ballina. A lot of apprentices are being trained—800 people completed their TAFE courses in civil construction in the local TAFE in 2015. That is just one dimension of the work we are able to do in regional New South Wales because we have a focus on regional New South Wales.

[*Interruption*]

Why would the member for Port Stephens be unhappy about that? Why would she be unhappy that since coming to office we have increased the roads budget in New South Wales by 105 per cent?

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

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

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY: I would be delighted to inform you, Madam Speaker, that since we came to office in 2011 the roads budget has increased by 105 per cent. For the information of the member for Port Stephens, 65 per cent of that funding is going into regional areas. I congratulate this Government on delivering for the

regions—and not just on big projects like the Pacific Highway. I was in your neck of the woods last Friday, Madam Speaker, accompanied by the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, and member for Bega, as we attended an inspection and opening of a new section of the Princes Highway just south of Batemans Bay. We have done some safety works in a terrible spot that has been the site of two fatal accidents over the past few years. That is one of the many sensible jobs we are doing.

Madam Speaker, as a passionate member for your electorate of South Coast you know it is not just about the Pacific Highway. The member for Kiama and the member for Bega also know that. It is also about the Princes Highway, the Kings Highway and the Newell Highway. We are making an amazing investment in the Newell Highway. It is a very important freight corridor. The work is improving overtaking opportunities and making the road safer, which is helping us get our freight to market in a much more efficient way.

Mr Troy Grant: It is the inland spine of New South Wales.

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY: Yes, the Newell Highway is the inland spine of New South Wales, as the member for Dubbo has pointed out. It is a very important road. [*Extension of time*]

Whilst I was with the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure in the electorate of Bega on Friday, the member for Tamworth accompanied the member for Northern Tablelands to an important event in Moree. I thank my Parliamentary Secretary for representing me in Moree. The event was also attended by the mayor of Moree, Katrina Humphries. She is a very important woman and the daughter of Wal Murray, my former boss and a former leader of our party. I congratulate Katrina Humphries, member for Northern Tablelands Adam Marshall and former Minister Duncan Gay because our work is transforming the community of Moree.

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

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY: It is very important work. I know it does not mean much to members opposite, but the project at Moree has reinstated a 2.8-kilometre rail line that is part of the Moree intermodal terminal development. Government members unveiled it on Friday. The project is the result of a \$5.3 million partnership with industry participant Broadbent Grain. It is expected to shift 250,000 tonnes of grain and 6,400 cargo boxes of cotton and pulses from road to rail. We are investing in commonsense infrastructure development that is taking the pressure off the road network and putting it onto rail where possible. I congratulate the former Minister, Duncan Gay, on his initiative that was supported by Katrina Humphries as well as local members. We are making good, commonsense investments and delivering for regional New South Wales to improve job prospects and capacity in the regions.

PENALTY RATES

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (14:46): My question is directed the Minister for Women. What action will the Minister take to protect the incomes of women working in the hospitality and retail industries who are facing a cut in their penalty rates?

Ms TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Women, and Minister for Ageing) (14:47): I thank the member for her question on this International Women's Day. After yesterday's effort, these questions are certainly not unexpected, but they are rather pointless. Let me remind this House that the Opposition's Federal colleagues set up the Fair Work Commission when they were in government. There is a difference between State awards and Federal awards. Members opposite clearly need to be reminded that the Fair Work Commission was established by a Federal Labor Government. It is interesting that Opposition members would choose to ask about the pay and conditions of New South Wales workers. How extraordinary—because under their watch, during the 16 years they were in power, New South Wales had the worst economy in this nation.

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

Ms TANYA DAVIES: We had the lowest level of business confidence.

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

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Our economic growth had stalled under their mismanagement. There was in fact never a worse time to be a worker in New South Wales than when they were in government.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: If the point of order is on relevance, the Minister remains relevant to the question. Does the member have another point of order?

Ms Jenny Aitchison: I asked her about her actions. I did not ask for—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister remains relevant, which is all I can ask of her under the standing orders.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: It is important to note that the question the member for Maitland asked was in relation to an award that is not a State award and is completely unrelated to the nurses and midwives award. We have evidence that members on this side of the House are backing our nurses and midwives to the hilt.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (14:49): My question is addressed to the Minister for Women. How is the Government supporting and promoting the goals of International Women's Day?

Ms TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Women, and Minister for Ageing) (14:50): I thank the member for Miranda for her question and for all of her advocacy work for her community. This morning I had the privilege of hosting the International Women's Day Women of the Year Awards ceremony with the Premier, the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, other Ministers, members of Parliament, dignitaries and members of the community. This year's finalists across all categories are leaders who embody the theme of this year's International Women's Day—Be Bold for Change. From meeting the finalists this morning it is clear that women are making a difference in New South Wales in so many ways. Their contributions have changed lives in their communities and across this State.

The New South Wales Government is proud to recognise and celebrate the accomplishments of so many extraordinary women through the NSW Women of the Year Awards. The increasing interest in this event, including the record number of nominations this year, is testimony to the difference that women are making in their communities. As part of the awards process, members of Parliament are invited to select a local woman of the year. A record number of entries were received this year—340. There were 203 for six statewide award categories and 83 local women of the year award recipients. The statewide awards received more than 10,000 votes, which was an extraordinary show of support for women across our communities.

The winner of the 2017 Premier's Award for Woman of the Year was Associate Professor Catherine Birman—one of the most experienced cochlear implant surgeons in the world. She has given the gift of hearing to more than 1,000 New South Wales residents and has pioneered work in cochlear implants for children with complex medical conditions. Of course, we are all particularly proud of cochlear as a story of innovation and excellence based here in Sydney. Catherine is not only a dedicated surgeon but also the medical director of the Sydney Cochlear Implant Centre Cochlear Implant Program—a charity that provides all aspects of care for patients requiring cochlear implants and implantable hearing devices. On top of these achievements, Catherine was only the third female ear, nose and throat surgeon to qualify in New South Wales. She is a trailblazer for women in surgery more broadly.

The recipient of the Regional Woman of the Year Award is Julia Harpham. She is a school teacher, cattle farmer, refugee advocate and Mingoola community legend. I acknowledge the member for Lismore, who nominated Julia for this award. Julia has developed a grassroots resettlement plan for African refugees in Mingoola, helping some of the most vulnerable while reinvigorating her community. It is allowing the town to reopen its school and providing permanent seasonal workers for local families. Kristal Kinsela is the recipient of the NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year Award. She has established a consultancy to use her passion and skills to help corporate and government clients increase their productivity, performance and Indigenous engagement. Kristal also runs leadership camps for young Aboriginal women to educate them about their rights and to equip them with the skills they need to make their way in the world.

Sadly, we do not have time to go through the many achievements of today's award winners, but I take this opportunity to congratulate Harvey Norman Young Woman of the Year Dr Nichole Seebacher, New South Wales Businesswoman of the Year Gina Field, and Community Hero Debbie Higgison for her mentoring, advocacy and commitment to her local community. As well as recognising great achievements by women, International Women's Day also provides an important opportunity to reflect on and acknowledge the barriers and challenges that women continue to face. In 2014 this Government announced the Premier's Priority to drive public sector diversity. It committed us to increasing the proportion of women in senior leadership roles to 50 percent by 2025. [*Extension of time*]

The proportion of women in senior leadership roles across the public sector has increased to 36.1 per cent from last year. We are making progress, but there is more work to do. We are also shifting the culture of our workplaces to make them more flexible for working parents. I acknowledge Madam Speaker, the first female Speaker in the New South Wales Parliament, for her and the clerks' hard work in establishing the Parliament's first parents' room for members, which I and the member for Holsworthy have already accessed. I thank you,

Madam Speaker. There are now more women on government boards. Under the Liberal-National Government the percentage has increased from 39 to 41 per cent since April of last year.

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

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Today is a day to honour our female heroes; great women like Associate Professor Catherine Birman, Julia Harpham and Kristal Kinsela and the millions of others across this State excelling in their chosen field and inspiring others to make positive changes in their communities, no matter how great or how small. I know I speak for everyone when I say congratulations to today's winners and finalists. I thank all local members for nominating outstanding women from their electorates. The New South Wales Government stands beside these women in its commitment to improving gender equality and the lives of all women. As Minister for Women I am continuing to hear firsthand from women all across New South Wales about the issues that affect them. I commit myself to being a tireless advocate on their behalf.

PENALTY RATES

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (14:57): My question is directed to the Premier. What action will the Premier take to ensure that the 5,500 retail, food and hospitality workers in the electorate of Gosford do not face a reduction in their take-home pay because of a cut in penalty rates?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:58): This is an interesting strategy from members opposite. They have asked nine of the same questions, and none of them are directly related to State government. If members opposite cannot think of their own questions they do not need to go to Bill Shorten and the unions to get them.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The member for Wyong asked me a question about how our policies impact workers on the Central Coast. I am more than happy to address that question because we are the party of the workers. We are the party that has created more jobs on the Central Coast in the past five years than members opposite did in 16 years. We are the party that is redeveloping Gosford Hospital. We are the party that is providing millions of dollars—

Mr David Mehan: Point of order: If the Premier wants to address how her Government—

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

Mr David Mehan: If the Premier had a policy for the Central Coast—

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The member will resume his seat. I call the member for The Entrance to order for the first time. I call the member for The Entrance to order for the second time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The member for The Entrance should get his printing done on the Central Coast—

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order: First—

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

Mr Guy Zangari: I refer to Speaker Murray's ruling of 1999.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Fairfield will resume his seat. There is no point of order. It would be nice if members on both sides would show some respect.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: While members opposite do Bill Shorten's bidding in this place, this Government is getting on with the job of providing better services for the people of the Central Coast, whether it be hospital upgrades, road upgrades, improving public transport services, or rebuilding the member's school—

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will stop arguing across the Chamber. The Premier has the call.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I assure the great people of the Central Coast, given that I was asked a question—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129.

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

Mr Michael Daley: Where is the Premier's candidate?

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am glad—

The SPEAKER: Order! Stop the clock. The member for Kiama will cease arguing across the Chamber. The clock will not restart until members come to order. The Premier is waiting to complete her answer. Restart the clock.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The member for Maroubra mentioned a candidate. It is evident that the Labor campaign in Gosford is not being run by Sussex Street, because the Labor candidate sent out a tweet saying that today she has put up her hand to join Luke Foley's Labor ticket as the candidate for Wollongong. Members opposite can play all the games they like, but this Government is busy delivering for the people of Gosford and the Central Coast.

DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (15:03): I address my question to the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. How is the Government improving women's safety where they are victims of domestic and family violence?

Ms PRU GOWARD (Goulburn—Minister for Family and Community Services, Minister for Social Housing, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (15:04): I thank the member for Terrigal for his question. I join the Premier and the Minister for Women in congratulating us all on International Women's Day, which is a day of reflection and celebration. I recall the wonderful domestic violence forum we held on the Central Coast with the member and his community. There is certainly a deep commitment to improving services in that area and how we tackle domestic violence. On International Women's Day is it always important to focus on women's safety.

It is one of the biggest issues facing women and girls here and around the world. Unfortunately, women are often most at risk within their own home and in their intimate relationships. Domestic violence affects everyone, but disproportionately women. One in six Australians from the age of 15 have experienced physical or sexual violence from a partner with whom they have lived. This Government is leading the nation in creating and funding a system for responding to domestic and family violence. For the first time, rather than a patchwork of services, as we had under the Labor Government, this Government—

The SPEAKER: Order! I place the member for Swansea on two calls to order.

Ms PRU GOWARD: Members opposite must cope with the truth. This Government is creating a system which responds in a consistent and effective way; a system which supports victims when they are in crisis; a system which supports victims to recover; a system which targets perpetrators, holds them to account, and intervenes to change their behaviour; a system which keeps them safe; a system which works to prevent violence and to intervene early; a system which is aiming to reduce re-victimisation; and a system which is working to stop reoffending. It was this Government that doubled investment in specialist domestic violence initiatives to more than \$300 million over four years in last year's budget. That is in addition to the hundreds of millions of dollars that the Government spends each year to combat domestic and family violence through mainstream services in justice, police, health, child protection, social housing, and homelessness services.

Another important way to more effectively help and to support victims of domestic violence is to put the perpetrator clearly in the centre of the frame. This Government will never apologise for getting tough on perpetrators; it will never apologise for targeting criminals who are terrorising and traumatising women and children in their own home. This Government is getting tough on perpetrators, but it is also continuing to invest a record amount of money for victims, because they deserve nothing less. I am delighted that Safer Pathway, the integrated multiagency response to high-risk domestic violence victims, will now operate at 27 sites across the State from this month. The new sites will help victims in communities such as Campbelltown, Griffith, Northern Beaches, Lismore, Tamworth, Bourke, Queanbeyan, Hunter Valley, and St George.

As Ella Foster from the Northern Rivers Women's Court Advocacy Services said when I met her in Lismore last year, "It is a really effective model and we're really excited that it's going to be rolled out here." Inspector Guy Guiana of the Hunter Valley Local Area Command said, "Domestic violence has a big impact on all of us. Officers witness, and have to deal with, so many different scenarios. More often it's harder to access services in regional areas, so we look forward to this program reducing domestic violence." The rollout of six new sites in the regions is great for the hardworking front-line workers responding to domestic violence every day.

