



New South Wales

Legislative Assembly

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Sixth Parliament
First Session**

Thursday, 9 March 2017

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Bills	1
Motor Accident Injuries Bill 2017	1
First Reading.....	1
Second Reading	1
Budget	4
Budget Estimates and Related Papers 2016-17	4
Business of the House	6
Postponement of Business	6
Bills	6
Public Health (Medicinal Cannabis) Bill 2017	6
First Reading.....	6
Second Reading	6
Steel Industry Protection Bill 2016.....	9
Second Reading	9
Business of the House	18
Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Member's Speaking Time.....	18
Bills	18
Steel Industry Protection Bill 2016.....	18
Second Reading	18
Motions	19
World's Greatest Shave.....	19
Local Government Elections.....	23
Tahmoor Railway Station Upgrade	29
Visitors.....	30
Visitors.....	30
Documents	30
NSW Ombudsman	30
Reports	30
Members	30
Representation of Ministers Absent During Questions	30
Question Time.....	30
CBD and South East Light Rail Project.....	30
Regional Infrastructure	31
CBD and South East Light Rail Project.....	33
Regional Infrastructure	34
CBD and South East Light Rail Project.....	35
Rural and Regional Tourism.....	36
Minister for Energy and Utilities	37
Local Government Inquiries	38
Orange Hospital Car Park	39

TABLE OF CONTENTS—*continuing*

Regional Planning.....	40
Committees	42
Committee on Transport and Infrastructure.....	42
Report: Procurement of Government Infrastructure Projects	42
Public Accounts Committee (PAC).....	43
Report: Examination of Auditor-General's Performance Audit Reports December 2014 - June 2015	43
Legislation Review Committee.....	45
Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 32/56	45
Matter of Public Importance	46
Kidney Health Week.....	46
Community Recognition Statements	48
Futsal Player Angus Stewart.....	48
Tribute to Arthur Watson.....	49
Norske Skog Young Achiever of the Year	49
Sydney Secondary College Balmain Campus Oval.....	49
Tribute to Senior Constable Bruce Whitwell.....	49
, OAM	49
Mrs Elizabeth Szilagyi 104th Birthday.....	50
International Women's Day	50
Winston Hills Football Club	50
Mandaeen Cultural Day	50
Inaburra School World's greatest shave	51
Association of the Ss Crocifisso Annual Festival.....	51
Tribute to Joyce Donovan	51
Kirketon Road Centre	51
Lower Clarence Hospital Auxiliary sixtieth anniversary.....	51
1st Alexandria Scout Troop	51
Tweed United Football Club.....	52
Nepean Men's Shed.....	52
Community Migrant Resource Centre Twentieth Anniversary	52
Strokecheck Campaign	52
Tribute to Judith Rutherford, AM.....	52
Metro Mala Yalam Community Awards	53
Cootamundra Electorate Senior Local Achievers.....	53
Petitions.....	53
Domestic Violence.....	53
Discussion	53
Community Recognition Statements	58
Myall Lakes Electorate Futsal Representatives	58
Wollongong Local Sport Grant Program Funding.....	58
Gosford Musical Society.....	58

TABLE OF CONTENTS—*continuing*

Lakemba Local Woman of the Year Awards	58
Hawkesbury Local Grandparent of the Year	58
Tribute to Aunty Bertha Kapeen	59
New South Wales Justices Association	59
Maltese Welfare Quiet Achievers Awards	59
Cronulla Electorate Public Service Medal Recipients	59
St George Men's Shed	60
Manning Valley Drama Students	60
Private Members' Statements	60
Housing NSW and Christopher Emery	60
Choppers for Charity	61
Coffs Harbour Foreshore	62
Cronulla Seniors Festival Awards	63
T3 Bankstown Line	64
Tribute to Gordon Braithwaite	65
Penrith Electorate Infrastructure	65
Fairfield Hospital Maternity Unit	66
Sydney Opera House Renewal Projects	67
Waverley Action for Youth Services	68
Western Sydney Incinerator Proposal	68
Midcoast Council	69
Hawkesbury-Hills Student Leadership Program	70
M5 East Widening	70

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday, 9 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.]

Bills

MOTOR ACCIDENT INJURIES BILL 2017

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Finance, Services and Property) (10:12):

I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Motor Accident Injuries Bill 2017. The bill introduces a new New South Wales compulsory third party [NCTP] insurance scheme for people who are injured or lose their life as a result of a motor accident. It represents a major reform for the Berejiklian-Barilaro Government. As a result of the NCTP, the owners of the 5.3 million registered vehicles across New South Wales will see a significant reduction in their premiums. The people injured on our roads will benefit from broader coverage and greater benefits. Subject to approval by Parliament, the new scheme will start on 1 December 2017. Motorists can expect to see a gradual reduction in green slip premiums throughout the course of this year with the full reductions to be felt from day one of the new scheme. The NCTP will give people injured in accidents fast access to statutory benefits in the form of weekly income support and medical treatment and care. The focus of NCTP will be on rehabilitation of injured road users so they can return to good health sooner. The reforms will also improve the claims and dispute resolution process and arrest insurer super profits.

Why the need for reform? Put simply, the old compulsory third party [CTP] scheme is seriously broken. The adversarial nature of the scheme means that only 6 per cent of benefits are paid out in the first year, and 22 per cent by the second year. The majority of payments to injured road users do not start flowing until years three, four and five. Injured road users receive only 45¢ in every green slip dollar, with the balance being subsumed in costs. This is symptomatic of a grossly inefficient scheme. Under the new scheme, 55 per cent of benefits will be paid in year one, and 65 per cent by year two. In simple terms, this means that injured people on our roads will receive better payments faster so that they can focus on rehabilitation and return to good health, rather than being left out of pocket while a protracted dispute between lawyers and insurers ensues. Under the reforms, 57 per cent of a premium dollar will go to injured people, of which 65 per cent will be paid to those people with more serious injuries. On 22 February 2017, the *Daily Telegraph* published on page 20 an editorial entitled, "Green Slip is an Insult". The editorial stated:

The green slip scheme strongly resembles a still-running terminal older vehicle. ... It's a busted device that arguably costs more to keep running than the scheme, so the aim of the reform is a tough one. ... Any overhaul might not be sufficient. This baby could be better off sold for scrap.

I agree with the *Daily Telegraph*. The people of New South Wales do not need a patched-up old jalopy. The Motor Accidents Compensation Act 1999 is that jalopy, which is why we are sending it straight to the wrecking yard. The people of New South Wales deserve a brand-new car with a smart engine. The Motor Accident Injuries Bill 2017 that delivers NCTP is a brand-new bill. The Government has consulted widely throughout this reform. The constructive input and broad support from the key stakeholders has been crucial to shaping this bill. I now turn to the details of the bill. The bill establishes a hybrid scheme. It delivers statutory benefits for injured road users with injuries other than soft tissue or minor psychological injuries, regardless of fault, while retaining the right to claim modified common law damages for those able to establish fault.

The Lifetime Care and Support Scheme for severely injured people is not affected by the reforms. One of the landmark changes in the bill will see all injured people receive support soon after they lodge a claim. Part 3 of the bill includes provisions for a statutory income, medical and care benefits for up to six months for all injured people, without any need for fault to be proven. At the moment, at-fault drivers can only claim a maximum of

\$5,000 under the accident notification form. This includes drivers, for instance, who may have been injured due to a momentary lapse in concentration or being blinded by the sun. The Government believes denying those people adequate support is not fair and only delays their recovery. NCTP will extend coverage by providing a six-month safety net for all at-fault drivers.

When the only injury is soft tissue or minor psychological injury, statutory benefits for loss of income and treatment and care will be available for up to six months. All other injured people who are not mostly at fault will be entitled to additional income support and treatment and care. Under division 3.3, people with moderate level injuries, up to and including 10 per cent whole person impairment [WPI] will receive regular income benefits of up to 95 per cent of pre-injury weekly earnings for the first three months after an accident and up to 80 or 85 per cent of pre-injury weekly earnings after that. The maximum weekly payment will be indexed and capped at 2½ times average weekly earnings, or \$3,853.

Income benefits will be paid for up to two years for injured people not mostly at fault. However, if an injured person has continuing needs beyond two years, and has made a common law claim, income benefits will be paid for up to three years. Income benefits will be subject to the injured person's capacity to earn income, with insurers able to regularly assess the person's earning capacity. This is to ensure that injured people who have the capacity to return to employment stay off work only as long as is necessary to support their recovery. If there is contributory negligence, such as not wearing a seatbelt or helmet in the case of a motorcyclist, payments for loss of earnings or earning capacity are subject to being reduced after six months. For injured people who are not mostly at fault and do not have soft tissue or minor psychological injuries, reasonable medical and commercial attendant care costs will be payable for life, if needed. Insurers will be responsible for claimant medical and care costs for up to five years and the Lifetime Care and Support Authority will be responsible for those costs after five years. gratuitous care by family and friends will not be payable. For people with more serious injuries—above 10 per cent of WPI—statutory weekly benefit payments will be paid for up to five years if a common law damages claim has been made. People with such injuries will also be entitled to medical treatment, rehabilitation and commercial care for life.

If someone loses their life in a motor accident, part 3 provides statutory benefits for reasonable funeral expenses. Claims for economic loss can also be made where dependents of the deceased can prove another driver was at fault. Part 4 of the bill retains access to modified common law damages for injured people who can establish another driver was at fault, and do not have soft tissue or minor psychological injuries. This means people with injuries less than or equal to 10 per cent of whole person impairment will continue to be able to make a claim under common law for economic loss. Those with injuries above 10 per cent WPI will be able to make claims for economic loss as well as pain and suffering. The cap for non-economic loss payments for pain and suffering will be \$521,000—which is the current cap under the existing scheme—and indexed. It should be stressed that such a person with ongoing needs will remain entitled to defined medical and care expenses for life, if needed.

The bill will reduce costs in a number of ways. The introduction of statutory and no-fault benefits under part 3 will reduce legal costs and the adversarial nature of the scheme because injured people will no longer have to lodge a common law damages claim to get compensation for their injuries. Costs will be further reduced by the removal under part 4 of access to common law damages for soft tissue and minor psychological and psychiatric injuries, which have contributed to a large spike in scheme costs and reduced the proportion of benefits going to those with more serious injuries.

The bill also tackles cost by allowing the regulation of legal fees that injured people can be charged. It allows for both the fixing of maximum legal costs by reference to the amount recovered by the claimant and a fee-for-service model. I have seen too many cases of injured people being left with a small fraction of their original payout after legal, insurance and other costs have been taken out. In one case an injured person received a payout of \$150,000 but was left with only \$60,000 after insurance and legal costs were deducted. In another instance, an injured person received a payout of \$40,000 but ended up with just \$479 in their pocket.

The introduction of statutory benefits should allow insurers to price risk more accurately, ensuring more funds flow to injured people when they need it, particularly the more seriously injured. Crucially, eliminating insurer super profits will also help reduce green slip premiums. The Government's actuaries estimate the reforms will produce statewide average premium reductions of more than \$100. This will be welcome news for New South Wales vehicle owners, who pay on average \$635 for a premium—the highest in Australia. In Sydney, this runs to more than \$700 for the average family car. This is a real social equity issue.

As a further safeguard against high premiums, part 2 of the bill confirms the regulator's power to impose a risk equalisation mechanism to stop insurers targeting low risks and avoiding high risks. This will lead to more price competition and encourage potential new market entrants. In addition, a profit normalisation mechanism during the transition to the new scheme will ensure any insurer super profits are returned to vehicle owners. The State Insurance Regulatory Authority [SIRA] will review the ongoing need for this power three years after it

commences. SIRA will be empowered to collect and regularly publish a range of insurer profit, filing and loss ratio information. Part 2 of the bill boosts the regulator's powers to regulate premiums, including the ability to reject a premium an insurer proposes to charge if it is deemed excessive or does not comply with the premium guidelines. As part of this, division 2.3 gives SIRA additional powers to place limits on what it considers unreasonable assumptions by insurers in relation to superimposed inflation and insurer expenses.

Taxis will also be significant beneficiaries under the legislation. Sydney taxi owners currently pay on average around \$8,000 for their green slip premiums, and country taxi owners pay almost \$5,000. Under the reforms, average taxi premiums are expected to fall by up to 40 per cent. Green slips are one of the major cost components in keeping a taxi on the road, so these reforms will significantly relieve pressure on the industry. Division 2.3 of the bill establishes a new premium-setting process for green slips for taxis and rideshare vehicles which will create a more level playing field for point-to-point transport providers. Premiums for taxis and rideshare operators will comprise a base premium with a top-up or refund based on their vehicle usage to ensure CTP insurance accurately reflects a motor vehicle's risk and usage.

These reforms respond to concerns raised by the New South Wales taxi industry. The Chief Executive Officer [CEO] of the NSW Taxi Council, Mr Roy Wakelin-King, said in September 2016, "Without reform to the current CTP scheme, owning and operating a taxi could become uneconomic when compared to ridesharing and this is clearly not in the public interest." Having been briefed on the proposed reform, Mr Wakelin-King said in a letter dated 6 March 2017: "The proposed reforms achieve significant saving for taxis, it will also achieve competitive neutrality across the point-to-point transport sector." His letter went on to say, "...we are greatly heartened by this approach".

Importantly, the bill is also designed to reduce fraudulent and exaggerated claims. Fraud and exaggeration currently costs New South Wales motorists as much as \$400 million per year and adds about \$75 to the cost of each green slip. Parts 3 and 4 of the bill will substantially reduce opportunities for fraudulent and exaggerated claims by providing statutory benefits for soft tissue and minor psychological injuries for up to six months and removing access to the common law system. Part 10 of the bill will give the regulator stronger powers to investigate fraud as well as for prosecution and enforcement, and penalties will be increased for people abusing the system.

Part 7 of the bill establishes a new and enhanced dispute resolution model. If disputes do arise in a claim, this new model requires much more robust decision-making by insurers, and provides an independent dispute resolution service for disputes to be resolved independently, flexibly, fairly, cost-effectively and quickly. The State Insurance Regulatory Authority will also establish a claimant support service to provide injured people with assistance with completing and lodging forms as well as advice on claims and dispute processes. Part 10 of the bill will introduce enhanced data collection and reporting, and real-time performance monitoring of insurer behaviour and claims experience, to enable SIRA to better regulate the scheme.

CTP reform is very difficult reform. That is why no government has successfully navigated it in nearly two decades. Former State Government Minister John Della Bosca said attempting CTP reform was akin to the first 30 minutes of *Saving Private Ryan*. John was right. The battle over CTP reform for many years has been akin to a war. The brunt of that battle has been borne by New South Wales motorists. That changes today. JFK—John F. Kennedy—famously popularised the Italian saying that victory has 100 fathers and defeat is an orphan:

La vittoria trova cento padri, a nessuno vuole riconoscere l'insuccesso.

The CTP reform contained in this new bill has many fathers and many mothers and without their contribution the Government and I would not be in a position today to deliver this monumental win for the motorists of New South Wales. The reforms contained in this bill represent an authentic victory. It will be a success for the people of New South Wales by dint of the many authors who have contributed their time, energy and intellectual rigour to its creation. I place on record my sincere appreciation to each and every one of them. I will list them, in no particular order: immediate past president of the Law Society of New South Wales Gary Ulman; current President Pauline Wright and long-serving Chief Executive Officer Michael Tidball; President of the New South Wales Bar Association Noel Hutley, SC; Deputy Executive Director Alastair McConnachie; and Common Law Committee member Elizabeth Welsh.

I especially thank Andrew Stone, SC, who in many ways is the godfather of CTP in New South Wales. He is a man who wears many hats, and many bow ties, including those of the New South Wales Bar Association and the Australian Lawyers Alliance. His knowledge of the scheme has been invaluable along the way. I acknowledge and thank Roshana May, New South Wales Branch President of the Australian Lawyers Alliance and Andrew Christopoulos, New South Wales Branch Secretary. From the insurance industry, I thank and acknowledge Robert Whelan, Chief Executive Officer of the Insurance Council of Australia; Vicki Mullen and Richard Shields of the Insurance Council of Australia; Anthony Day of Suncorp; George Karagiannakis and

Anthony Justice of Insurance Australia Group; Niran Peiris, Tony Mobbs and Nicholas Schofield of Allianz; and Steve Rivers and Kate O'Loughlin of QBE.