The Opposition may criticise and has said that the Government has been sitting on its hands in rolling out Safer Pathway. Rolling out 21 new sites this financial year is not sitting on our hands. That is what members opposite did for 16 years; it is not what this Government has done. The Government has championed a number of other reforms to further prevent and to respond to domestic and family violence. New South Wales was the first State to introduce legislation that allowed for the enforcement of domestic violence orders made in other States

and Territories in Australia. New South Wales is leading with the use of groundbreaking, innovative policing tools such as domestic violence video evidence in chief and suspect target management plans. [*Extension of time*]

New South Wales is leading the nation with the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme so that people at risk can find out whether their partner has a violent history. This Government has delivered a blueprint for policy reform over the next five years to create a safer environment for women, men and children. This Government, with the Deputy Premier's leadership, extended fee free training scholarships under the Smart and Skilled program for survivors of domestic violence. This Government amended the mandatory New South Wales years 7 to 10 personal development, health and physical education syllabus to explicitly include domestic and family violence prevention to educate our young people. This Government has doubled the investment in Start Safely to \$100 million over four years to provide support for people leaving domestic violence with private rental subsidies. This Government proposed changes to New South Wales residential tenancy laws to further protect victims of domestic violence.

The Government has launched a \$20 million innovation fund for new prevention, early intervention and crisis responses. It is strengthening court support and homelessness services with record investment to help respond to increasing demand. If we want to reduce violence for women, men and children, as I say, we need to target the perpetrators like never before. That is why the Government is investing in non-government-organisation led, community based perpetrator interventions. This Government has also introduced police specialist teams for high-risk offenders. The message to perpetrators needs to be absolutely clear: There is no place to hide. The Government is leading the nation in tackling domestic violence. Whilst we on this side of the House are proud of our record we acknowledge that there is always more to do. That is why we are committed to supporting victims affected by this crime. We will continue to be the champions of social policy that makes vulnerable people's lives better.

SHORT-TERM HOLIDAY LETTING

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (15:11): My question is directed to the Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation. Will the Government protect strata communities by ensuring owners' corporations have the ability to permit, limit and set conditions on short-term letting in their buildings?

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation) (15:11): I thank the excellent member for Sydney for his question and acknowledge his keen interest in this matter and his commitment to achieving a great outcome for his community, as he always does. I also acknowledge that his electorate is particularly attractive to property owners and residents and holidaymakers who make deals relating to short-term letting. This is a complex issue. On the one hand we have property owners and residents who want to make money from their home and on the other hand we have residents who want, and are indeed entitled to, peace and security in their own homes.

As the member for Sydney knows, the Government is considering the findings of the recent parliamentary inquiry—otherwise known as the Coure inquiry—into short-term letting and will respond next month. As the member identified, my role in that response as Minister responsible for strata schemes relates to what power may be given to owners' corporations to allow, control or prohibit short-term letting in their buildings. Approximately 25 per cent of the population of greater Sydney lives in a strata title scheme and it is estimated that by 2040 half of all of Sydney's residential accommodation will be strata titled.

Currently around 75,000 strata title schemes are registered in New South Wales with more than 100 or more schemes being registered every month. The vast majority of these are residential schemes. In the short time I have had ministerial responsibility for this area I have spoken to many people about short-term rentals. I am meeting with the owners' corporation network in the near future and, like many in this place—I am sure that includes the member for Bankstown—I am a keen reader of Jimmy Thomson who writes for the *Sydney Morning Herald* on the strata issue. Unsurprisingly he is popular in this place and he is well-read. He is one of the best writers for the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

Unsurprisingly, Mr Thomson's website *flat-chat.com.au* has given significant coverage to the issue of short-term letting. I was especially interested in his observation that, while proponents of short-term letting talk up its place in the sharing economy, people who live in a strata scheme are already living in their own sharing economy. Strata scheme residents share common facilities, responsibilities and bills. I assure the member for Sydney that we take seriously the need to protect people's rights to the quiet enjoyment of their own homes.

We understand that running an owners' corporation can be hard work and we certainly do not want to unnecessarily increase that workload. We also understand that short-term letting, if properly managed and respected by all parties, can be a boost to the local economy. It can fill a void in accommodation, it can increase tourist spending and it potentially can be a nice little earner for a property owner or a resident. I say to the member

for Sydney that I know he wants more detail, and quickly. I assure him that these issues are front of mind for the Government and its response to the parliamentary inquiry—the Coure inquiry—will be sound, thoughtful and comprehensive. I thank him for his advocacy on behalf of his community. I am interested in this issue myself and will be working closely with the member for Sydney to achieve a great outcome.

WESTERN SYDNEY TRAIN SERVICES

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (15:15): My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. How is the New South Wales Government boosting Western Sydney train services and making Sydney Trains a more inclusive workplace?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Infrastructure) (15:15): I thank the good member for her question—an important question on International Women's Day.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: What an appalling question time strategy from those opposite! On International Women's Day they targeted the Minister for Women. It is hardly surprising that they did that when the Leader of the Opposition is prepared to do a fundraising event with Mark Latham.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: We know his views. He has refused to distance himself from Mark Latham. He has found a new fundraising friend. Members would be aware of Mark Latham's view about women. They would be aware of those views but they have not said anything about them.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will resume his seat. I am hearing interjections that are unparliamentary. The member for Bankstown will be removed from the Chamber for three days if I hear those sorts of interjections from her again.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 129. I have an opposite view to that of the Minister so I am keen to know what he has to say. Could he refer in his answer to transport?

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: More people ought to be running a protection racket against the Leader of the Opposition. I know that the member for Strathfield is busily trying to undo the member for Maroubra at the moment. Recently the good member and I, along with the member for Camden and the Premier, proudly announced more services for the people of the south-west. During peak hour services from Campbelltown members will now see 10 express trains per hour into the city and 20 additional weekly express train services into the city, which is great news. But all we hear from the member for Campbelltown are complaints. He says it is deplorable that we are putting on more trains and more services for his community.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister does not need the help of Government backbenchers.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: He goes on to say that the additional train services from his electorate into the city are resulting in overcrowding issues. I do not know what is going on but if that is Labor's best and brightest, commuters in the south-west deserve to be treated a little better.

The SPEAKER: Order! I place the member for Rockdale and the member for The Entrance on three calls to order. The member for Wyong will cease interjecting.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: This Government is running an important campaign to encourage more women train drivers. The first female train driver in New South Wales was employed in 1970 and only 6 per cent of train drivers in this State are women, so we have a long way to go. We have been encouraging women through the current application process to take advantage of any opportunities that might arise from being a train driver in Sydney: they will get to see Sydney from a different perspective and they will have the flexibility associated with being a train driver. There is much more interest in those applications, which will close next week.

It is unacceptable that only 6 per cent of train drivers in this State are women and 12 per cent of train guards are women. There are only 79 female train drivers in this State and one in 100 driver trainers. We want to see an improvement. I am pleased that women are taking an interest in and are applying for these positions which have been advertised on *www.seek.com*. Traditionally, it is a male-dominated workforce and we have a long way to go. I encourage women to apply for these positions; we need more women in leadership positions in the transport industry.

Ms Jodi McKay: Any women want his job? I will have your job.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I know that the member wants my job but she will not be getting it. This Government will focus on employing more women train drivers and deliver great outcomes for the workplace and for Sydney Trains.

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

Ministerial Statement

ST PATRICK'S DAY AMBASSADORS

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I announce the appointments of the member for Lane Cove, the member for Castle Hill, the member for Auburn, the member for Maroubra, the member for Blue Mountains and the member for Davidson as our St Patrick's Day ambassadors. God save the Queen.

Documents

UNPROCLAIMED LEGISLATION

The SPEAKER: In accordance with Standing Order 117, I table a list detailing all legislation unproclaimed 90 calendar days after assent as at 8 March 2017.

Petitions

PETITIONS RECEIVED

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**.

RESPONSES TO PETITIONS

The CLERK: I announce that the following Minister has lodged a response to a petition signed by more than 500 persons:

The Hon. Don Harwin—Mining and Gas Projects—lodged 14 February 2017 (Mr Anthony Roberts)

Business of the House

WORLD'S GREATEST SHAVE

Reordering

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (15:23): I move:

That the General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice) given by me this day [World's Greatest Shave—Blood Cancer Research] have precedence on Thursday 9 March 2017.

This motion should be supported and given precedence because the World's Greatest Shave is the annual fundraising event of the Leukaemia Foundation of Australia and the money raised is used to support important medical research. The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government supports leukaemia research through grants provided by the New South Wales Cancer Institute. As well as supporting medical research, the Leukaemia Foundation supports blood cancer patients and their families. For example, the foundation provides accommodation in Newcastle, Waverton and Westmead to meet the needs of patients undergoing treatment for blood cancer.

While they are in assisted accommodation, patients also receive support, advice and information from health professionals and receive transport assistance to and from treatment centres. In other words, the Leukaemia Foundation uses the funds raised from the World's Greatest Shave event to help people with all those difficult logistics that inhibit good treatment outcomes. When patients come from a regional area they often do not have anywhere to stay and once they arrive in Newcastle or Sydney they may not know their way around. They may be quite anxious about meeting appointment times, which bus to catch to the hospital, and a range of other day-to-day problems that get in the way of them receiving first-class world-best treatment which the New South Wales health system offers to people with blood disorders. This is where the foundation's support is critical.

I encourage every member present to go back to their communities and to spread the word about the World's Greatest Shave, which starts next week and runs from Thursday 16 March to Sunday 19 March. We all need to support the participants who will shave, wax or colour their hair or maybe even their beard. In the coming weeks we might see around Macquarie Street a few more bald heads, some colourful beards, less grey hair and perhaps some pink, blue or green hair. When people are asked why they have done something that might be considered unusual for a member of Parliament, they can say that they are proudly supporting the World's Greatest Shave and encourage others to support it as well. They could also support the Cancer Institute of New South Wales, a pillar organisation of NSW Health and Australia's first statewide cancer agency.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (15:26): The General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice) given by me this day relating to penalty rates should have precedence on Thursday 9 March 2017. Opposition members support cancer research and services but they also support the thousands of men, women, families and young people in this State who know that this Government does not give a damn about penalty rates. Only one party in this place will support these hardworking people. Only one party in this place gives a damn about the most disadvantaged in this State.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order—

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

Mr Brad Hazzard: There is a requirement for members to speak to the motion. The remarks of the member for Keira are completely outside the motion. I ask you to draw the member for Keira back to the motion.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Keira does not need to scream. The member for Keira has the call.

Mr RYAN PARK: My colleagues and I are proud that between now and 2019 we will stand with some of the most disadvantaged people in this State. We will stand with them and their families to fight the cuts that are coming from a conservative Liberal Government. NSW Labor leaders Luke Foley and Bill Shorten said to hard-working families, "We support you. We believe in you. We will fight tooth and nail to make sure the penalty rates that put food on your table, clothes on your back, and a roof over your head are maintained in this State." We will fight tooth and nail for train drivers, bus drivers, disability workers and those who protect us from our worst prisoners in this State. We will also fight for those people in uptown cafes who serve Government members coffee on a Sunday. An amount of \$100 a week might not make a big difference on the North Shore but in our communities \$100 a week counts. I am proud to be a member of a party that is going to stand up for the most disadvantaged people. Every one of my colleagues will fight this tooth and nail between now and 2019.

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

The House divided.

Ayes49
Noes38
Majority.....11

AYES

Anderson, Mr K
Barilaro, Mr J

Aplin, Mr G
Berejiklian, Ms G

Ayres, Mr S
Bromhead, Mr S

AYES

Brookes, Mr G
 Coure, Mr M
 Dominello, Mr V
 Fraser, Mr A
 Goward, Ms P
 Hazzard, Mr B
 Humphries, Mr K
 Lee, Dr G
 Notley-Smith, Mr B
 Pavey, Mrs M
 Piccoli, Mr A
 Rowell, Mr J
 Taylor, Mr M
 Upton, Ms G
 Williams, Mrs L (teller)

Conolly, Mr K
 Crouch, Mr A
 Elliott, Mr D
 George, Mr T
 Grant, Mr T
 Henskens, Mr A
 Johnsen, Mr M
 Maguire, Mr D
 O'Dea, Mr J
 Perrottet, Mr D
 Provest, Mr G
 Sidoti, Mr J
 Toole, Mr P
 Ward, Mr G

Constance, Mr A
 Davies, Ms T
 Evans, Mr L
 Gibbons, Ms M (teller)
 Gulaptis, Mr C
 Hodgkinson, Ms K
 Kean, Mr M
 Marshall, Mr A
 Patterson, Mr C
 Petinos, Ms E
 Roberts, Mr A
 Speakman, Mr M
 Tudehope, Mr D
 Williams, Mr R

NOES

Aitchison, Ms J
 Car, Ms P
 Cotsis, Ms S
 Dib, Mr J
 Finn, Ms J
 Harris, Mr D
 Hoenig, Mr R
 Lalich, Mr N (teller)
 McDermott, Dr H
 Mihailuk, Ms T
 Parker, Mr J
 Scully, Mr P
 Washington, Ms K

Atalla, Mr E (teller)
 Catley, Ms Y
 Crakanthorp, Mr T
 Donato, Mr P
 Foley, Mr L
 Harrison, Ms J
 Hornery, Ms S
 Leong, Ms J
 McKay, Ms J
 Minns, Mr C
 Piper, Mr G
 Smith, Ms T F
 Zangari, Mr G

Barr, Mr C
 Chanthivong, Mr A
 Daley, Mr M
 Doyle, Ms T
 Greenwich, Mr A
 Haylen, Ms J
 Kamper, Mr S
 Lynch, Mr P
 Mehan, Mr D
 Park, Mr R
 Robertson, Mr J
 Warren, Mr G

PAIRS

Stokes, Mr R

Watson, Ms A

Motion agreed to.*Motions Accorded Priority***INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY****Consideration**

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (15:35): My motion on International Women's Day should be given priority because it is on this day, 8 March, every year that we celebrate International Women's Day across the State and in each electorate. Events are held across the globe to mark International Women's Day, and Australia has a strong history of acknowledging and celebrating this important event on the calendar. In my own electorate of Port Macquarie today over 370 people came together to hear from the very inspiring Rosie Batty, the 2015 Australian of the Year. In New South Wales—as we have heard today from the Minister for Women—the Women of the Year awards recognise the outstanding contribution women make in our community. The finalists and award winners announced today deserve to have their contributions to New South Wales recognised by this House and this Parliament.