I also pay tribute to Roy Wakelin-King, CEO of the NSW Taxi Council. Taxi drivers, owners and operators of this State are lucky to have a man of Roy's ilk at the helm. I also acknowledge David Holmes, CEO of GoCatch, and David Rohrheim, CEO of Uber, as well as Jessika Loefstadt, Manager of Public Policy and Government Relations at Uber. I acknowledge the significant work undertaken by previous Ministers of Finance Greg Pearce, Andrew Constance and Dominic Perrottet. I also acknowledge the members of our CTP backbench reference group—Alister Henskens, Trevor Khan, Damien Tudehope, Stephen Bromhead, Shayne Mallard and Jonathon O'Dea. I thank the Premier, Gladys Berejiklian, and Deputy Premier, John Barilaro, and all my Cabinet colleagues for their support along the way.

I thank the staff in my ministerial office for work they have put in behind the scenes to get us here today—my chief of staff, Matt Dawson, in particular has been heroic as he has put his heart and soul into this legislation. I also thank my director of policy, Jane Standish, my media adviser, Will Sparling and my policy adviser, Tom Green, who have been sensational. My thanks also to Dora Shipley, our departmental liaison officer. I have promised Dora we will tackle workers compensation dispute resolution next. My final acknowledgements must go to the engine room behind this reform, and that is my agency, the Department of Finance, Services and Innovation, ably led by its outstanding secretary, Martin Hoffman. The quality and volume of work that my agency—in particular the team within SIRA—has produced is nothing short of remarkable. It is probably the best example that I think I have seen, during my six years in government, of a ministerial office and a department working in sync, as one team, towards one common goal, for the betterment of the people of this State.

I thank Anthony Lean, the CEO of SIRA, for his wise counsel and tireless efforts along the way. I also acknowledge the executive director of the Motor Accidents Insurance Regulation Division of SIRA, Andrew Nicholls, who is certainly the godfather of CTP within government. He is a walking Encyclopaedia Britannica on CTP. I thank him for taking all my late-night and early-morning phone calls and brushing up on my knowledge of the scheme before a radio interview or Cabinet meeting. Other members of the SIRA team I must thank are Christian Fanker, CTP Reform Project Director, Sharon Mooney, Louise Briffa, Theresa Fairman and Catherine Ellis, and the hundreds of other unsung heroes who have played a role in the reform process. I also acknowledge Cameron Player, Executive Director of Dispute Resolution Services, as well as Dr Ian Harris and Professor Ian Cameron. I also acknowledge the magnificent contribution of the SIRA board: Chair Trevor Matthews, Deputy Chair Nancy Milne, Abby Bloom and the most recent addition, Dr Graeme Innes. I also thank John Della Bosca for, alongside Nancy Milne, leading an extensive round of stakeholder consultation and producing a top-rate report.

I conclude my thanks by acknowledging one of the great "Dons" of the New South Wales Public Service: Parliamentary Counsel Don Colagiuri, SC. In the preparation of this bill, I read an email that contained a thread from the Don that was sent at 3.15 a.m. on Sunday 5 March 2017. This was a powerful reminder to me of how dedicated people have worked so hard behind the scenes to deliver this reform. For every person I acknowledged, I know there is a team of people behind them who deserve equal praise. My cascading thanks go to each of them. Finally, my greatest thanks go to the many people who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes for so many years to achieve this reform whom I have not directly or indirectly acknowledged. You know who you are. The people of New South Wales thank you. The Berejiklian-Barilaro Government is determined to deliver reform that improves the lives of the people of New South Wales. That is why I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Budget

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS 2016-17

Debate resumed from 23 February 2017.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (10:33): In my last contribution to the debate on the Budget Estimates and Related Papers 2016-17, I spoke about the \$50 million injection of funds into Bowral Hospital. This investment would not have been possible without the hard work and support of the former Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, with whom I worked closely to get this project off the ground. It will be a welcome sight for the people of Bowral when construction commences, which is expected to happen soon. As the former Minister for Mental Health and the Assistant Minister for Health, I was thrilled when it was announced that a record \$1.8 billion will be invested in New South Wales mental health services over the next financial year. This Government's commitment of \$8 million over four years for a suicide prevention fund highlights specific evidence of how that money is being spent to help the community. This funding is essential to prevent those suffering a mental illness from committing suicide, instead giving them the guidance they require to find hope in their lives.

Mental health can affect anyone, anywhere, anytime. It does not discriminate and members on both sides of this Chamber need to work together to ensure that funding is invested to help these people.

It also fills me with pride to be part of a government that is driving resources into key initiatives to transform patient health care and meet our election commitments, like the \$197 million for drug and alcohol services and prevention and harm minimisation programs addressing the scourge of drug and alcohol addiction that still greatly affects many aspects of the community. This Government is also intent on improving transport infrastructure across the State. This continues to be a major priority, and my electorate is a grateful recipient of this spending. I am sure the investment of \$2.7 billion this financial year to deliver Sydney Metro will in time free up the network so that rail users who rely on services on the Southern Highlands line, in my electorate, can reap the benefits of a more regular train service. In addition to its dependence on rail services, my electorate also relies on regular bus services. This budget provides \$1.4 billion for bus services throughout New South Wales including rural and regional bus services, which will be welcome news for those in Wollondilly.

A quality education is one of the greatest gifts that one can bestow on someone else, and this Government continues to deliver the resources required for that gift to become reality. More than \$13 billion will be invested in education. This is an increase of \$959 million from last year. Student numbers are growing across New South Wales, and that is why we are spending \$2.6 billion over the next four years to deliver vital infrastructure, including new high schools and upgrades to improve facilities at schools. As I have mentioned, we are delivering on our election commitment and we are reaping the rewards of being the first State to sign up to the Gonski funding. The importance of this investment cannot be underestimated. One school in my electorate benefiting greatly from the spending commitments is Bowral Public School, which has received \$2.076 million to upgrade the school and build new classrooms. Bowral Public School was one of the schools with a record increase in student numbers, and until now had received no money for new classrooms. That money has now been allocated, and at the other end of my electorate Wilton Public School, a new school that the former member for Wollondilly, Labor member Phil Costa—

Dr Hugh McDermott: Outstanding member.

Mr JAI ROWELL: —an absolutely outstanding member and married to a good friend of mine. When the Labor Government approved that school, it did not put in enough money to build sufficient classrooms for the kids who enrolled. We spoke to the principal and were able to allocate funding for 10 new classrooms, and that is what the budget delivered. I note that the member for Macquarie Fields was working for the former member for Wollondilly. Phil Costa was not the root of the problem; it was the Labor Government that would not give the school enough funding because it was ripping money out of education. I will support Phil Costa because he is a great guy. We are always fixing up Labor's mess with these important reforms.

As stated on many occasions, both inside and outside this place, my electorate contains two of the major dams for Sydney's water supply in Cataract Dam and Warragamba Dam. Warragamba in particular supplies Sydney with much of its drinking water. As members can imagine, water is a significant issue for the people of Wollondilly. I am very pleased to see that this budget contributes \$14.728 million out of the \$57.816 million for upgrades to the Warragamba Dam. This is just a small fraction of the total \$9.7 billion outlined in the budget to be invested in water, wastewater and energy projects, and will have a substantial and positive impact on constituents in my electorate. The Government has also allocated \$40 million for youth homelessness over four years, and I am very pleased that the Government recognises youth homelessness as a priority. Irresponsible and reckless opposition from those opposite sought to stop the long-term lease of TransGrid, which has resulted in net proceeds of \$6.6 billion. All these infrastructure projects right across New South Wales are projects that we supported.

I will now run through some local projects. These projects represent only small amounts of money, but they are projects that mean a lot to the benefiting communities. We were able to provide \$10,000 to Picton-Thirlmere-Bargo RSL for its hall enhancement project. It had been crying out to get a hall for the diggers there, but the previous Government would not spend the money. We have been able to do that. We provided \$10,000 to the Anglican Church at Wilton for a demountable building. We were able to support a project at the fantastic Warragamba preschool. The project was called "Protecting our skin and eyes from harmful sun rays" and we provided \$10,000 towards that project. Picton Rugby League Football Club was given \$20,000 to enable it to provide disability access to the clubhouse. These are all things that should have been done more than a decade ago, but it took this side of the House to do them.