Today, on International Women's Day, I draw the attention of the House to the fact that many of the 3.8 million women in New South Wales still face barriers and challenges that are disproportionate to those faced by men. There are a range of issues affecting girls and women throughout their lives—educational attainment; developing and maintaining careers; raising children; home ownership; balancing work and family; caring for

young and adult children, ageing parents and partners; and retirement, ageing, health and economic security in older age.

We know that women are still under-represented on boards and in senior leadership roles, and, as has been highlighted, earn less than their male counterparts. Women held 41.2 per cent of positions on New South Wales Government boards and committees as of 30 June 2016, while 58.8 per cent of positions were held by men. There should be no more pressing matter for debate in this Parliament today. There is no better time to raise these issues and to remind the House of the initiatives and steps that this Government is taking to advance the status of women in New South Wales.

International Women's Day provides an important opportunity to reflect on each of these things and to acknowledge those barriers and the challenges that women continue to face. The New South Wales Government will continue to support International Women's Day and the Women of the Year awards each year. Both of these provide an excellent opportunity to celebrate the progress that we made towards gender equality as well as to acknowledge the challenges and the barriers that still remain for women. For these reasons, this motion should be given priority today.

GENDER EQUALITY

Consideration

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (15:38): Today being International Women's Day, my motion deserves priority. It deserves priority because the Berejiklian Government must address the gender inequality that still exists in New South Wales. Upon the election of this Coalition Government in 2011 the Liberals moved the Office for Women from the heart of Government, the Department of Premier and Cabinet, to the Department of Family and Community Services. Then they moved it to the Ministry of Health. Now we have a new Minister and there has been a new relocation. We do not know where it is being moved. Today we call for the Office for Women to go back to the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Women deserve to live safe and secure lives; however, sadly, we have to shine a light on the safety status and economic security of women in our State. I long for the day that I do not have to stand here and call on this Government again to take urgent action to address the issue of why some women still do not feel safe in their own homes; why those women have difficulty accessing local services, especially in rural and regional areas; why women are still missing out on employment opportunities; and why, after all this work and action by so many trail-blazers over the past 50 years, women are still being paid less than men for equivalent work.

It is 2017, and I am standing in this Chamber calling for pay equity because the fact of the matter is that women are still being paid less than men. That is a shameful situation for our State. Childcare workers began a strike at 3.20 p.m. today, which according to the gender pay gap is when women start working for free each and every day. On this side of the House, we stand in solidarity with those workers. Too often the question of equal pay for women is dismissed because it is just assumed that it is entrenched discrimination that will be fixed, and if there are still pockets where it has not yet been fixed then all we have to do is wait a bit longer and wait a bit longer. We cannot wait any longer.

The decision to cut Sunday and public holiday penalty rates is a direct attack on women's pay. It is a direct attack on the pay of an overwhelmingly female workforce—retail, fast food and hospitality workers. Disability support workers are a vital part of our society. In the public service in New South Wales, women make up 78 per cent of disability sector workers. Their work in supporting people with disability has been historically undervalued and underpaid. The current base rate of a disability support worker year 1 is \$28 per hour. Female disability support workers rely on penalty rates, and they are currently at risk because of this Government.

Why is this Government not providing additional domestic violence leave and interstate awards to give women in abusive relationships the breathing space they need to find accommodation, to speak to the police and lawyers and to arrange new schools for their children? This Government refuses to argue the case for domestic violence leave to be included in the National Employment Standards. Action speaks louder than words and, unlike this Government, NSW Labor is prepared to stand up for the women of New South Wales.

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

The House divided.

Ayes	48
Noes	38
Majority.....	10

AYES

Anderson, Mr K
 Barilaro, Mr J
 Brookes, Mr G
 Coure, Mr M
 Dominello, Mr V
 Fraser, Mr A
 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
 Toole, Mr P
 Ward, Mr G

Aplin, Mr G
 Berejiklian, Ms G
 Conolly, Mr K
 Crouch, Mr A
 Elliott, Mr D
 Gibbons, Ms M
 Gulaptis, Mr C
 Hodgkinson, Ms K
 Kean, Mr M
 Marshall, Mr A
 Patterson, Mr C (teller)
 Petinos, Ms E
 Roberts, Mr A
 Speakman, Mr M
 Tudehope, Mr D
 Williams, Mr R

Ayres, Mr S
 Bromhead, Mr S (teller)
 Constance, Mr A
 Davies, Ms T
 Evans, Mr L
 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
 Taylor, Mr M
 Upton, Ms G
 Williams, Mrs L

NOES

Aitchison, Ms J
 Car, Ms P
 Cotsis, Ms S
 Dib, Mr J
 Finn, Ms J
 Harris, Mr D
 Hoenig, Mr R
 Lalich, Mr N (teller)
 McDermott, Dr H
 Mihailuk, Ms T
 Parker, Mr J
 Scully, Mr P
 Washington, Ms K

Atalla, Mr E (teller)
 Catley, Ms Y
 Crakanthorp, Mr T
 Donato, Mr P
 Foley, Mr L
 Harrison, Ms J
 Hornery, Ms S
 Leong, Ms J
 McKay, Ms J
 Minns, Mr C
 Piper, Mr G
 Smith, Ms T F
 Zangari, Mr G

Barr, Mr C
 Chanthivong, Mr A
 Daley, Mr M
 Doyle, Ms T
 Greenwich, Mr A
 Haylen, Ms J
 Kamper, Mr S
 Lynch, Mr P
 Mehan, Mr D
 Park, Mr R
 Robertson, Mr J
 Warren, Mr G

PAIRS

Stokes, Mr R

Watson, Ms A

Motion agreed to.**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY****Priority**

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (15:47): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes today marks International Women's Day.
- (2) Recognises the invaluable contribution women and girls make to our society.
- (3) Congratulates this year's winners of NSW Women of the Year Awards.

Today marks International Women's Day, an opportunity to recognise the invaluable contribution that women and girls make to our society. It is also an opportunity for us to congratulate this year's winners of the NSW Women of the Year Awards. As I mentioned previously, International Women's Day is celebrated every year on 8 March with events held right across the globe. Many such events are also held in our electorates, and shortly I will talk about a special event that was held in my electorate this morning. Australia has a strong history of acknowledging and celebrating this important annual event.

The New South Wales Government is proud to recognise and celebrate the accomplishments of many extraordinary women through the NSW Women of the Year Awards. The increasing interest in this event,

including a record number of nominations this year, is testimony to the difference women make across our communities. This morning, as the Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Women, and Minister for Ageing, Tanya Davies said, she and the Premier hosted the International Women's Day Women of the Year Awards ceremony at the International Convention Centre. They joined with Ministers, members, dignitaries and, importantly, members of our community to celebrate these awards. The NSW Women of the Year Awards are awarded every year to recognise outstanding contributions made by New South Wales women to industry, community and society and celebrate significant achievements. The awards profile women who have demonstrated excellence in their careers and elsewhere, women who make significant contributions in their communities and young women whose achievements make them leaders in changing the social and business landscape. The awards are a symbolic centrepiece of the New South Wales Government's commitment to improving the overall status and wellbeing of women in New South Wales which aims to inspire collective community participation.

This year's finalists across all categories are leaders who embody the theme of this year's International Women's Day: Be Bold For Change. After hearing the life stories of these women in the Chamber today, it is clear that there are many ways women are making a difference in New South Wales. Their contributions have helped to change lives in their communities and across the State. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the Hastings Heroines Awards which we celebrate in Port Macquarie each year on 8 March, International Women's Day. I am really pleased to host this event with the Hastings Business Women's Network. We have been doing it for six years, and again this year we had some absolutely outstanding nominations.

The 2017 Hastings Heroine was Tanya Simmons. "Ready and willing to help"—that is exactly how many locals describe Tanya Simmons. Tanya started her working life as a hairdresser and has always been a creatively minded woman. After a number of years living in Sydney, she moved back to Wauchope and into managing the family business at the Maul and Wedge Restaurant, which was owned by her mum, Peta, and Peta's partner, Gordon. A few years later it was time to don her steelcap boots and join the other family business, Bennetts Steel, where Tanya worked for the next 11 years helping her mum.

Three years ago, Tanya and her sister Shiree took over the Bennetts Steel business, a family-owned operation for 25 years, and they are seeing it go from strength to strength. Tanya is immensely proud of the business she and Shiree are building, and she acknowledges the amazing team that help them build their dreams and do what they love every day. Tanya is not just a wonderful businesswoman but a true advocate for Wauchope and the mid North Coast area, being an active member of many groups and boards. She is a dynamic lady who combines her skills and creativity in customer service and leadership to contribute in many ways. Her focus on teamwork and empowering youth sees her not only nurturing young apprentices and employees in her workplace but also joining local networking mentor programs such as the newly formed Free Thinkers Group, in which she has two mentees.

As a member of the Mid Coast Connect workplace program board and the Manufacturing and Industry Working Group, Tanya has also been a strong voice for promoting women in trade. Tanya actively encourages young women to step into their own boots—maybe not always steelcap boots—and challenge the typically male-dominated fields. More recently, Tanya was elected the president of the Wauchope Chamber of Commerce and she has been one of the main driving forces behind the beautification of High Street in Wauchope. In 2016, she was the recipient of the Business Leader award from the regional NSW Business Chamber. Tanya has gone from hairdresser to hospitality and is now our very own Hastings Heroine. I know that everyone in my community joins me in congratulating her as our 2017 winner.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (15:52): International Women's Day was originally called International Working Women's Day. The earliest observance of Women's Day was held in 1909 in New York and was organised by the Socialist Party of America—not the Republican Party of America. I acknowledge the Wallsend Woman of the Year, a wonderful woman named Tomika Riley. I had the opportunity this morning to sit with her partner, Bree, her sister Carly, her mum, Cheryl, and her dad, John. It was a wonderful day and Tomika is certainly a wonderful ambassador for Wallsend.

We should, on this day when we celebrate working women around the world, look back at the original aim of International Women's Day. It was to achieve full gender equality for women of the world, but that aim has not been realised—and that lack of realisation was, sadly, not recognised in the contribution by the member for Port Macquarie and it has not been recognised by members of the Government. A gender pay gap does exist across New South Wales, and I ask members of the Government—my female colleagues on the other side—what they are doing about the gender pay gap in Government right now.

There are a disproportionate number of women affected by penalty rates and, whether or not it is a Federal Government decision, it is women workers of New South Wales who will today be unable to celebrate

International Women's Day—because they are the women who work at Coles or Woolworths, who work on Sundays. They are the single mums who will not be able to get the penalty rates they deserve.

Mrs Leslie Williams: Why don't you talk about the women in your electorate? Why don't you talk about the great things women do?

Ms SONIA HORNERY: I am talking about a lot of things—about the equality of women. There is another matter I want to raise. I have concerns about the woman who has been selected for the women's leadership role—Minister for Women—in the Government. Early on questions were raised by the Women's Electoral Lobby. They said that most women in New South Wales did not share the new Minister's pro-life view. In fact Clare Pullen said:

The overwhelming majority of people in New South Wales are pro-choice and we would want a Minister for Women who is prepared to trust women and doctors to make personal medical decisions.

Ms Melanie Gibbons: Point of order: The motion is about the Women of the Year Awards and International Women's Day, not the personal opinions of the Minister. I ask you to bring the member back to the leave of the motion.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I uphold the point of order. The member for Wallsend will return to the leave of the motion, which is about celebrating International Women's Day.

Ms SONIA HORNERY: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, but I refer you to paragraph (2), which is: "recognises the invaluable contribution women ... make to our society." They cannot very well make an invaluable contribution if they are not treated equally and they do not have rights of their own. That is something that would deeply upset many women in my electorate and certainly on this side of the House. Clare Pullen said:

The overwhelming majority of people in New South Wales are pro-choice and we would want a Minister for Women who is prepared to trust women and doctors to make personal medical decisions.

Mrs Leslie Williams: Point of order: The member is flouting your ruling. You upheld the previous point of order. I ask you to bring the member back to the subject matter of the motion, which is not about the Minister's view on any particular issue. It talks about congratulating this year's winners, about which we have not heard anything from the member.

Ms SONIA HORNERY: You are not listening.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wallsend will return to the leave of the motion.

Ms SONIA HORNERY: I have recognised the Wallsend Woman of the Year, and I recognise all women. I also talked about the history of International Women's Day, which is about equal rights for women. If we are talking about equal rights for women, then we are talking about women having the right to make choices about their bodies—for now and for their children in the future. The selection as Minister of— [*Time expired.*]

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (15:58): The theme for International Women's Day this year is Be Bold For Change—to forge a better working world that is more gender inclusive. In line with this theme, the Government has an ongoing commitment to increasing the representation of women in the public sector workplace, and to workplace flexibility. With almost 400,000 employees, the New South Wales public sector represents over 10 per cent of all people employed in New South Wales. Women represent nearly two-thirds of our workforce and hold just over a third of senior leadership roles.

The challenge of gender equity is experienced by employers across Australia and is not unique to the New South Wales Government sector. The challenges include disjointed career paths, lack of flexible work and cultural barriers such as unconscious bias. As the largest employer in Australia, the New South Wales Government has a responsibility to remove the barriers women face in progressing their careers and determining their financial security. As a result, in 2014 the New South Wales Government announced the Premier's Priority, which was aimed at driving public sector diversity. It committed the government sector to doubling the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in senior leadership roles and increasing the proportion of women in senior leadership roles by 50 per cent to 2025. Let me assure the House that our progress is promising. The proportion of women in senior leadership roles increased from 33.8 per cent in 2014 to 36.1 per cent in 2016. We look forward to it increasing again in 2017.