Picton Tennis Club received \$52,500 for hardcourt tennis resurfacing. The Big Fat Smile Group was given \$2,500 towards a sail structure for the Picton Community Preschool. The Tahmoor District Cricket Club was given \$30,000 for new equipment and a new pitch. I spoke to the president of that club just last week, and members are rapt. I reckon there would have been people who would have supported the Labor Party at the last election in some of these groups, but they are leaving Labor in droves.

For Challenge Southern Highlands Inc., an organisation very dear to my heart, we supported refurbishment of the male and female toilets. For Bong Bong Race Club we supported hillside toilets to the tune of \$15,000. We put \$20,000 towards a verandah meeting area at the Anglican church at Menangle. We supported a great project of the Touched by Olivia Foundation—an all-abilities playground at Warragamba. We put \$10,000 towards that. That group has been crying out for an all-abilities playground, given all the tourists who go there, but those opposite just would not listen. We got the money to contribute to that project. It is fantastic. I am just so disappointed that those opposite would be against positive community projects in my electorate of Wollondilly in the Southern Highlands. I commend the budget to the House.

Business interrupted.

Business of the House

POSTPONEMENT OF BUSINESS

Mr CLAYTON BARR: In accordance with Standing Order 101, I postpone General Business Notice of Motion (for Bills) No.1 [Discount Rate Reduction (Miscellaneous Acts Amendment) Bill 2017].

Bills

PUBLIC HEALTH (MEDICINAL CANNABIS) BILL 2017

First Reading

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Luke Foley, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (10:43): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill seeks to decriminalise the use and possession of cannabis for medical purposes. It is about restoring dignity to people with a terminal illness or serious medical condition who are seeking temporary relief from their pain and suffering. By passing this legislation, we can remove unnecessary hurdles for sufferers of terminal and chronic illnesses. Seeking respite from relentless and unwavering illness should not be a criminal offence. It should be met with our sympathy and support. If we have the ability to relieve someone's pain and suffering then we should do it.

We know that for some people with terminal illnesses and very serious illnesses, medicinal cannabis is the only effective form of pain relief. They should not be treated as criminals under our legal system. If those opposite sincerely believe in medicinal cannabis, they will vote for this bill—because it is time to act. The bill adopts key recommendations of the New South Wales Legislative Council inquiry into the use of cannabis for medicinal purposes. The recommendations received unanimous support from five political parties. I turn now to the details of the bill. The purpose of the bill is to protect medicinal cannabis users, and their carers, from liability under the criminal laws of this State. Recommendation 2 of the Legislative Council report urged:

That the NSW Government introduce an amendment to the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985 to add a complete defence to the use and possession of cannabis, so as to cover the authorised medical use of cannabis by patients with terminal illness and those who have moved from HIV infection to AIDS. The features of this system would include:

- provision of a complete defence from arrest and prosecution for the use of cannabis and possession of up to 15 grams of dry cannabis or equivalent amounts of other cannabis products, and equipment for the administration of cannabis, by the patient;
- provision of a complete defence from arrest and prosecution for the possession and supply of up to 15 grams of dry cannabis or equivalent amounts of other cannabis products, and equipment for the administration of cannabis, by the patient's carer;
- that the defence be restricted to persons listed on a register of 'authorised cannabis patients and carers', with eligibility contingent upon certification by the patient's treating specialist medical practitioner that the patient is diagnosed with a specified condition;
- the defence would only apply where the use and supply of cannabis does not occur in a public place; and
- a review of the amendment commence within three years of the date of commencement.

This recommendation responded to the compelling evidence given to the committee. While the recommendation was limited to benefiting those with a terminal illness, this bill also extends to those with a serious medical condition. Since the committee's report was delivered in 2013, the evidence from those suffering chronic pain that is unable to be treated by conventional medicine, or where the side effects of conventional medicine seriously compromise quality of life, has convinced me and the NSW Labor Opposition that we need to go further to provide

more options for pain management. There is one other departure from that recommendation which I will outline later in this speech.

Part 1 of the bill provides the key building blocks for the scheme we seek to create. Clause 3 sets out the definitions used in the legislation, which are aligned with those in the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985. The central definition is what is meant by the term "cannabis". It is defined as "cannabis leaf, cannabis oil, cannabis resin; a preparation, admixture, extract of other substance containing any proportion of cannabis leaf, oil or resin; or a substance declared by the regulations to be cannabis". The regulations may also exclude any substance from being "cannabis" for the purposes of the legislation. This is a safety valve, should it be needed, to guard against the use of artificial substances or compounds not presently contemplated as being cannabis, which do not have the beneficial effects and which may constitute a danger to those who consume or use the material.

Clause 4 defines "terminal" or "serious medical condition". This is central to the scheme since, to be eligible to be registered as a medicinal user of cannabis, a person must suffer from a terminal or serious illness. Reflecting the deliberation of the Legislative Council committee, the bill defines a terminal illness as an illness or condition that is likely to result in death in a reasonably foreseeable period. Serious illness is defined to be a serious illness or condition that is likely to result, and to continue to result, in a significant reduction in the affected person's quality of life, whether that is from the symptoms of the illness or condition or from its treatment. These are, I believe, commonsense definitions, able to be readily understood and accepted by laypersons and experts alike.

The definitions are, if you like, a narrative gateway into the system of medicinal cannabis use. If people suffer an illness or condition as defined, then they can seek registration under part 2 of this bill. That part sets out a detailed regime for registration that, at its heart, requires a person to have a medical certificate certifying that they suffer from the terminal or serious illness as claimed. Outside terminal conditions, there will need to be a judgement formed by the regulator, in this case the Secretary of the Department of Health in New South Wales, that the illness or condition does warrant the description of serious. To assist in this process and to provide a safeguard against an overly bureaucratic approach, clause 4 (2) sets out a range of conditions that are for the purposes of this legislation serious.

They are: severe intractable epilepsy, human immunodeficiency virus [HIV], motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis, the neurological disorder known as stiff person syndrome, severe and treatment-resistant nausea and vomiting due to chemotherapy, or pain associated with cancer, or neuropathic pain. These conditions have been chosen, in part based upon the evidence to the Legislative Council inquiry, but also from dialogue with sufferers of chronic or permanent conditions for which traditional, Western pharmaceutical medical care is not able to adequately provide relief, at least not without other negative consequences. This provision also enables further conditions to be declared to be a terminal or serious illness by regulation. As I have already mentioned, the bill will achieve its aims by establishing, by law, a registration scheme for medicinal users of cannabis and their carers. This is drawn from recommendation 3 of the Legislative Council Select Committee report which provided, relevantly:

That ... the NSW Ministry of Health establish and administer a register of 'authorised cannabis patients and carers' certified by the patient's treating specialist medical practitioner and issue patients and carers on this register with a photo identity card verifying that they qualify for exemption from arrest and prosecution.

While we understand that the Health Department is currently undertaking such a process administratively, we do not know what safeguards are in place or the conditions that are put upon any such registration. Because the registration is intended to protect persons from the application of the criminal law, it must be regulated openly and by law. Very importantly, we do not think it satisfactory to have any scheme in this area dependent upon police officers being asked simply to not enforce the existing law by the Executive Government. At its heart, such an approach is anti-democratic and dangerous. Laws must be properly enforced. If the law is no good, or outdated, or does not meet community expectations and needs, let us have the courage and honesty to say so—and to change the law.

Under Part 2 of the bill, the health secretary is empowered to register a person as a medicinal user of cannabis, or a carer of a registered medicinal user of cannabis. The body of the arrangement is found in clause 5. Any application for registration as a medicinal user must also be accompanied by a medical certificate certifying as to the terminal or serious medical condition suffered by the person. Any application for registration as a medicinal user of cannabis or carer of a registered medicinal user of cannabis must be in the approved form and be accompanied by the required proof of identity. To be able to be registered as a medicinal user, the applicant must have a terminal or serious medical condition as defined, have their principal place of residence in New South Wales, and meet any other requirements in the regulations, and not otherwise be disqualified from registration.