One of our initiatives is to ensure access to development opportunities through shifting the mindset on flexible working. Flexibility is important for everyone. For a woman, it enables a greater level of choice when balancing work and non-work commitments. In response to this, the Government has committed to 100 per cent of New South Wales government sector roles being flexible by 2019. We are changing our default position on the eight to six deskbound job. We will establish a job sharing register and will roll out training for senior leaders so that they can understand why flexibility is important. Flexibility will be the norm, rather than the exception. People

with caring responsibilities will be able to rise through the ranks of the New South Wales public service while also meeting the needs of their families. This is the right outcome from a gender equity perspective.

These are only some of the exciting initiatives this Government is undertaking to ensure women are given the opportunities they deserve to flourish in the workplace. This Government is being Bold for Change. I note that the theme of being bold for change is being really well represented by Western Sydney Women and founding director, Amanda Rose, who is looking after people who are experiencing domestic violence or working on their personal success and empowerment. I acknowledge my Local Woman of the Year for 2016, Catherine Murray, and congratulate this year's winner, Chloe Esposito, OA.

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (16:01): Like previous speakers I acknowledge all winners of the NSW Women of the Year Awards on this International Women's Day. I was there this morning to hear about their great achievements; however, many members were not. I was therefore a bit surprised that the Minister who moved this motion did not talk in more detail about each of the winners. I acknowledge in particular what a great delight it was for me to meet the Regional Woman of the Year, Julia Harpham. Julia has been working with the Great Lakes Agency for Peace and Development on a partnership to settle recent Central African and Congolese refugees in the small township of Mingoola, which is near Tenterfield.

I have done a lot of work with the Great Lakes Agency for Peace and Development over the past few years. I know how important it has been for that community to allow refugees from rural parts of Africa to be resettled in rural New South Wales. It is an enormous adjustment to move to the other side of the world as a result of war. It is even more of an adjustment to move to a city when you have always lived in a rural area and farming is all you have known. It is great that Julia is an advocate for refugees in rural New South Wales. I acknowledge the Granville Woman of the Year, Mona Yaghi, who is the secretary of the Granville Boys' High School Parents and Citizens Association and raised more than \$20,000 last year to install air conditioning in the school. Although it is ridiculous that the school needed its P and C to raise that money when it gets to over 52 degrees in some of the classrooms in summer, it is excellent that Mona managed to achieve her goal.

Mrs Leslie Williams: It was the same policy when Labor was in government. Nothing has changed, Julia. You need to get that right.

Ms JULIA FINN: I am not talking about the policy; I am talking about Mona's wonderful work. I am very pleased that she raised the money and that I was able to assist through a Community Building Partnership grant to ensure that the boys can concentrate on their studies even when it is more than 40 degrees outside. It is also important to acknowledge the gender pay gap—even though members on the other side refuse to. The issue is very important and needs to be addressed. Penalty rates are a crucial factor for women. In my electorate, more women work in hospitality than in any other area. They will be affected by the loss of penalty rates on Sundays. The gender pay gap needs to be narrowed, not widened. It is really important that we focus on that.

While it is essential to acknowledge the great achievements of women and how far we have come, it is also vital, on International Women's Day, to reflect on the challenges we still face. A widening gender pay gap is one of those challenges. It is important that we acknowledge the unpaid work done by women in our community—ordinary women who do extraordinary things and never receive any acknowledgement. That is a big issue throughout the community. Women still do the majority of unpaid work and, of course, make up the majority of volunteers. It is also crucial that women in paid work are paid a fair amount, even on Sundays.

Ms TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Women, and Minister for Ageing) (16:04): By leave: I thank my colleagues for granting me leave to make a contribution. I congratulate the member for Port Macquarie on moving this important motion on International Women's Day. This morning a breakfast was held to celebrate this day. At the breakfast and in the time allotted in question time today I was unable to thank specific people for putting on the event. I take this opportunity to say that it takes many people pulling together to stage a fantastic International Women's Day celebration. I acknowledge his Excellency, the Hon. David Hurley, and his most excellent wife, Mrs Hurley, for attending. Andrew Scipione, who is the longest-serving New South Wales Police Commissioner and about to retire, was also in attendance. I thank the sponsors that made the event happen—First State Super, Harvey Norman and Rex Airlines. Without their contribution the awards simply could not proceed.

Master of ceremonies Gretel Killeen was once again fantastic and humorous. She is a wonderful lady and a champion. I thank Women NSW for its steadfast work in supporting the event and supporting me. Natasha de Silva and her team did a phenomenal job at a brand new venue, the International Convention Centre [ICC]. The staff at the ICC were fantastic. I have received feedback from the women and community members who attended from across New South Wales. They told me how the event made them feel so special and valued. That is the message we want to communicate on International Women's Day. This Government values every woman, regardless of where she comes from.

The New South Wales Government thanks all women for their contribution and service and for the countless hours they give to not only their families but also the wider community to make New South Wales great. I look forward to working with everyone from all sides and all places in continuing to forge ahead on the issues women still face, such as domestic and family violence and gender pay gap. It is disappointing that Opposition members want to be so nasty about an occasion as important as International Women's Day. I am here to represent all women, including women from the opposite side. I hope we can work together to achieve things and improve the status of women of all ages in this State.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (16:08): In reply: I thank the member for Holsworthy, the member for Granville, the member for Wallsend, and the Minister for Women for their contributions to this debate. Part of the motion was to congratulate this year's winners of the NSW Women of the Year Awards. I note that the Minister spoke about a couple of the winners during question time. I thank the member for Granville for highlighting the Rex Airlines Regional Woman of the Year, Julie Harpham, for her civic leadership as a school teacher, cattle farmer and refugee advocate. She is a real giant in her community. I also acknowledge Community Hero Debbie Higgison, who is a passionate volunteer. Debbie is a skilled community builder and a highly respected member and mentor of the Chain Reaction Foundation team at Learning Ground.

Dr Nicole Seebacher, the Harvey Norman Young Woman of the Year, received the award for her volunteer medical research into novel agents that target drug-resistant cancers. I again acknowledge New South Wales Aboriginal Woman of the Year Kristal Kinsel. I established the award last year in my capacity as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and I am pleased that there was a number of nominations. I congratulate Kristal on her passion and skills in helping corporate and government clients to increase their productivity, performance and Indigenous engagement. A new award category was introduced this year for the New South Wales Business Woman of the Year, and the winner was Gina Field.

These women stood out from a strong group of nominees and distinguished themselves as leaders in their fields and communities. Nominees for the awards comprise an extremely competitive field. On behalf of the House, I congratulate each of the award winners. I also congratulate the local women of the year. As I said earlier, the Young Hastings Heroine Award was introduced this year at Port Macquarie and two nominations were received. I take this opportunity to congratulate the winner Caitlyn Howard. Caitlyn aspires to make a difference not only locally but also globally. She is an active member and now vice president of the Youth Advisory Council, a volunteer at the Ironman event for the past four years, and also a volunteer with Zonta, where she assisted with packaging health and sanitary items for women who have just given birth.

Caitlyn is a compassionate young woman, and these are only some of the local programs and initiatives in which she is involved and about which she is passionate. Caitlyn has also helped and supported the Young Guns to take on their own fundraising initiatives. The Young Guns are part of the Luminosity Youth Summit. Because of her personal experience of the positive outcomes, she now drives and empowers other Young Guns to join the program. As a young woman with a bright future, Caitlyn has already found the right balance between being a leader and pushing herself to achieve her goals while embracing a strong sense of community and helping others. [*Time expired.*]

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank the members who have contributed to debate on this important motion recognising International Women's Day. Every member would have felt proud at this morning's breakfast honouring the women who were nominated for awards. Members have mentioned Julia Harpham, who lives at the western end of my electorate. I point out that Mingoola is not a town, it is an area. Members might call it a town, but it has just one hall, one school and a fire engine. I know I speak on behalf of the Mingoola community in congratulating Julia on her achievements. We are extremely proud of her. I am also proud to have been one of her supporters and part of the changes that have occurred in that little community.

The question is that the motion as moved by the member for Port Macquarie be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Private Members' Statements

FAIRFIELD LOCAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (16:12): I commend and congratulate an amazing and inspiring woman who has had an enormous impact on Fairfield and its surrounds. Ms Zarina Munguia has recently been named as Fairfield's 2017 Local Woman of the Year for her contributions to our community for more than 15 years. Zarina has been attached to the Fairfield Local Area Command [LAC] since 2002 and over the years has undertaken a wide variety of roles and responsibilities, which have included general duties and domestic violence and crime prevention. Most recently, Zarina has been working with local youths as Fairfield LAC's youth liaison officer.

The value that Zarina has added to the Fairfield electorate throughout her time working in our community is truly immense. The long-term impact she has had on many young lives is phenomenal, and our community is wealthier as a result. Zarina is an integral part of her LAC, and she plays a pivotal role when it comes to intervention with troubled youths and their families. Her actions can instigate real and lasting change in their lives. As part of Zarina's role and outreach from the LAC, she has the opportunity to impact upon our culturally diverse community because her duties require her to liaise and to work with a variety of cultural groups and communities. A large number of residents in our area come from countries where the relationship between the police and the community is vastly different from what we know and experience in Australia.

This important work helps to break down the barriers that unfortunately result in local residents failing to receive help and support when it is needed the most. The value of face-to-face interaction and building trust with the community cannot be over-emphasised, especially in a culturally diverse area such as Fairfield. In my six years as the member for Fairfield, I have had nothing but positive interactions with Zarina, and I have seen firsthand the wonderful work she does. She is admired by her peers and considered a role model by many. I had the privilege of hosting Zarina and her partner, Scott, on Monday at a small celebration to thank her for her wonderful service and to present her with the Fairfield 2017 Local Woman of the Year award. Of course, we also presented her with a lovely bouquet of flowers.

Mr Gareth Ward: How nice.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: They were nice; they were provided by a local florist. It was an honour to have nominated Zarina for the 2017 Local Woman of the Year award because her contributions to our community are vast and so many young lives are irrefutably better because of her efforts. Zarina's passion, commitment and drive to help those in need is truly remarkable. I am grateful to have her working by my side in Fairfield. The front page of today's edition of the *Fairfield City Champion* has a beautiful photograph of her and an article acknowledging her great work. I thank the newspaper for supporting International Women's Day.

Zarina, as a mother and as a police officer, has always given 100 per cent, and there are no signs of her letting up. She is an incredible woman. Once again, I congratulate Ms Zarina Munguia, our 2017 Fairfield Local Woman of the Year on her outstanding contributions to the community and unwavering dedication. She is a great mother to two beautiful daughters and a two-year-old son. On behalf of the residents of Fairfield, I thank Zarina for her hard work, dedication and passion. She makes Fairfield a better place for all of us.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (16:17): I thank the member for Fairfield for his commendation of the Fairfield Local Woman of the Year for her service to the Fairfield community. I know the member is a great advocate and champion for women, not only in his community but also throughout New South Wales. I take this opportunity—opportunity that it is—to congratulate local florist Marie Beikmanis, who is the Kiama Local Woman of the Year. Perhaps when the member for Fairfield next wants to send flowers he can use her business. Marie, who is also president of the Kiama and District Chamber of Commerce, is a delight.

Every time I see her I am filled with warmth, and that is what she brings to many people across the local community. I also acknowledge one of the four finalists for the Aboriginal Woman of the Year, Aunty Joyce Donovan, who lives in the electorate of Kiama. Joyce is a highly respected elder who has been a lifelong advocate for Aboriginal people and their issues. Her recognition today, along with the recognition of other woman from throughout New South Wales, is a wonderful celebration of the diversity and extraordinary talents of the women of this great State.

SHORT-TERM HOLIDAY LETTING

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (Epping) (16:19): International Women's Day is one of those days on which everyone tries to outdo each other. I live in a household of only women, other than me. I have a wife and four daughters living with me; I even have a female dog. It is lovely, and they all deserve to be women of the year. In question time today the member for Sydney asked the Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation about his attitude towards Airbnb. Before I make some comments in relation to Airbnb, I disclose that my brother is the chair of Tourism Accommodation Australia. He was relaying to me some of the challenges faced currently by the hospitality industry as a result of the rise of what he calls commercial-residential accommodation services such as Airbnb.

This situation is not unlike the impact Uber is having on the taxi industry, except that regulatory measures have been put in place to structure the way ridesharing services operate. We are yet to address this process in the hospitality industry. The main concern of the hospitality industry is that the Airbnb market is offering a comparable product to that provided by hotels and motels but without the applicable regulatory controls. The hotel and motel operators say that as a result the playing field is not even. Listed as private property but used for a commercial purpose, the commercial-residential market exists as a quasi-hotel market without the associated

costs. These costs include food safety compliance, fire safety, disability access, insurance, and associated taxes such as GST, capital gains tax, land tax and, not least, income tax.

There are, of course, strong arguments to be made for embracing emerging business models that encourage competition and greater choice for consumers. As a Liberal, I am inherently inclined to support this principle. For example, comparison websites and those that offer last-minute deals make for a more transparent and competitive industry and at the same time give the service provider the opportunity to fill vacant rooms due to cancellations. I am a user of Airbnb and Uber. My experience recently in travelling to Europe and using Airbnb accommodation was enormously successful and trouble free. However, there does appear to be a need to give these industries some framework and structure in the way that they operate.

Although I acknowledge the concerns of the hospitality industry and recognise that the industry has some very legitimate concerns, my primary concern with the Airbnb market is the effect it is having on supply in the rental market. It is estimated that approximately 38 per cent of the Airbnb market is shared accommodation such as when the property owner has a spare room. So 62 per cent of that market is by way of commercial rentals when the whole of the property is made available. Many of us have owned a holiday house at some point and it is common to lease these out for short-term stays. This was the case long before Airbnb came onto the scene. The difference is that you still have to register a holiday home and they traditionally have not been in competition with the Sydney rental market.