A person may be registered as a carer only if they have the care of, or are assisting in the care of, a person who is a registered medicinal user of cannabis, and the registered medicinal user of cannabis consents to

registration of the person as their carer. A carer's principal place of residence must also be in New South Wales, and they must meet any other requirement set out in the regulations, and not otherwise be disqualified from registration. An application may be made on behalf of a child by the parents or guardians of the child. Registration as a medicinal user of cannabis, or carer of a medicinal user of cannabis, remains in force for a period set out in the regulations, and may be renewed.

There is also a regime, found in clause 6, for the cancellation of any registration. The health secretary may cancel a person's registration as a medicinal user or carer if satisfied that the registration was obtained improperly, or the person is not eligible to be registered as a medicinal user or carer, or the person has committed more than one offence against this Act or the regulations. Other grounds for cancellation may also be provided for in the regulations. Before the Secretary of the Ministry of Health takes any action, he or she must provide notice to the person or, in the case of a child, the guardian, providing the reasons and allowing at least 14 days to make submissions in relation to the proposed cancellation.

The health secretary must cancel any registration if application is made by a registered medicinal cannabis user for that cancellation. Clause 7 provides a regime for the inspection of any registration and the return of any certificate. The bill before this House will also permit the creation of a lawful supply chain of medicinal cannabis, something the Legislative Council committee was not able to definitively deal with, given the legal complexity involved and the time constraints under which its inquiry took place. However, it is worth noting that the committee did not ignore this crucial aspect. Recommendation 4 provided:

That the NSW Ministry of Health and Department of Attorney General and Justice give further and detailed consideration to the issues surrounding lawful supply of crude cannabis products for medical purposes.

It is unsatisfactory, to say the least, that this appears to not have occurred in the more than three years since that inquiry reported to the Parliament. While I note the extensive measures enacted under similar legislation in both Victoria and Queensland, the sheer volume of the bills considered by those Parliaments discloses the legal complexity involved in making this idea a practical reality. To achieve the same in this State would involve extensive discussions with multiple agencies, both here and at Commonwealth level, and amendments to literally dozens of different pieces of legislation. Victoria only includes severe intractable childhood epilepsy at this stage, with other conditions to be added in the future. Queensland does not list conditions but leaves it to the individual medical practitioner to decide whether cannabis might help.

The approach we take in this bill is a simple, facilitative measure found in part 3, clause 8, which will enable the State to establish a scheme for authorising the activities needed to create a lawful supply chain. This will include the cultivation and harvesting of cannabis plants; the manufacture or production of cannabis; as well as the storing and supplying of cannabis. The regulations will also permit the creation of a scheme for the granting of any necessary licences, permits or other authorities for the activities, including requirements for criminal record checks or other eligibility requirements that are determined as necessary and prudent, the imposition, variation or revocation of conditions of licences, permits or other authorities. This will extend also to provision for the suspension or cancellation of any licence, permit or other authority.

The activities that a registered user of medicinal cannabis is lawfully able to engage in, and the activities lawfully permitted to a carer, are set out in part 4, clause 9. The provision will permit the administration of cannabis by a registered user to himself or herself, and the administration, or assistance in the administration, of cannabis by a carer to the registered medicinal user. It will also allow registered users and carers to possess cannabis, and equipment for use in the administration of cannabis.

Clause 9 subclauses (1) (c) and (2) (c) will permit registered users and carers to also manufacture or produce cannabis by making a preparation or admixture, either at the user's principal place of residence or at the carer's principal place of residence. In addition, it will permit registered carers to supply cannabis and equipment for use in the administration of cannabis, to the registered medicinal user. Each of these activities are made lawful only to relieve a registered user's terminal or serious medical condition, and only to the extent it is authorised by a licence, permit or other authority under the legislation or regulations.

Clause 9 (4), together with schedules 1 and 2 to the bill, ensures the effectiveness of the regime provided for in this legislation is not adversely impacted by existing criminal law. Clause 9 (4) ensures that neither the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985 nor the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 1966 overrides any aspect of this law. Schedule 1 makes the necessary amendment to the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985, and schedule 2 amends the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 1966. Importantly, nothing in the bill excuses a registered medicinal user for any driving or other offence committed while under the influence of cannabis. Part 5 contains the offences and penalties.

Clause 10 provides that medicinal cannabis may not be administered by a registered user to him or herself or by a carer to a registered user in a public place. "Public place" is defined in clause 3 to mean a place where

members of the public are lawfully entitled, invited or permitted to be present in their capacity as members of the public, whether conditionally or unconditionally. This non-technical and commonsense definition encapsulates the intention of the Legislative Council committee report.

Clause 11 sets out the limits of cannabis that may be lawfully possessed. A registered medicinal user, or registered carer, must not possess more than 15 grams of cannabis leaf. The Legislative Council committee recommended that registration would make a person who is relevantly ill eligible to possess up to 15 grams of dry cannabis or equivalent amounts of other cannabis products. This amount was chosen because, as it noted in chapter 2 of the report, individuals in possession of up to 15 grams of dry cannabis—at least as at 2013—were able to be subject to the Cannabis Cautioning Scheme. This bill adopts that limit and also provides, in terms of the other equivalent amounts of cannabis in other forms, that a registered user or carer may possess up to one gram of cannabis oil and 2.5 grams of cannabis resin. The penalty for breach of these provisions is up to 15 penalty units, or \$1,650.

I am very conscious that the amounts set, both in the Legislative Council committee report and this bill, are relatively small. I am also aware, from conversations with users of medicinal cannabis and their carers—and particularly with the entirely remarkable Lucy Haslam—that in many cases the amounts set out are inadequate to the need being faced by those with terminal and other serious conditions. So that we may continue the conversation about what will meet those needs, and to provide the necessary flexibility, clause 11 explicitly provides that the regulations made under the legislation may authorise the possession of "other amounts" of cannabis leaf, oil and resin.

Part 6 provides for the enforcement of the legislation. Clause 12 incorporates into the bill part 8 of the Public Health Act 2010, and provides that public health authorised officers can exercise their powers under that Act to administer and enforce this legislation. Clause 13 provides for the health secretary to order the surrender or destruction of any cannabis where the registration of a registered medicinal cannabis user or carer, or any licence, permit or other authority is suspended or cancelled. A penalty of up to \$2,200 will apply for any breach of this part. As with other enactments and as foreshadowed earlier in my speech, regulations will be able to be made under this law that flesh out important aspects of the operation of the proposed scheme.

Clause 15 provides for a review of the legislation to determine whether the policy objectives remain valid, and whether the terms of the law remain appropriate for securing those objectives. While most reviews of this kind take place after five years of a law being in operation, consistent with recommendation No. 3 of the Legislative Council report and reflective of its novel approach, this bill provides for a review to be undertaken as soon as possible after three years.

I urge members opposite to vote in favour of this legislation in order to alleviate the pain and suffering of so many of our fellow citizens. I cannot justify treating like criminals people who are facing terminal or extremely serious illnesses who are looking for pain relief. People who are suffering so much already should not also have to live in fear of being charged. We should not treat their parents or carers, who are simply seeking to help their loved one, like criminals. I have spoken to parents who are concerned that when they access a small amount of cannabis to relieve their child's suffering they face the possibility of criminal charges being laid. A parent buying a small amount of cannabis for a child with severe epilepsy should never be treated as a criminal. Let us do the right thing here, and let us do it now. I commend the bill to the House, and I urge those opposite to support it. It is long overdue.

Debate adjourned.

STEEL INDUSTRY PROTECTION BILL 2016

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 16 February 2017.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (11:06): I will begin my contribution to debate on the Steel Industry Protection Bill 2016 by reiterating the Government's response to its introduction. The Government opposes Mr Shoebridge's bill because, if enacted, it would violate free trade agreements and expose sectors such as agriculture, natural resources and professional services to tariffs and other restrictive measures. It would also increase the cost of steel by 20 per cent and would jeopardise the hospital, highway and infrastructure projects that this Government is delivering. In addition, it would increase red tape for government agencies, local government authorities and suppliers. It would force tens of thousands of suppliers, including small and medium enterprises, to create and duplicate supply chains—one for the Government and one for everyone else. The bill also ignores the need for industry to be innovative and more competitive, and it will not secure the long-term future of the domestic steel industry.

The Government is a strong supporter of the local steel industry. Our State is leading the nation in the delivery of roads, rail and other infrastructure, making the New South Wales Government the largest purchaser of steel in the nation. Between 2012 and 2015, almost 70 per cent of the Government's \$26 billion in construction spend went to New South Wales-based suppliers. That included huge quantities of Australian steel. For example, the Pacific Highway Kempsey bypass used 400 massive steel piling tubes produced in Brisbane and Coffs Harbour. The majority of the steel used in the M4 widening project was Australian sourced. Significant quantities of Australian steel are also being used in the Sydney Metro Northwest, Wynyard Walk and the Barangaroo Ferry Hub.

Among other measures to support the local steel industry, the New South Wales Government acted decisively and provided \$60 million in payroll tax relief to BlueScope to keep steel production at Port Kembla. The New South Wales Government is working hard with the Australian Steel Institute [ASI] and Standards Australia to develop a new standard for the fabrication and erection of structural steel. This standard will apply to New South Wales infrastructure projects, assuring the quality and safety of projects while also ensuring that domestic steel suppliers are not competing with lower quality steel sourced from overseas.

Comprehensive data on how much steel is being used in New South Wales infrastructure projects and the source of the steel does not exist. In most circumstances contractors are responsible for sourcing the materials used in construction projects. Transport agencies have reported the following steel usage in these projects: on Sydney Metro Northwest, 100 per cent of the steel, approximately 7,000 tonnes, used to reinforce tunnels was sourced in Australia; on the Sydney Metro Northwest skytrain more than 90 per cent of all steel—roughly 550 tonnes of structural steel—was sourced in Australia; on the Princes Highway Gerringong upgrade the majority of steel was sourced in Australia; on the Foxground and Berry bypass the majority of steel was sourced in Australia and used approximately 1,500 tonnes of steel sourced from Arrium Steel, an Australian steel company. I will say that again: it was an Australian steel company.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! If the member for Strathfield casts aspersions on the Chair she will be removed from the Chamber. I remind members that under Standing Order 52 members are entitled to be heard in silence. The member for Strathfield will observe that standing order.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: On the M4 widening project the majority of steel used to support girder installation was sourced in Australia. Steel described as sourced in Australia could potentially be sourced from an Australian supplier that has imported the steel, for example, prior to further processing. Requests for information about the use of Australian steel in transport projects should be referred to the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight or the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. The ASI is continuing to work with the Construction Leadership Group, which reports to the Procurement Board, on recognising the Australian National Structural Steelwork Compliance Scheme and the new Australian Standard for the fabrication and erection of steelwork. NSW Procurement has had discussions with ASI in regard to the new standard.

New South Wales businesses were paid \$23 billion, which equates to 69 per cent of total payments, by the New South Wales Government for goods and services in the construction and facilities maintenance industries in the past five financial years. More than \$9.5 billion of that was paid directly by government agencies to New South Wales small and medium sized construction businesses. As we have heard in this Chamber on many occasions, it is the small and medium sized businesses that are driving the economy, employing people, creating jobs and doing an enormous amount to support the wider community. In addition, the larger contractors also engaged small and medium sized subcontractors.

In other words, New South Wales businesses are already delivering more than two-thirds of the value of goods and services in the Government's construction and facilities maintenance program, which includes infrastructure work. A large proportion of that expenditure goes to small and medium sized businesses. Virtually all of the remainder is paid to Australian businesses based in other States and Territories. Turning to the broader issue of support for local industry, our current policies are paying dividends for small businesses across regional New South Wales. I am sure the member for Parramatta is very interested in this, as there is a large number of infrastructure projects either underway or being planned for his local area.

Dr Geoff Lee: The stadium and the Powerhouse.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: There is the stadium, the light rail, the Powerhouse Museum—and the list goes on. In 2015 the Government spent \$3.1 billion across more than 37,000 businesses across regional New South Wales. New South Wales businesses are deeply embedded in this Government's supply chain, and regional businesses are very much a part of it. However, requiring those businesses to only use products sourced from particular locations is problematic in two respects. First, in a practical sense, suppliers should be free to choose where they source their products from, as long as they meet the required Australian standards.

The Government engages large and small private sector construction firms to deliver its infrastructure projects. These firms make the procurement decisions about supplies including steel. This ensures that the public benefits from the best quality product sourced at the best prices. It would be a ridiculous impost on our suppliers in the construction and maintenance fields if they had to have two sets of supply chains and inventories depending on whether they were doing New South Wales Government work or work for other clients. In addition, Australia belongs to the World Trade Organization and has signed 11 free trade agreements to eliminate tariffs and other restrictions on trade between countries.

Removing such restrictions benefits Australian firms and consumers through access to global markets. Free trade agreements with Japan, Korea, Chile and the United States specifically apply to State Government procurement activities. A law requiring the use of Australian made steel on all New South Wales Government infrastructure projects would likely breach the terms of those free trade agreements. This could potentially result in the New South Wales Government making compensation payments to overseas suppliers or allowing other countries to place tariffs on Australian exports. In many cases, the markets our exporters gain access to through free trade agreements are much larger than what is available in Australia. This is why I strongly oppose this bill.

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (11:16): The Steel Industry Protection Bill 2016 is important to NSW Labor because it is critically important to the Illawarra region. It is about supporting the jobs of tens of thousands of residents of that region. The bill is also important to Western Sydney families and industry because of the effect that the closure of the steel would have on associated industries and employment in the Western Sydney region. This Government under three different Premiers has weakened the manufacturing industry in New South Wales by refusing to use a majority of local steel in State Government infrastructure projects. NSW Labor is seeking a change in government policy to increase the use of local steel in government projects and to improve the sustainability of the steel industry in this State.

The steel industry and associated industries employ more than 100,000 people nationwide and tens of thousands in the Western Sydney basin. A local example of the New South Wales Government's failure to support local industry in government projects is Goldstein Eswood, based in Smithfield in the Prospect electorate. Goldstein Eswood is a local manufacturer of commercial kitchen equipment. It has been using Australian steel since 1911. It is a local employer in Western Sydney with more than 120 people directly employed. The company was not invited to tender for works to construct a number of major projects in New South Wales. One in particular was at Ryde TAFE. Despite having contracted with the Government for various projects for more than a century, the company was not even considered for tender by the Department of Finance, Services and Innovation.

Goldstein Eswood believes that the contract will go to a foreign steel fabricator, using foreign-made steel. In fact, the equipment being used in TAFE kitchens often comes from Canada, the United States and New Zealand—countries that are not much cheaper than Australia, if at all. It is a great shame for the businesses and workers in Western Sydney who have the skill, expertise, experience and willingness to provide the Government with steel equipment. The steel industry is affected by factors beyond its control. The value of the Australian dollar, the amount of construction requiring steel across the country and even trade deals such as the Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement can affect thousands of steel industry jobs in New South Wales. These factors change rapidly, depriving 100,000 people in the steel industry of the certainty of their family's financial security. Communities live and die by the security of employment and strength of their industries. Not only could the Illawarra face economic depression as the steel industry fades but the knock-on effect to local and industrial manufacturing would also be significant, especially in regional cities and Western Sydney.

NSW Labor supports: ensuring that public infrastructure projects are required to use 90 per cent Australian-made steel that meets Australian standards and certification; setting a local content requirement of 90 per cent Australian-made steel for all significant public infrastructure projects in New South Wales; and using the State infrastructure plan to provide indicative details of future demand for steel in infrastructure projects, which will set up a known pipeline for Australian steel producers to plan for this demand. We also support amending the State's procurement policy to assess whole-of-life calculations for public infrastructure including the cost of transport, insurance, assembly and maintenance, as well as environmental impacts, supply chain activity, employment and regional development objectives. Further, we support establishing a New South Wales steel industry advocate to ensure that the new standards for steel use are complied with. The advocate would be based in the Illawarra.

We support announcing a steel and fabrication sector review in New South Wales to be conducted by the New South Wales steel industry advocate, focusing on supply chain capability of the sector; co-ordination of innovation, research and development; and investments in plant and equipment in the sector. These are reasonable targets which will significantly increase jobs and the financial security of more than 100,000 families. For every \$1 million of local manufacturing output, \$225,300 of tax revenue is generated and \$64,900 worth of welfare benefits is saved. The costs are small when compared with the positive impact that Labor's policy would have on

jobs and the economy. This policy would cost \$61 million to \$80 million annually, which is 0.2 per cent of the total construction costs of public projects. That is nothing compared with the multi-billion dollar blowouts of the light rail and WestConnex.