The problem in the current market is that short-term commercial-residential accommodation is now impacting on the supply and availability of homes. Anecdotally there are now residential properties being built in Sydney's most sought-after suburbs solely for the purpose of servicing tourists through the Airbnb market rather than being offered as a home. When housing supply is a significant challenge in Sydney, this is an alarming trend which we should not ignore. There may be merit in allowing strata bodies to include a by-law whereby residents must all agree that commercial-residential accommodation is permitted in the building, otherwise it will be excluded. We might also consider clarifying the difference between a property primarily used as a home in which spare rooms are occasionally rented out and a property that is listed as residential but is used predominantly for commercial purposes.

Some of the suggestions from the hospitality industry include registration of all short-term letting with local government; an enforceable "one host, one home" policy; and in circumstances where a single provider is listing multiple properties on Airbnb, the venture could be considered a commercial operation. I believe there is a need to clarify the framework and structure of the commercial-residential market to not only restore balance to the hospitality industry but also, more importantly, ensure families seeking a rental property as a home always come first.

MOREE COMMUNITY

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Tourism and Major Events, and Assistant Minister for Skills) (16:24): It is a sad fact of life that many rural communities rarely make the metropolitan news for their civic achievements, pride and good deeds. Unfortunately, it is usually the opposite. The most recent thing many members would have heard about the strong and prosperous town of Moree in my electorate is that it underwent a record heatwave—more than 50 consecutive days recording temperatures above 35 degrees. No-one will deny that it is a hot town, least of all its hardy residents, but the story of Moree goes far deeper than that. It is impossible to discuss the town of Moree and the thriving district without bringing up its hardworking local council.

Ably led by the mayor, Katrina Humphries, who is an absolute force of nature—as those who have met her would agree—the council puts many others twice its size to shame. Katrina is not one to demand recognition—indeed, she may be a little embarrassed that I am mentioning her here—but under her stewardship the town, the district and the shire have progressed in leaps and bounds. The town is continually developing its tourist attractions. For example, the artesian spa baths at the Moree Artesian Aquatic Centre are absolutely world class and attract tens of thousands of visitors and tourists each year. More recently, there has been a very innovative solution found to a greywater disposal problem: the Moree Ski Lakes. It is not something you would associate with a community so far inland, but it is a facility that is built to an international standard. I have no doubt it will attract State, national and even international competitions to the burgeoning regional centre.

Moree and its surrounds have a strong and proud Indigenous history. More than 20 per cent of the town identifies as being of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background and that community is extremely self-led and progressive. The Dhiyaan Aboriginal Centre is doing its part to preserve their culture and the staff there are working to secure some 100,000 family records for Kamilaroi and Gamilaray people from across the region. Indeed, at the moment it is undergoing a \$500,000 facelift thanks to funding from the New South Wales Government. We all know education is the great leveller. Nowhere is it more important than in rural communities

where there is already a vast difference in outcomes for rural and metropolitan students. Moree East Public School has just undergone a complete rebuild at a cost of more than \$15 million, which will boost learning outcomes for its 135 students, almost 90 per cent of whom identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. With their new principal Lorinda Potter, this is truly the start of a reinvigorated Moree East Public School.

As a rich, agriculturally producing area, Moree is one of those communities that has struggled for many years through the terrible drought conditions which left business owners across the region tightening their belts. Now they are on the cusp of another huge wave of growth. The town has seized its opportunities. With rains and stellar commodity prices, Moree is starting to show the signs of growth once more. There really is a sense of optimism when walking down the main street. Last week I was in Moree to welcome the departure of the first grain train on the new 2.8 kilometre reinstated line to the Broadbent Grain receival site. Each one of those trains saves local producers \$40,000 in freight costs and takes 56 B-double trucks off already strained country roads on black soil. It will be worth many millions of dollars a year to local producers. I want to see more projects like that around the Moree district, and I know we will.

This is a great community and the town can match any of the amazing skyscrapers or other big buildings in the cities. It has always been a town willing to fight for its future. In the past two weeks there has been a lot of discussion about the potential to deregulate the Moree to Sydney air service. That battle has lit a flame in the community. People are very upset. I have received letters and phone calls from business leaders, council, agricultural commodity traders and older residents concerned about medical services. There are not many issues that completely unite a rural community but this is certainly one in Moree. Everyone wants to keep the route regulated and keep the air service that is critical to the community. I for one am very positive that the Moree community can win this battle, as we have countless others before. I am proud to represent the people of a town like Moree who care so much about its future. In this role I hope to do them justice.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (16:29): I knew the member for Northern Tablelands for many years before we came to this place. The people of the Northern Tablelands should know that their elected member is not only an outstanding member of Parliament but also incredibly passionate about regional communities, in particular, Moree. I join him in acknowledging Katrina Humphries, whose background is in small business. She has provided extraordinary leadership to her community. The House has been provided with a snapshot of some of the things that are happening in that community. I know that the member for Northern Tablelands will continue to be the strongest advocate for the services that community requires and the investments it needs from government. I congratulate him on his outstanding work not only as a Minister but also for being an exceptional local member who is well regarded by members on both sides of the House. The member for Northern Tablelands is a strong and vocal advocate for regional New South Wales.

HOLBROOK LOOSE-FILL ASBESTOS CONTAMINATION

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) (16:30): In June last year, following contact from Scott Black of Holbrook, I took up the issue of loose-fill asbestos facing the 1,263 people in that community. Ever since, I have been on a succession of phone discussions and meetings to understand their personal issues and to seek solutions. I can report that Fair Trading has communicated the Voluntary Purchase and Demolition Program of this Government. The head of the loose-fill asbestos task force is doing a great job and has attended public meetings and met with home owners. The Greater Hume Shire Council is doing a great job identifying concerns for the town and its residents. The right things are being done by the right people and organisations, yet progress is hindered by a lack of flexibility in the scheme. Some residents are now considering rejecting the program and staying put in their hazardous homes.

I am the first to say that the action plan of the Government to deal with the scourge of loose-fill asbestos is fair. This problem was not created by this Government. It is a legacy of Mr Fluffy, which was a private business that used a legal product to achieve a result of seeming benefit to the environment and to householders. Eventually it was shown that the installation was not only dangerous but also potentially deadly. Therefore, the Government is acting and offering public compensation for the failure of a private enterprise. However, the reality is dawning that if Holbrook is to continue as an important and functioning regional town we must not only present a fair compensation scheme; this Government must also remove asbestos contaminated properties from our communities for good, which means this program must be attractive to its target audience.

Unfortunately, we are seeing shortfalls in the current guidelines of the program, which places the future of Holbrook in jeopardy. If we are not watchful, we will end up with the worst of all scenarios—too many people will leave town for good or stay in their dangerous homes. The community will be left with the same contaminated properties in the same positions and in the same condition. Let us consider a house in Sydney that is valued for the purposes of the asbestos program at \$1.5 million but its owners believe it is worth \$1.7 million. Of course it is worth them spending \$1,000 of their own money to obtain an additional report if they feel something has been missed. If a house in Holbrook is valued at \$100,000 but its owners consider that it falls under a higher price

bracket of \$110,000, it is not worth outlaying \$1,000 to appeal the valuation. It is a matter of scale and financial resources. We are asking the stressed home owners of Holbrook to do what we might not do ourselves in their situation. This is not an encouragement.

Holbrook is a hotspot, with 33 homes affected by loose-fill asbestos. Remarkably, 5 per cent of homes in Holbrook require demolition. How would it look in our streets? Might it affect property values? Many of those homes are valued below \$200,000 and low valuations are a game changer. Every dollar counts and individual family savings and equity loans cannot be called upon to top up compensation or plug expense gaps. Options have been discussed, including suggestions such as establishing a discretionary fund, incentives to rebuild in small towns—anything to meet the costs of getting residents over the line. For some, sentiment might be the crunch point rather than money. If a home owner seeks a new valuation, can something be done about the cost? If the sticking point is a piece of heirloom furniture, can it be cleaned? Compensation for loss of soft furnishings such as curtains, carpets, rugs, sofas and bedding which must be destroyed is limited to \$1,000. Can we negotiate with suppliers?

Home owners may be prepared to endure rectification of their site but can only afford a \$100,000 demountable home, relying on a small mortgage. Unfortunately, the bank will not lend money on the security. Help is needed. Home owners with large sheds can store their furniture and appliances at no cost while their home is removed and rebuilt, but can we help with storage solutions if a home owner does not have a large shed? I have to report that frustration is spreading. Several Holbrook home owners, particularly the elderly, are talking of rejecting the program. They will literally live out their lives under asbestos dust and, in the course of time, they will pass on the problem. As with health scenarios such as child vaccination, we must encourage people to get on board if we are to achieve an acceptable level of community safety. A one-size-fits-all scheme will fail in Holbrook.

The Government is currently rebuilding Holbrook Hospital to include multipurpose services. This Government cares about that regional community and its future. That too is a game changer and the good momentum for growth must continue. The people of Holbrook deserve not only our fairness and compensation, they also deserve to have this deadly problem solved. To put it in perspective, the cost of rejuvenating Holbrook and ridding the town of the menace that is loose-fill asbestos is no more than the cost of two or three Sydney homes. I ask for the people of Holbrook: Can we solve this quickly?

CAMPBELLTOWN ELECTORATE COMMUNITY BUILDING PARTNERSHIP GRANTS

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (16:35): I am delighted to bring to the attention of the House the 15 local community groups and organisations in the Campbelltown electorate that were successful in securing grants under the Community Building Partnership program. This is the second year that I have had the privilege of supporting many organisations in my community with the help of the Community Building Partnership program. I could not be prouder to report that for the second year running every cent of the \$300,000 available for grants has been allocated to local community groups in Campbelltown. This program is an investment in our community. For example, when we are funding upgrades to soccer clubs, netball clubs, rugby league clubs, or cricket clubs we are providing the athletes in those clubs with an opportunity to develop their skills and contribute further to our community.

I especially thank Campbelltown City Council, in particular, General Manager Lindy Deitz, Director of City Lifestyles Lisa Miscamble, and Mayor George Bricevic for their immense cooperation with the program. The council contributed an additional \$85,000 to the Community Building Partnership funds to assist in funding four projects that would have missed out on a grant. I have always believed that the best outcomes are achieved by working together to determine the preferred outcomes. With the indulgence of the House, I will mention each organisation that has received funding under the program this year, and the difference that the grant will make to each of those organisations. The Campbelltown Rotary Club received \$6,000 for a new barbecue trailer, which will help it to continue supporting those in our community in their time of need. The Philippine-Australian Arts, Culture and Innovation Centre received \$16,900 to upgrade its centre so that our proud Filipino community members can have an opportunity to tell their stories.

The Macarthur Baseball League received \$17,125 to replace its dilapidated batting cages with all-weather cages for the kids. Airds Bradbury Men's Shed received \$15,000 to purchase a ute to assist its members with their activities at Waratah House and Birunji Adolescent Mental Health Unit at Campbelltown Hospital. That is one task among many that lads from the Men's Shed undertake to support our community. The Ambarvale Public School Parents and Citizens Association received \$40,000 to build an inclusive school playground. The Campbelltown Hall Theatre Company, which is one of the most beautiful iconic buildings in our city, received \$34,166. That funding was matched by council and will enable the theatre company to perform a significant upgrade to its electrical supply, which is in need of repair. The Campbelltown Public School Parents and Citizens

Association, which celebrated its 140th anniversary last year, received \$20,035 to upgrade its run-down play equipment.

Lynwood Park Rural Fire Brigade received \$9,500. Those funds were also matched by council and will allow the fire brigade to connect with the water main, enabling it to refill its tanks at the station as well as helping with other logistical needs. The John Warby Public School Parents and Citizens Association received \$27,000 to install an LED sign. This school serves some of the most marginalised and disadvantaged children in our community. The Campbelltown Community Preschool received \$15,164. This year celebrates the sixtieth anniversary of the preschool. Its funding was also matched by Campbelltown council, which will be used to upgrade the soft-fall surfaces and other resources so that the kids can enjoy the outdoor areas of the preschool.

Campbelltown Caspers Baseball Club received a grant of \$11,000 for upgrading and revitalising its playing surfaces. Macarthur Rams Football Association received \$10,000 for a new scoreboard. The biggest grant recipient this year was Campbelltown Ghosts Baseball Club which received \$43,000. Along with a significant contribution from council, this grant will go towards a substantial upgrade of the irrigation system of its home field in St Helens Park. St David's Presbyterian Church received \$21,700 to get the security fences that it needs. Last but not least, the Ruse Football Club received \$12,000 to upgrade the footpath to its second playing field. I congratulate all the grant recipients and all the people involved who made such an effort. This fantastic initiative is a good use of taxpayers' money and is a wonderful program from which the community will benefit. I truly enjoyed working with everyone, for which I thank them.

COOTAMUNDRA ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Cootamundra) (16:40): Bland shire experienced some of the worst from Mother Nature in the past 12 months but this has not dampened the shire's prospects. It was fantastic to see recent data from the National Australia Bank [NAB] which listed Bland shire, together with Gundagai in my electorate, in the top five fastest growing regions in New South Wales. According to the *Daily Advertiser*, the NAB's data was based on four million daily transactions, which showed average monthly spending of \$2,117 in metropolitan areas and \$1,949 in the regions. Chief economist Alan Oster said spending growth in regional areas outpaced growth in the cities, with many of the fastest growing areas also among the smallest.

This positive news for Bland shire comes on the back of the announcement that the New South Wales Department of Planning and Environment approved an extension of the Cowal goldmine near West Wyalong. The Cowal goldmine is an impressive operation that is responsible for producing the gold of the Melbourne Cup. Yes, the Melbourne Cup originates from the heart of regional New South Wales, and the community of West Wyalong is immensely proud of this claim to fame, as am I. Evolution Mining's modification application will see the existing mine increase its total extraction from 3.8 million ounces to 5.5 million ounces of gold over an extra eight years to 2032. The Cowal goldmine is one of the largest employers in my electorate and, importantly, this approval means that 385 local jobs are secured.

Furthermore, it is great to see just how much support the mine has from the local community, with more than 60 submissions received in support of the proposed expansion and no objections. I thank the current Minister for Planning, the Hon. Anthony Roberts, and the former Minister for Planning, the Hon. Rob Stokes, for their ongoing support for my electorate. The success story for West Wyalong does not stop there, with the SBS *Small Business Secrets* recently featuring local business Whispering Pines Organics, run by Betina and Robert Walker. This family business is booming but, as with many farming enterprises, it has endured its share of trials through nature and depression. I congratulate the family on its innovation and determination. The positive media attention for the area continues, with the *Travel Oz* program filming at the Naradhan Woolshed more recently.

In light of these positive stories for West Wyalong and the broader region, I wish to highlight something I have raised previously in the Parliament—one of the biggest issues for the region that needs to be addressed. The Newell Highway runs from Brisbane to Melbourne via Toowoomba and Goondiwindi on the Queensland border through to Toomum on the Victorian border and on to Shepparton. It goes through West Wyalong, Narrandera and Ardlethan in my electorate as well as the major logistical centres of Parkes and Dubbo. As members may be aware, late last year the Newell Highway was closed for six weeks with the section between West Wyalong and Forbes underwater and severely damaged. This section of highway is a real pressure point after periods of high rainfall, with the closure having an immediate impact on West Wyalong and Forbes but also having an impact on transport arrangements throughout the State and interstate.

The Newell Highway Taskforce comprises representatives from Bland, Coolamon and Narrandera shires in my electorate and from 14 local government areas across New South Wales altogether. The task force is in the process of drafting a West Wyalong to Forbes flood report, and it has had some interesting feedback. For example, the closure of the Newell Highway at Marsden from 22 September to 4 November last year meant that one transport company reported its fleet travelled an extra 49,500 kilometres. Another transport company from

Adelaide said the closure meant it had to divert trucks through Broken Hill; rearrange permanent motel bookings; incur damage to the trucks with the increased number of collisions with animals; incur extra wear and tear on the trucks; incur increased costs for fuel, time and wages; and experience more traffic and poor road conditions on alternative routes. This feedback is important, and I look forward to reading the report in due course. I thank all those who contributed to the report.

With the traffic on the Newell Highway only set to increase over the next 20 years, the infrastructure investment is needed now to flood-proof this vital freight and tourism corridor in the future. As I have indicated previously, this would include building up the height of the road and installing additional culverts to allow a greater flow of water under the road around Marsden. Flood-proofing of the intersection of the Newell and Sturt highways at Gillenbah also needs serious attention. This issue has been raised with me again recently by the mayor of Narrandera. In the meantime, it is pleasing to see so much activity and interest in the Bland shire. The region is a great case study of how, with the right infrastructure investment and support, small business and tourism in regional New South Wales can go from strength to strength. I encourage all members to take a visit to West Wyalong and to Bland shire to see this beautiful part of regional New South Wales.

GOULBURN LOCAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR

TRIBUTE TO THE BASNETT FAMILY

Ms PRU GOWARD (Goulburn—Minister for Family and Community Services, Minister for Social Housing, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (16:45): Today, in the spirit of International Women's Day, I recognise the Goulburn electorate Woman of the Year Liz Ikin. Liz is a remarkable nurse, wife, mother, grandmother, volunteer, fundraiser, innovator, confidante, friend, colleague, businesswoman and breeder of champion Herefords. Originally from Tarago, Liz is active in every part of the Crookwell community. Members of that community really cannot remember what it was like before she arrived. Liz is a registered nurse, positively impacting the lives of her patients and colleagues at the Crookwell District Hospital, who thank her for her 30 years of experience. Her commitment to her patients is endless. Her compassion for her patients with acute care needs, often in need of end-of-life and palliative care, inspires her nursing colleagues and local doctors.

Without complaint, Liz does whatever is needed to make her patients as comfortable as possible at the end of their lives, sometimes visiting at 2 o'clock in the morning to sit with them and their families, to hold their hands and to make sure that their last moments are cherished. As she said to me today, she knows it is her vocation. She will then go home, shower, and start her 8.00 a.m. shift at 7.00 a.m. Despite always being on call for other families who need her strength and guidance, she also helps run her family's Hereford stud and volunteers as president of the VIEW club and the Crookwell Show Society's women's auxiliary, as well as finding the time to cherish her grandchildren and be a devoted wife to her husband, Ken, and to her two children, Daniel and Kristen.

She counts establishing the wound clinic at the Crookwell District Hospital as one of her great professional achievements. The wound clinic, now a firm feature of the hospital, was established to relieve pressure on a busy emergency department. It was established in an upstairs room, with basic equipment and part-time attention. Through a local grant, Liz was able to refurbish the room to provide patients with a facility that is in line with their expectations of what a hospital should offer. This was nearly 10 years ago, and today the wound clinic is serviced at all hours, as needed, greatly reducing the pressure on the emergency department and doctors. Liz truly is a pillar of our community. I am so pleased she is finally getting the recognition she deserves as the 2017 Local Woman of the Year.

It is with a heavy heart that I now honour and remember stalwarts of the Gunning community Andrew and Anne Basnett and Andrew's brother, Richard Basnett. Tragically, on Thursday 16 February, Andrew, Anne and Richard lost their lives in a terrible accident on the Basnett's property at Oolong, near Gunning. The Basnetts were good country people, contributing so much to their community—something that is sorely missed. The member for Cootamundra was able to attend the memorial service for that family. Gunning is still hurting, and my thoughts and prayers go to their surviving children, Tom and Victoria, Campbell and Jo, and Emily and Anthony; their adored grandchildren, Jack, Annabelle, Pippa, Willa and Polly; and Andrew's mother, Mrs Marjorie Basnett. I pay my respects to Andrew, Anne and Richard. We will remember them fondly.

MALDON TO DOMBARTON RAIL PROJECT

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong) (16:49): Last week Infrastructure Australia released its Infrastructure Priority List for 2017. To suggest that the Illawarra region is disappointed with the list would be an understatement. For a few years now Infrastructure Australia has been considering three projects that are very important to the region's economic future, but not one of them—not the Maldon to Dombarton rail link, not the

upgrade to the Wollongong to Sydney rail line, and not the F6 extension—made the list for high priority or priority projects for 2017. I note that the member for Kiama is in the Chamber.

I believe the member for Kiama would share my disappointment that those projects are not on the priority list. Instead, each project will continue to be passed through bureaucratic hoops and suffer bureaucratic buck-passing. In the meantime, the economic future of the Illawarra region continues to be compromised by the neglect, inaction and complete lack of ambition of the Federal and State Liberal governments. When one reads the description for each project in the Infrastructure Australia report, one gets a clear understanding of the rationale and purpose behind each one. For example, when one looks at freight rail access to Port Kembla, Infrastructure Australia says:

The Australian Infrastructure Audit 2015 identified that Port Kembla would face capacity constraints in the absence of any additional rail network improvements. Port Kembla is a significant economic asset. Maintaining efficient movement of freight to and from the port is a key challenge.

In case it is not immediately obvious, the rationale for the project is jobs. Yet, after years and years of study, the half-built Maldon to Dombarton rail link remains as stalled as it was when the Greiner Liberal Government foolishly cancelled its construction in 1988. Of the three infrastructure projects, only the Maldon to Dombarton project, according to Infrastructure Australia, can be delivered within the next five years. The other two—also worthy projects—have a far longer time frame. This includes the F6 extension, which needs a little less conversation and a little more action having been announced and re-announced by the Government eight times, according to a recent 9News bulletin.

The Maldon to Dombarton rail link is arguably the most cursed rail infrastructure project in the country. When there is a resources boom, everyone starts looking to the Maldon to Dombarton rail project to relieve capacity constraints. When the boom busts, interest in the Maldon to Dombarton rail link fades until the next resources boom is underway and the cycle starts all over again. This has been the fate of the Maldon to Dombarton rail project for the past 34 years. This rail project is expensive. None of its supporters has ever denied or sought to diminish its cost.

But does anyone really think that the project will get any cheaper by delaying it or ordering yet another examination of options? Make no mistake: the Maldon to Dombarton rail link will be finished. It can be done under this Government or it will be done under a future Labor government. The Liberals at Federal and State levels may hate the Maldon to Dombarton project because it competes for funding with other infrastructure projects, mainly in Sydney. But Labor can see what the Maldon to Dombarton project means for the Illawarra region in jobs and business opportunities.

Mr Jai Rowell: So does the member for Wollondilly.

Mr PAUL SCULLY: I am glad that the member for Wollondilly supports the Maldon to Dombarton project. It means a direct link between the port of Port Kembla, located in my electorate, and the country's third largest growing region in south-western Sydney. It offers the untangling of the passenger and freight-handling task on the Illawarra Line and the South Coast Line. Maldon to Dombarton can free up and increase new commuter services between Wollongong and Sydney. Unlike the Government, Opposition members will not abandon the Maldon to Dombarton rail link.

I am glad the member for Wollondilly has signed up for the cause, precisely because it offers so many economic and social benefits to the Illawarra region. On the Labor side, at the Federal and State levels, we stand shoulder to shoulder in strong support of the Maldon to Dombarton rail project. We have each pledged \$50 million in foundation capital, in partnership with the private sector, to build and complete this freight access rail link once and for all. My colleague in the Federal Parliament the member for Cunningham, Sharon Bird, and I will not give up on this project because it supports jobs growth and opportunity. Labor believes in the Maldon to Dombarton rail link project.

Labor's vision and ambition for the Illawarra is another reason why we will not only invest in the Maldon to Dombarton rail link but also invest \$50 million to upgrade the Appin Road. We believe that the Illawarra's future points to stronger connection with south-west and Western Sydney. Improving links between the growing community of south-west Sydney and the Illawarra underpins jobs growth, so that people in both communities have a better chance at getting a job close to where they live to allow them to spend more time with their families and less time on congested transport networks. Labor remains ready and willing to invest in the Illawarra's future, but the Liberals seem set in their ways of short-changing us at every opportunity. It is deeply disappointing that the current Federal and State Liberal governments do not share the ambition Labor has for the Illawarra's future.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (16:54): I agree with the member for Wollongong on one thing, and that is both this Federal Government and previous Federal governments can do much more to invest in infrastructure for the Illawarra, particularly the Princes Highway which was neglected by the Labor Government

for 16 long years. In relation to the Maldon to Dombarton rail link, I say to the member for Wollongong that the member for Wollondilly and I, in the term of the last Parliament, pushed for our Government to fund engineering studies as well as partner with the Commonwealth Labor Government on the progress of this project.

I think we all agree that the Maldon to Dombarton rail link is a priority for our region. I can offer one solution, and that is superannuation funds could be used to fund more investments, particularly in the private operator of the port of Port Kembla which has an interest in having enhanced access to the port with the expansion of the port. I hope that I can work productively with the member for Wollongong as he starts his political journey to make sure that there are major investments from the Federal Government and this State Government and future State governments.

WOLLONDILLY POLICING

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (16:55): People work out which politicians are scaremongers. They can tell the difference between people who genuinely fight for something and achieve an outcome and those who just grandstand. I am disappointed a Wollondilly councillor cannot be bothered to worry about council issues, which councillors are elected to tackle, but instead attempts to articulate a case against the State Government on matters over which he has no control. I add that in doing so he has done a very poor job and cannot even be bothered to do his research. One example is his petition calling for Wollondilly to employ more police. At first glance this appears a noble and worthy cause, despite him having no responsibility for the matter.

Maybe I am being too harsh and maybe I should use this as a reminder that I should do something myself. Wait, I already have done something, a year prior to this petition, and the issue has been solved. The member for Camden and I share responsibility for the Camden Local Area Command [LAC]. Due to a sudden increase in population the police had to do more work with no additional police officers. The police approached the member for Camden, Chris Patterson, and me to support them. We are big supporters of our local police, who do an amazing job, and we showed our support. On 13 October, 19 October and 8 November 2016, I raised this issue in Parliament and called for more police resources, and on numerous occasions I have raised this matter with the Minister's office. Having seen the hard work that we did and the support we were getting from the community and police, this individual went to the community suggesting he would fix the problem as nothing had been done.

In all his comments, he singled out towns where he said a crime wave was happening. The thing that angers the community and me is that by singling out individual towns all he has managed to do is talk down the towns and talk up crime. He said that there is no police presence in some of these towns, which encourages criminals to target them. Of course, his statements are incorrect, but worse still they are dangerous. I provided him information from police that across just about every crime category in Wollondilly crime has been trending down and in some cases has dropped to 20- and 30-year lows. I also offered to meet with him. Needless to say, he has refused to meet with me and has said the crime statistics are wrong. This is a shot at our police, as they are the ones who record crime. I choose to believe the police over this person. I call on him to apologise to the police.

I have also sent information letting him know that more police had been organised. He chooses to ignore this information. Recently the member for Camden and I met with two New South Wales deputy police commissioners, the local area commander, the Police Association of NSW and the Minister's office to explore the granting of additional resources. For the House and the individual involved, I will list the measures that have been put in place so far. Four recover-at-work officers are providing important back-of-house support to frontline police. One sergeant working a 38-hour week is performing computerised operational policing system [COPS] work confirmation. One detective senior constable has been assigned to Camden from 23 January 2017, before the petition was tabled.