Other States around Australia have already implemented government procurement policies that favour locally produced and sustainable steel. For example, Victoria is using 90 per cent local steel in its east-west highway projects. Sadly, the Federal Coalition Government has not supported our steel industry and has imposed an extra \$4 million in duty on New South Wales steel. In addition, 600 kilometres of rail line operated by the Australian Rail Track Corporation was not subject to a tender process. It is worth noting that the majority of submissions made to the Senate inquiry into Australian steel, which was conducted last year, suggested a change to procurement policy by Federal, State and Territory governments, including using 90 per cent Australian steel in publicly funded infrastructure projects.

In the electorate of Prospect, where steel fabrication is a significant industry, opportunities exist to improve supply chain capability and coordination in innovation, research and development. Investment in plant and equipment is declining. This trend has been rightfully criticised by industry stakeholders. This could change quickly if the New South Wales Government adopts a local steel procurement policy. Labor's policy is cost-effective and has the potential to enormously benefit the New South Wales economy. Therefore, I join my Opposition colleagues in supporting the bill and condemning the New South Wales Government for failing to support the steel industry in our State.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) (11:23): I oppose the Steel Industry Protection Bill 2016. I welcome the guests in the gallery, who are witnessing a classic debate about important issues in our State and nation. I commend Mr Shoebridge for introducing this bill to Parliament, but, unfortunately, it is not the answer. Make no mistake, it is not easy for families and workers in the steel industry. The industry is changing, and that will affect Australia's place not only in the world but also in free trade and manufacturing.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that under Standing Order 52 members are entitled to be heard in silence.

Dr GEOFF LEE: The Government must do everything it can to assist all communities to transition from industries that do not have a high competitive advantage to industries that can lead the world in exports. Australia can make steel; we have plenty of iron ore and high-quality coal. Australia has the technology to manufacture steel. However, Australia has high energy costs, high environmental standards, high labour costs and low-scale economics compared with our international competitors. That puts the Australian and New South Wales steel manufacturing industry at a distinct disadvantage. No-one would deny that it is important to assist people living in traditional steel manufacturing communities that are in transition. However, the bill advocates protectionism, which is not the way forward.

The member for Tweed outlined some of the reasons that the New South Wales Government opposes the bill. This bill would violate our free trade agreements, exposing sectors such as agriculture, natural resources and professional services to tariffs and other measures. It will increase the cost of steel by 20 per cent, putting the hospitals, highways and infrastructure projects that the Government is delivering in jeopardy. The bill will add red tape for government agencies, local councils and suppliers and will force tens of thousands of suppliers, including small and medium enterprises, to create duplicate supply chains—one for the Government and one for everybody else. The bill ignores a need for the industry to innovate and become more competitive.

The bill is bad for the infrastructure that the Government is delivering for the benefit of the people of New South Wales and Western Sydney. The bill challenges the fundamental economic question: where does Australia fit in the global economy? For more than 30 years we have been reducing our trade barriers and initiating free trade agreements to capitalise on Australia's competitive advantages. This has made our industries more competitive and our nation and its people more prosperous. It has also opened up new opportunities to grow industries and jobs of the future.

The New South Wales Government is already a strong supporter of the local steel industry. In fact, it is the largest purchaser of steel in the nation. Between 2012 and 2015, almost 70 per cent of our \$26 billion of construction spending went to suppliers based in New South Wales and included huge quantities of Australian steel. The member for Tweed outlined some of those projects. The Coalition Government believes in delivering infrastructure. We are delivering infrastructure totalling \$72 billion, which is a record amount, and there is more to come. It is about increasing the quantity of projects in order to use more steel and grow the industry. It is not about closing our barriers. The bill threatens Australia's position as a free trade nation and its future in free trade. It relies on a philosophical debate between free trade and protectionism. That is why I oppose the bill.

Australia and especially New South Wales are at a crossroads of an evolving industry and deciding the best way to set up the economy for this century and for future generations. Australia is a trading nation. Our prosperity relies in many ways on our ability to trade goods and services and to attract capital and develop relationships with our strategic world partners. Australia has a surplus of resources in many sectors such as agriculture, energy and mineral resources. In some areas we have more resources than our population could ever use. To a large degree, the wealth of Australia and New South Wales is reliant upon the free trade of commodities with other nations, especially in Asia, now and into the future. This bill threatens that trade.

When we trade with our partners we benefit from a surplus of resources which generates capital to purchase what we do not have from them. Trade creates partnerships and links between nations. Nations that are strong trading partners become close allies and are more likely to cooperate as they gain a better understanding of one another and realise that mutual prosperity is beneficial to all. Partnerships can be developed in the areas of security cooperation, defence, environmental agreements and more. Trade brings nations together as they work towards the mutual interests of a peaceful, harmonious and prosperous world. However, protectionist policies will see other countries putting in place their own retaliatory tariffs which will impact on local businesses by increasing export prices and make it harder for them to compete in a global market.

Tariff costs are passed on to consumers through higher prices, thus stoking inflation which in turn leads to fewer exports and less capital entering New South Wales. It also slows economic growth, which leads to fewer jobs and less prosperity for our State. Free trade makes Australian exports more competitive in the global marketplace. Free trade agreements with countries that may have placed tariffs on imported goods levels the playing field for Australian exporters and enables us to compete more readily in an open market that is not stymied by protectionism. Australia and New South Wales benefit from free trade, and we need free trade if we are to continue to prosper. The world is a competitive place. We cannot afford to stick our heads in the sand and hope that Australia will be successful. We must reduce our barriers to free trade as it will bring prosperity for all Australians and help us to develop our industries.

I have been fortunate enough to have been involved in the education industry, which benefits from Australia's competitive advantage. Education is our third highest export at the moment—at just on \$20 billion. This nation and this State should not place successful industries, such as the education industry, at risk by creating barriers. This bill provides us with interesting choices in the future but I need only to look at the Parramatta electorate to understand what needs to be done. The future of Australia lies not just in supplying agricultural and mining products but also in supplying tertiary professional services to the FinTech market, education and the insurance industry. The future of Australia depends on its ability to innovate and to create high-value products that can be exported. This bill, which is nothing more than a protectionist strategy, will result in the demise of that for which we have been working for 30 years. For those reasons I oppose the bill.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (11:33): On behalf of The Greens, I speak in debate on the Steel Industry Protection Bill 2016. After listening to this debate I had a flashback to my economics days in university. In Macroeconomics 101 we were told that free markets bring about peace and prosperity and ensure that the economy continues to work for everyone—and that brooks no criticism. Unfortunately, even if that economic theory was true—it has been significantly debunked—we do not have perfect market competition. We do not have perfect information, which is what economic modelling would require for that theory to be true. The international market is dysfunctional. The international market has an enormous glut of steel which in large part was caused by regional officials in China wanting to support their blast furnaces rather than promote employment. There are also significant issues around the dumping of steel products at below the cost of production.

Australian workers and manufacturers can compete, but they cannot do so in a market where there is a glut of steel as a result of a distortion of market principles. The certification of steel being brought into this country is a significant problem. Inferior quality product is masquerading as Australian quality steel. The market is in real disarray and the workers in the Illawarra and the people who are using inferior quality steel cop the brunt of that. It is up to the Government to do its best to ensure that this industry is supported. We must make sure that we level the playing field to bring back some balance and to secure the future of steelmaking in places like Port Kembla and Whyalla.

Government members said earlier that if this bill was approved the free trade world would collapse and we would be breaching free trade agreements. I bring to the attention of the House—as my colleague did in the other place—what is happening around the world. This legislation is not introducing tariffs or promoting protectionism. The Greens members are internationalists who embrace the world. We embrace diversity and multiculturalism and products and services from all around the world. We do not want to introduce tariffs to ensure that steel cannot enter this country; we want to encourage sensible procurement policies to ensure that we are protected against the irrationalities of the international market, and to ensure that our industries and workers in Australia work effectively and productively.