Increased police officers include one chief inspector and one sergeant and there has been an upgrade to the detective sergeant investigations manager position. A second domestic violence liaison officer has been allocated. Additional general administrative support officers have been rostered for seven-hour overtime shifts and there is an on-loan arrangement for a vacant GASO position from Macquarie Fields Local Area Command. Two recently appointed probationary constables are to remain in over-strength positions, which essentially gives the command two extra vacancies for recruitment. There is the secondment of a fully operational detective senior constable for six months, and there has been the recruitment of a part-time detective senior constable to job share with a part-position Special Auxiliary Police [SAP] vacancy that currently exists.

There has been a recent and pending transfer of four officers. A permanent part-time job share arrangement in the exhibits position for two senior constables has created a further general duties SAP vacancy. There has been a commitment to reduce the number of staff required to attend active armed offender training at the one time. There has been a commitment by the region commander to review the workload of Camden LAC Criminal Investigation, to exclude Camden LAC from ongoing strike force or external secondments and to excuse

Camden LAC from having to provide a South West Metropolitan Radio Electronics Section secondee until January. Further, the duty officer from Camden will be allowed to return.

There will be proactive recruitment strategies to fill any pending general duties constable vacancies, with an initial request for three probationary constables from class 330. There will also be discussion about further secondments. This week I was able to announce, with the member for Camden, that 10 new police officers were coming. We have had a letter from the Police Association thanking the member for Camden, the member for Wollondilly and all those involved in that campaign, particularly the hardworking men and women of the NSW Police Force who are now going to get what they asked for. That is how you do it. I too want to thank all those involved. My suggestion to the individual involved is to get your facts straight and support your community; do not endanger them. I look forward to updating the House on other scare campaigns he has been running. For the community's sake, I say to the individual involved: please, sir, stop grandstanding and support your community.

INTERCITY TRAIN FLEET CONTRACT

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (17:00): I am placing on the table, for the benefit of members, an article from today's *Blue Mountains Gazette* which is my source for the information in my statement today. Yet again I find myself in this Chamber with a bundle of notes in front of me about the ongoing farce unfolding within the New South Wales Government that is its mishandling of the New South Wales intercity fleet procurement project. Members of the New South Wales Labor Opposition stood here yesterday and gave notice of motion after motion calling on this Government to reconsider its decision to offshore the new intercity fleet. It is a decision that will cost over 1,200 jobs. At a time when Liberals from Macquarie Street to Canberra are parroting the "jobs and growth" mantra, this Government is more interested in sending those jobs overseas.

This week the *Blue Mountains Gazette* lays out its independent research about the very poor record of Hyundai Rotem, the Berejiklian Government's South Korean train builder. In February 2015, a train collided with a stationary vehicle on a level crossing. This had the tragic consequence of killing the train's engineer. A confidential report, cited in the *Los Angeles Times*, revealed that Hyundai Rotem had failed to meet design specifications provided to it by the government railway operator. In particular, deflectors at the front of the train that were designed to protect it from derailing in the event of a collision, such as at a level crossing, were found to be unable to withstand the required forces. There was evidence of poor welding and casting flaws that introduced weaknesses to the failed components.

The same manufacturer, Hyundai Rotem, is also responsible for building trains for the public transport network in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, which have been withdrawn from service due to the widespread failure of structural components—caused, yet again, by poor quality work and bad welding. The people of New South Wales deserve better than this. We need to be absolutely sure of the quality, safety and reliability of the new intercity fleet. It is very difficult to trust the assurances of this Government when it comes to these new trains, though. On the one hand they say, "Trust us", but the evidence from overseas tells us that the manufacturer cannot be trusted. The evidence also tells us that this Government does not actually know what it is doing and that it is making up the details on this project as it goes along.

It is now very well known in this Parliament and throughout the community that these new trains do not fit the tracks in the Blue Mountains. It is impossible for these new trains to squeeze past each other around tight bends or through the tunnels along the Blue Mountains line west of Springwood. When I made a freedom of information request asking to see what planning works had been undertaken and for a list of the upgrades required along the line to make these trains fit past Springwood station, I fully expected to receive a significant volume of information. Instead I received a very brief document that read more like a ministerial press release than anything else. But what it said was very telling. It said:

We are currently finalising where modifications need to be made and starting the design process. Work could include minor track work, changes to signals, platform modifications ...

This is a very wordy way of saying, "We don't know." This Government has no idea where the work needs to be done, no idea how much it will cost, and no idea how long it will take. It cannot tell us how long the Blue Mountains line will be closed while these works are being done, and the reason the Government cannot tell us anything is that it is making it up as it goes along. If it had been the intention all along, as the Minister has tried to claim, that these trains would go all the way to Lithgow, then these investigations and plans would have been well underway.

At this rate, though, the first of these unsafe, poorly built trains will be arriving on a boat from South Korea in 2019—and they will still not fit past Springwood. Blue Mountains commuters will be stuck with the old trains while this hopeless Liberal State Government works out how to use a measuring tape. It beggars belief. I call on the Government to call in this contract; I call on the Minister to admit that this project has been a fiasco

from the start; and I call on the Premier to admit that she made the wrong call back in 2014 when she set this fat train in motion. Let us get local experts in to design and build a train that fits the tracks, that is of a high quality, and that will keep local workers in jobs.

WARNERVALE TOWN CENTRE

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (17:05): Tonight I tell the sorry tale of Warnervale Town Centre in my electorate. It is a town centre that has been promised since 1975, so it goes back a very long time. It is something I fought very hard for in my first term in Parliament. I fought to get a lot of rezonings and such things done and to get some funding for an internal road. So I was very surprised when I came across a document that was put out in 2013 entitled, "Warnervale Town Centre: Live, Grow, Work and Play". The residents in my very fast-growing area would have been very excited when this brochure came out because it gave a time line for when a whole lot of things were going to happen.

Woolworths was going to build a shopping centre. There was going to be a railway station—in fact detailed design was already underway. A range of different construction projects were going to happen. But if members go to that site now what they will see is a beautiful intersection—and I congratulate the Government for delivering that intersection. It is a very good intersection. There is also the road I obtained funding for in 2010 that goes into where the town centre will be—and there it stops. Last year I wrote to both Transport for NSW and Woolworths to get an update. It was quite enlightening given that, in the brochure, everything was on the verge of taking off, the concept designs for the station were underway. But the reply I received from Transport for NSW in November said:

Bus services will provide sufficient public transport in the short to medium term prior to the provision of any potential additional rail service. Transport for NSW will continue to monitor development and growth in the area and adjust public transport services as required.

It sounded a lot less positive in November than it did in 2013—and nearly 4,000 new blocks have been approved in that area. I then wrote to Woolworths and said, "Woolworths, according to the brochure, you are ready to go." We were going to get this brand new shopping centre with Big W and BWS. It was going to be great. There were going to be 45 specialty shops. But Woolworths said in its letter, "Business conditions have changed." Surprise, surprise. It said:

In the intervening years since purchasing the site there has been significant shift in the conditions under which our business operates and a broader change in the retail sector.

This next bit was enlightening. It said:

Additionally, at a local level, the anticipated complementary adjacent medium- and high-density residential developments and community facilities, including residential aged care, community library and aquatic centre, are yet to be completed. It is dead right. The council says that it is waiting for the shopping centre to start. Woolworths says that it is waiting for everything else to start. People in the area have been waiting since 1975. I moved there 20 years ago and I thought I would have a short walk to get the newspaper at the nice shopping centre at the top of the hill. It is not there. When I go doorknocking in the area people ask, "Mr Harris, where is the town centre? I moved here because of the town centre." According to these letters from both Woolworths and Transport for NSW and the fact that council does not seem to have any plans for an aquatic centre in their forward planning or a library, it look like not much is going to happen.

I have a picture of the nice sign erected at the time by Landcom, which is now UrbanGrowth NSW, which says, "A brand new neighbourhood is coming to Warnervale." The 135 blocks were approved. But guess what? UrbanGrowth NSW is not building anything, it is actually selling the land. UrbanGrowth is looking for another developer. If members went there today—and I should have brought a photo of it—they will see that the sign has peeled off the board, and so this brand new community looks like a scene from *Back to the Future* where there is a fallen down sign in a community that does not exist. That is Warnervale.

The Minister for Transport needs to get something done about the railway station. Wyong Shire Council needs to get off its behind and start planning for a library and aquatic centre and all those sorts of things that were promised to the people. Woolworths needs to re-evaluate because it owns the land at the top of the hill where the shopping centre should be and nothing can happen without that. I call on the council to rezone some other land and invite others to come and build a shopping centre. Maybe if there is a bit of competition Woolworths will get off its behind and actually do something.

PENNANT HILLS HIGH SCHOOL FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation) (17:10): Today I acknowledge the fiftieth anniversary of Pennant Hills High School and, in doing so, I acknowledge 50 years of quality public education provided by outstanding and dedicated professionals and 50 years of building and strengthening my community through quality public education. Pennant Hills High School has been a much-loved part of our community for generations and we are fortunate to have some wonderfully talented staff led by their

hardworking and dedicated principal, Ross Warren, and deputy principals, Brendan O'Byrne and Amanda De Carli.

Last year the school opened its doors to former students, parents and citizens [P and C] association members and staff to come together and reminisce about their memories and share stories with the current students about their time at the school. I had the pleasure of joining Ross Warren, the parents and citizens president Ross Knight and staff and students to celebrate the occasion. On the day we were treated to superb musical performances by the choir and the outstanding concert band and viewed a selection of memorabilia displays. The evening celebrations continued at Hornsby RSL, and they were also memorable. We listened to the evening's special guest speaker, former principal Geoff Wing, who is also a local hero and one of the best educators you ever will find. He shared many interesting and funny stories whilst showcasing the school's 50-year history.

It was great to see so many people in attendance supporting the evening and having a great time. I give special thanks to the organising committee of Fiona Ackerman, Janelle Dennis, Marnie Finch, Janette Louis, Robyn Munari, Roger Niccol, and Brendan O'Byrne. They all put in an outstanding effort behind the scenes to make sure everything ran smoothly. It was a wonderful celebration. Pennant Hills High School has a long and rich history dating back to its inception in 1966 when former New South Wales Governor Sir Roden Cutler was invited to formally open the school at a ceremony on 10 December. The school opened for classes from February 1966 with 240 students and a full-time staff of 14. Back then the school consisted of only eight classes but it quickly grew in response to population growth in the local area. By 1967 Pennant Hills High was sharing its buildings with North Carlingford High School, which moved later that year to Roselea.

The school continued to grow and change over the following years, with the first annual careers night established in 1971 supported by the Rotary Club of Pennant Hills. In the 1970s, the school started to broaden its curriculum to include a greater emphasis on music and sport. This brought new achievements, with the school first entering the City of Sydney Eisteddfod in 1975 while the school's baseball and squash teams started to succeed in inter-Sydney competitions. Further success was to follow with 43 out of 198 students finishing 1994 in the top 10 per cent of the State. In 1996, Pennant Hills High honoured Louise Sneddon for winning a gold level Duke of Edinburgh Award. It is this hard work and dedication throughout the years that has helped Pennant Hills High School forge a strong reputation in the community for providing high-quality education in a safe and nurturing environment.

I am delighted to say that Pennant Hills High School's class of 2016 has continued to produce fantastic results, with 83 band 6 results for last year's school leavers. I make special mention of Adam Walker who finished with the all round excellence award by scoring seven straight subjects in the band 6 category and finishing with an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank [ATAR] of 98.45. Special praise should also go to Grace Lickley who finished the Higher School Certificate on the Board of Studies Top Achiever List for ranking second in the State in Extension 2 English. Grace achieved a perfect 50/50 test result—congratulations. Notably, the school was ranked thirty-eighth among public schools in last year's Higher School Certificate results. It is a fabulous result for the 2016 cohort and we are all very proud of their achievements. It is a great testament to the outstanding teachers who work there.

The class of 2016 can also boast that 12 per cent of their year achieved an ATAR of over 90. With academic results at an all-time high, Pennant Hills High School is thriving under the leadership of principal Ross Warren. Mr Warren is the seventh principal the school has had since its establishment in 1966. I know that Mr Warren works tirelessly to ensure that the most effective teaching methods are delivered. Educational opportunities like these have helped produce some impressive alumni over the years. Some notable alumni that have graduated from Pennant Hills High include Olympic race walker Adam Rutter, Commonwealth Games squash representative Anthony Ricketts, Australian fashion designer Lisa Ho, Neuroscience Research Australia Chief Executive Officer Dr Peter Schofield and former Australian Labor Senator John Faulkner. These are just a few of the many talented and wonderful members of our community who got their start in life as a student at Pennant Hills High.

Fifty years on from its establishment, Pennant Hills High School continues to prosper each year, playing an integral role in shaping the youth of the local community and properly preparing them with the skills they need for life after high school. I thank the many fine staff who work there for their service to our community. I also acknowledge the school captains, Aimee Love, Bradley Thomson, Kalindi White and Chen Fong Lou, and wish them all the best for the next chapter of their lives. I congratulate the many staff, students, principals, P and C members and volunteers who over the many years have helped the school reach this historic milestone. The local community owes each and every one of them a great debt of gratitude for the countless hours of service they have given. I am sure that Pennant Hills High School will continue to grow and prosper for the next 50 years.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) (17:16): I thank the member for Hornsby for his great advocacy on behalf of Pennant Hills High School. What a wonderful school—50 years of dedicated service. It reminds me of

another great service organisation, the Rosehill Local Area Command which includes Granville police station. What a wonderful Police Force we have. I give a big-shout out to Commander Scott White and all the officers there for their hard work and diligence. In fact, I was speaking with him this week about the reduction in crime. Through the hard work of his dedicated officers, all categories of crime are reducing. It is appropriate at this time to recognise the command, especially the dedication of Scott White and his staff in producing such an outstanding service. Policing in the community is a very important role.

I send my best wishes to all the police, not only in Parramatta but right throughout Granville and the Rosehill commands. Parramatta is a wonderful area, but like all big cities we do have issues. I give a big shout-out also to Acting Commander Jodie Radcliffe, who is filling in for Wayne Cox. Wayne is on sick leave at the moment and we wish him all the best for the future. In conclusion, I congratulate Commander Scott White and all the team at the Rosehill and Granville commands. They are a great asset to the community and we wish them all the best and future success at reducing crime to an even lower rate.

Matter of Public Importance

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I trust that this will be a wonderful discussion to conclude our celebration of International Women's Day.

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (17:18): International Women's Day is a day on which we celebrate the achievements of women and the changes they have made in our society. As Margaret Thatcher said, "If you want something said, ask a man; if you want something done, ask a woman." On 8 March every year we come together and proudly acknowledge the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women across the globe. International Women's Day was first celebrated in 1911 by the suffragette movement in the hope of achieving equality between men and women. Throughout history, women and men alike have banded together to redress inequality, hoping for a better future for their communities and children. In my inaugural speech in this place I stated:

My gender is very unremarkable. It is the same as 50 per cent of the population and yet all too often it seems to be the quality used to define or characterise me ... I have always violently objected to the proposition that I need to be propped up and am capable of attaining only a tokenistic position. I believe in a system based on merit. I believe in choosing the best person for the job.

With this in mind, I am disappointed that in 2017 we still need an International Women's Day. I am a very proud woman but I am cynical about ceremonial symbolism. What does International Women's Day achieve? It may well be that disparity really does exist, and I will highlight certain elements of it later in my contribution. However, the question we should be asking is: How do we bridge the gap in practice instead of paying lip service to an ideological concept? I would rather that we address issues throughout the year instead of highlighting them only once every 365 days. The campaign theme for 2017 is "Be Bold for Change". The World Economic Forum now predicts that the gender gap will not be entirely closed until 2186. Today's celebration aims to pull everyone together to achieve a more gender-inclusive world in our lifetime. I point out that this experience varies from country to country and from society to society.

International Women's Day aims to address some of the inequities that women face in everyday life. Across New South Wales, women are facing challenges in achieving equal rights and equal treatment. For example, in this State women continue to be paid less than men for doing the same job. On average, women working full-time earn \$320 a week less than men. Four in five victims of sexual assault are women, and women are three times more likely than men to experience violence from an intimate partner. Women are also significantly under-represented on executive boards in the public and private sectors in New South Wales. Women's share of technical and trade training is at a 10-year low, and only 17.6 per cent of apprenticeships are completed by women.

A range of issues affect girls and women throughout their life, including educational attainment, developing and maintaining a career, balancing family and work, raising a family, and caring for ageing parents and partners. They are issues that affect every stage of life. However, they are attributed in part to our biological nature. International Women's Day provides us with an important opportunity to take stock of the statistics and to acknowledge the barriers and challenges that women continue to face compared to those faced by their male counterparts. I have already pointed out that we face challenges, but it is my hope that we can be more productive, upbeat and positive about some of them and highlight some of our successes, particularly with the cohort of people around us now.

This Government is committed to supporting women and girls to reach their full potential and to address the social conditions that challenge gender equality. For example, it is providing funding for New South Wales organisations to develop and to implement projects that support the economic empowerment and leadership of women. It is developing strategies to encourage women and girls to undertake and to complete training in male-dominated trades. It has also developed a sexual assault strategy, which will provide a framework for

preventing sexual assault, supporting victims and holding perpetrators accountable. It is promoting initiatives to increase the representation of women on government-appointed boards and committees and exploring the establishment of pathways for young women into leadership roles. I am passionate about that latter issue. I want the next generation of young girls to grow up in a world in which women and men are seen as equals on all levels, a world in which we celebrate and empower women, and a world in which every woman is able to use her voice, to make her own decisions and to engage in economic opportunities.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (17:24): As the chair of the New South Wales branch of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians and the deputy chair of the Australian region, I speak with joy about International Women's Day. This year's theme is "Be Bold For Change". Events around the world in recent times tell us that it is time for women to be very bold for change, and no more so than in New South Wales. The CWP's mission is to increase the participation of women in politics, but it also sees as a priority stopping violence against women, including sexual violence, providing women with opportunities to lead at all levels of society, and ensuring economic empowerment of women, particularly in education and health.

At a meeting of female parliamentarians in the United Kingdom the weekend before last, it was humbling to hear from women from countries as diverse as Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Samoa, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Canada about their experience as legislators and women with political power addressing these issues in their social, political and cultural contexts. It was with some shame that I had to admit that in New South Wales we still do not protect women's control over their bodies and reproductive rights. As the shadow Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, it is my role to speak in this place about those issues. However, during this debate I will address one of the most important issues facing women. I refer to the gender pay gap and wage equity. The economic power of women is a key concern to everyone in our society. We know that when women are supported to become economically secure, they contribute to the economic development and prosperity of their community.

Even in the poorest community on Earth, where the lack of education opportunities for women often works against them when they seek good jobs, having economic security, let alone empowerment, is a core value. It is an acknowledgement that women's economic activity is core to ensuring good health, good social outcomes, good education, and a good economy for everyone in the society. That is why it beggars belief that when asked questions over the past few days about penalty rates, Liberal-Nationals Ministers in this place have failed to commit to fighting the attack on penalty rates by the Fair Work Commission. The female Premier—the second female Premier and the first female Liberal Premier in this State—did not take the opportunity to show leadership on this important issue by making a submission to the commission in support of retaining penalty rates for some of the most disadvantaged workers in this State.

Ms Katrina Hodgkinson: Point of order: Penalty rates are a matter for the Commonwealth Government—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! We are recognising International Women's Day. I acknowledge the point of the member for Cootamundra, but this is a wideranging debate. There is no point of order.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: A female Minister today told members about her hard early life working in a chicken and chip shop at night and on weekends. Despite that, she still failed to commit to saving penalty rates for the women who are following us. When I asked the Minister about what action she would take on behalf of retail and hospitality workers—who are predominantly women and who will be impacted by this change—she failed to answer the question. In fact, she wanted to talk about nurses and midwives, so I am not sure she listened to my question.

As female politicians, we have a responsibility to stand up for all women. I ask members to consider the passionate speech given by the shadow Minister for Women, the member for Canterbury, when she defended the right of all workers in every sector of the economy to be paid penalty rates, recognising that it is women who are often at the bottom of the economic tree and who are most impacted by changes to penalty rates. If the Minister will not stand up for penalty rates for the most lowly paid workers, which enable women to provide for their families, is she fit to be here? She cannot hide and say that this is a Federal issue. She is willing to speak about marriage equality, which is a Federal issue, but she will not talk about penalty rates. What is the point of her being the Minister for Women?

The member for WallSEND raised another important issue during debate on the motion accorded priority dealing with International Women's Day earlier this afternoon. She spoke about our need for a Minister for Women who will advance women's rights. The Minister came into this role articulating her personal views against women's rights to control their own bodies through abortion and termination access. I urge the Minister to stand up for women's rights at work and at home to achieve economic and social equality. Most importantly, I urge the Minister

to stand up for their right to have control over their own bodies. The Minister must be bold for change but ensure that the changes she makes are in favour of women.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Cootamundra) (17:29): I am delighted to have been asked to participate in the discussion of International Women's Day as a matter of public importance. Today, of course, is International Women's Day. For many women in this place and beyond it has been a very busy day. Mr Deputy Speaker, this morning you and many other members attended a breakfast at the International Convention Centre where the women of the year were announced in many categories. The Minister for Women highlighted that during question time today. I thank the excellent master of ceremonies, Gretel Killeen, Auntie Ann Weldon from Wiradjuri country, Governor David Hurley and Mrs Linda Hurley and all those who made the morning such a wonderful success. Of course, our Premier, Gladys Berejiklian, was there also.

My nominee for the Woman of the Year Award is Jacqui Vincent. Jacqui has contributed enormously to the township of Cootamundra and beyond. Her commitment to her local community is simply extraordinary. I have known Jacqui for many years. Jacqui organises all of the memorial services for Anzac Day, Remembrance Day and so on for the greater Cootamundra region and is also very involved with the young cadets. Over the past 26 years, under her supervision the local Army cadets have put young people through their paces and brought them out the other side as fine young human beings. I thank Jacqui for all the amazing leadership, guidance and passion she has shown to the greater Cootamundra area.

I was delighted that Jacqui was able to come to the breakfast this morning. She is also secretary of the Cootamundra RSL Sub-Branch and is involved with the indoor soccer and swimming clubs. She is absolutely inspirational. She did not win a major prize today but she has won the major prize in the hearts of many in the Cootamundra electorate, together with all of the other wonderful women nominated by people in this place and beyond. There was Cathy Gairn who was nominated by the member for Albury; Delma Lloyd, who was nominated by the member for Auburn; and Jacalyn Harding, who was nominated by the member for Bega. The list goes on.

There was Kylie Gray, who was nominated by the member for Cessnock; and Julie Fitzgerald, who was nominated by the member for Hornsby. Time precludes me from mentioning everyone but I thank all of the wonderful women in our communities who go above and beyond every single day. Most often they are unsung heroes because they do not want to promote themselves. They are happy just giving of themselves to make the community a better place, whether it is through helping the disadvantaged or becoming a very successful businessperson. I wish everybody a happy International Women's Day.

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (17:32): By leave: I contribute to the discussion on International Women's Day, a day when we recognise the gains we have made and understand that there is still so much more to do. It was wonderful to celebrate the achievements of many amazing women at today's Women of the Year Awards. I was very pleased to share the morning with Port Stephens Local Woman of the Year Carmel Northwood—someone who works so hard in my community every day alongside her team at Port Stephens Koalas, trying to stave off the extinction of the koalas in our area. I thank Carmel and her team for their contribution. I also acknowledge the contributions made by many women across this great State of ours.

I will now repeat something I spoke about on this day last year. At that time I said that the Government had an opportunity to do more than talk on gender equality, but nothing has changed. In its heartless push for privatisation, this Government is privatising State disability services. The service has a workforce that is primarily—in fact, 79 per cent—women. In this harsh world of privatisation, there are no deals being done for this feminised workforce that go close to matching the deals being done for the predominantly male workforce of Ausgrid. It is difficult to sit in this place and listen to the platitudes of Government members about the importance of gender equality whilst at the same time they are giving disability workers—a predominantly female workforce—a dud deal.

This Government is giving Ageing, Disability and Home Care [ADHC] workers an employment guarantee that is two years less than that provided in industries where men make up most of the workforce. Disability workers are getting 22 fewer weeks pay on the transfer of their employment to a private provider than the blokes. What is fair and equitable about that? Feminised workforces in child care, aged care and disability sectors not only get a dud deal in terms of pay, they also get duded when their jobs are privatised by this Government. The Government has an opportunity to do more than pay lip service to gender equality, but time and again we see that this Government is happy to continue to walk past those opportunities when it could and should be doing more. This Government could be leading the way on reducing gender inequality. Whilst this Government continues to choose not to take up those opportunities, the need for International Women's Day and to be bold for change will only continue.

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (17:35): In reply: I acknowledge the contributions made and the passion shown by the member for Maitland, the member for Cootamundra and the member for Port Stephens.

I thank them for their interest in this important bipartisan matter. For the benefit of the member for Maitland, I point out how proud I am to serve our first female Coalition Premier, the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, who is both a mentor and an inspiration to me and many other young women in New South Wales. On this International Women's Day, as we celebrate the women who have made enormous contributions in our communities, it would be remiss of me not to mention the Miranda Local Woman of the Year for 2017, Madeline Tynan. Madeline is a woman whose success in business is an inspiration to everyone in our shire and indeed to many across New South Wales.

Madeline is marketing director and a board member of the Tynan Motor Group. She has been instrumental in positioning the Tynan Motor Group as one of Australia's top 100 private companies, with an annual turnover in excess of \$500 million. Her management has resulted in the expansion of services, sales and outlets in the male-dominated automotive industry, resulting in commendation and national benchmarking of industry standards. Madeline is also an exceptional role model and strong advocate for women. She established Women in Business Southern Sydney group and cadetship programs in local high schools and at the University of Wollongong to ensure that women are provided with pathways into the automotive industry. Madeline also leads Women in MBA at the University of Wollongong, where she actively empowers and mentors women to develop skills, knowledge and expertise to equip them for success in business.

As well as her incredible success in business and her role in empowering women, she is also a strong advocate and supporter of many charities in the Sutherland shire. She is a board member of the St George and Sutherland Medical Research Foundation where she has contributed thousands of hours and secured philanthropic and corporate support for medical research for more than a decade. Recently Madeline has implemented two charity events that celebrated her father Michael Tynan's life and coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of Tynan Motors, raising \$520,000 for medical research. Given all of Madeline's successes and the impact she has made on our community, she still considers her biggest achievement in life to be her strong and loving marriage to Wayne whilst raising four independent, wonderful, interesting and compassionate young adults. She is an inspiration to all women who are in the workforce whilst also raising a family.

Madeline is a phenomenal woman whose influence can be seen in every area of the Sutherland shire. I am delighted to have nominated Madeline for both the Miranda Local Woman of the Year Award and the NSW Business Woman of the Year Award. I congratulate her on being a finalist for the 2017 NSW Business Woman of the Year Award. I was delighted to see her receive her award this morning at the NSW Women of the Year Awards at the International Convention Centre in Darling Harbour, along with her son Samuel. On behalf of our community, I thank Madeline for her service and wish her even greater success in her future endeavours. In concluding, I celebrate the remarkable women in New South Wales, each and every one of them. I wish all of them, including those opposite, a happy International Women's Day.

Bills

FINES AMENDMENT BILL 2017

Returned

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

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 17:39 until
Thursday 9 March 2017 at 10:00.**