My colleague David Shoebridge in the other place said that when The Greens were putting this bill together they looked at that supposed bastion of the free market—the United States of America. The bill is based on a lot of the work done by legislators in states such as Pennsylvania and Illinois. The rest of world gets it; the European Union and the United States understand that they need to have a sensible balance. With a failing global market the steel industry needs to be acknowledged, recognised and supported. The United States Government introduced the Buy America Act which Government members said earlier would destroy any kind of free market arrangements or free trade agreements. More recently the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act—the so-called Obama stimulus package—included provisions that multi-billion-dollar public works projects funded by that Act needed to be made out of American steel and all manner of American raw materials and manufactured goods.

The European Union is pursuing a program slightly different from the one in this bill relating to import tariffs and anti-dumping legal challenges in response to the steel glut and slump in steel prices. People the world over are seeking to address a dysfunctional market. This is not about Australian workers being too expensive or uncompetitive, or Australian businesses not being able to deliver; this is about a dysfunctional Australian market. Members would have received a letter from the Australian Steel Institute, the peak body of the Australian steel industry, which referred to this issue. The Australian Steel Institute supports proposals to secure that procurement and ensure the industry is not destroyed by this failing international market. There is support for action within Australia and around the world, and this is exactly what the Government should be doing.

I take a moment to acknowledge that there is a good working relationship in the upper House between Labor, The Greens and crossbench members. This should set the tone for the type of approach to be taken by the Government. The Government must work constructively with all members in this place, regardless of their political persuasions, to address this dysfunctional and destructive market that is impacting on Australian workers and workers in other countries. We note that what is happening in this market is undermining the viability of steel manufacturing in Australia, which has placed pressure on local steel manufacturing.

As other contributors to the debate have described, the impacts would be significant and severe not only for the Illawarra but also for the communities of New South Wales and, indeed, this country. Workers in these factories, in Port Kembla particularly, have taken very strong action. They have agreed to a range of provisions—freezing their pay and job losses—in order to support BlueScope Steel to achieve its target of cost-cuttings, yet there are still questions about the business model. We want the company, this Government and all members of this Parliament to work constructively together to ensure that the dysfunctional international market does not destroy the conditions of workers and this important industry.

We also acknowledge the work of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, the Australian Workers Union, the Maritime Union of Australia, the South Coast Labour Council and a whole range of the trade unions for their fantastic work defending the wages and conditions of workers. These unions are protecting all people in New South Wales, because this issue affects workers not only in the steel industry but also in regional communities. The union movement, in its finest tradition, is standing up for its members and the wider community. I acknowledge union officials and members for the work they have done to protect their communities by ensuring that members have jobs for the future and therefore their communities can thrive and grow.

I draw to the attention of members of this House the 2015 report by BIS Shrapnel commissioned by the AWU that highlights the estimated cost of steel used in Australian public sector construction. The report found that currently less than 50 per cent of steel used in Australian public sector construction is produced domestically and forecast that this share would fall to 43 per cent by 2019-20, as government contractors increasingly turn to cheaper imported steel. I encourage members opposite to review the report. It is easy to highlight one project that uses a significant proportion of Australian steel, but we have to look at the overall market and particularly the trends. Currently the trends are bad and going in the wrong direction if we want to support the workers and communities of the Illawarra.

This bill is important because it does not advocate the protectionist route. It does not call on the Federal Government to impose tariffs or to lock out global steel products. Instead the bill suggests that where there is a dysfunctional market undermining the jobs and future of communities in this State, governments should act. If the Government chooses not to support this bill, it highlights a failure of leadership and how out of touch this Government is. The Greens, the crossbenchers and Labor are working constructively to ensure that we can beat back the worst excesses of a dysfunctional economic system. We support the workers of the Illawarra as well as the affected communities. We stand for a system that recognises that people and the environment should be at the centre of decision-making. We should not rely solely on blind ideology to block this bill, or on outdated economic textbooks to find a way not to protect our communities.

I thank members who support this bill—in particular the member for Keira, who brought this bill into the lower House after it received support in the Legislative Council. I thank all those members who support this

bill, and I encourage Government members to do so as well and therefore make sure we protect the steel industry for the future of the people of New South Wales.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (11:43): Having grown up and lived and worked in the Illawarra my entire life, I know how important industry and manufacturing are to our region and our economy. Like so many Illawarra families, my mum and dad met at the then BHP Steelworks in 1973. My story is no different to that of so many others who have deep connections to this important local industry. Manufacturing is as much our region's past as it can be its future. I want the right solutions to sustain this industry not just today, not just for a headline, but for the next generation of young Australians so that they can play a role in our region's proud manufacturing tradition. No matter our political persuasion, ensuring a future for jobs and opportunity in our region is something in which we should all be seriously investing.

I make it clear that I do not dispute the passion of my Labor colleagues for supporting local jobs. Members on both sides of this Chamber share that passion. In saying that, I oppose the Steel Industry Protection Bill 2016 not because I do not share the passion but because I do not share the view on how best to support our steelworks, its workers and the long-term viability of this industry. It seems on this issue we both have the same destination, but our pathways for achieving results are very different. Indeed, Labor's path is one I thought had long since been abandoned by Labor luminaries such as Bob Hawke, Paul Keating, Morris Iemma and Bob Carr.

I do not simply come to this debate in opposition; I come with a solution. As members of the House would be aware, I went to the heart of government to secure the only ask that BlueScope Steel has ever made of government, something people seem to have forgotten. I ensured the company's request for around \$60 million in payroll tax concessions was delivered. Since that announcement, BlueScope Steel has announced a major turnaround in business fortunes and even purchased greater shares in other steel manufacturing and steelmaking businesses. By supporting investments in major infrastructure delivery, I have also brought projects to our region, together with the member for South Coast, that use local steel—major projects like the Berry bypass and the Gerringong upgrade. Together these projects represent almost \$1 billion in investment with much more to come. Indeed, this Government is the largest single procurer of Australian steel, bigger than any other government or any other business.

Implicit in this bill is a criticism that the Government is not purchasing Australian steel products. Unlike those opposite who built such projects as the WIN Stadium western grandstand and Shoalhaven Correctional Centre without using an ounce of Australian steel, we have used Australian steel in our infrastructure projects and will continue to do so. The hypocrisy of the shadow Minister for the Illawarra is indeed breathtaking. Whilst he was a government functionary he was involved in the purchasing of train carriages from China using no Australian steel, yet the member for Keira parades himself as a champion of local procurement. Indeed, I sometimes wonder of my friend the member for Keira whether, if he were speaking to a convention of cannibals, he would happily offer up a missionary. It is those examples that make me wonder whether the Opposition is just saying whatever it takes to get elected and will quickly return to type.

That is why I think it is important to have a real and honest debate about what we can achieve. As I have stated in this House on previous occasions, there is a need for governments at all levels to focus not just on bottom-line figures but also on all-of-life aspects such as longevity and quality in the steel used in government procurement and projects. Australian steel is a product held to the high standards of quality. Whilst it can be challenging for Australian companies to compete with the currency and labour costs of South-East Asian nations producing steel, our product is unquestionably of superior quality and performance. That is why I will be arguing the case for steel standards to be inserted into government procurement guidelines that will mean it still gets used because it is the best, a requirement that will help keep the industry competitive and viable. As noted by none other than the Hon. Simon Crean, who was a trade union and Labor parliamentary leader, protectionism is a seriously flawed policy. He said:

When things are going bad it is very easy to blame others—to blame foreigners for taking local jobs or forcing local factories to close.

It is simple but it is wrong—especially for a trading nation like Australia ...

For us we have to trade with the rest of the world. But we will only succeed—promoting our comparative advantage—not protecting inefficient local industries.

The introduction of steel quotas would likely constitute a repudiation of our free trade agreements so that creating jobs in many other local critical export industries, like farming and agriculture, in our region could be at risk. I think Kim Beazley put it best when he stated:

The one guaranteed route towards wealth destruction lies in a downward spiral of relative protectionism.

Yet those opposite would rather fall into the seductive and populist embrace of The Greens' economic idealism than move towards solutions that we know would work and work for the long term. As an aside I find it odd that

The Greens claim to support the steel industry whilst opposing coalmining in New South Wales. Given that steel manufacturing requires coking coal, one truly wonders whether The Greens are serious or whether this is a struggle between The Greens and Labor for the hearts and votes of trade unionists. The Greens talk of corporate profits, but this bill mandates that governments purchase steel from a duopoly, which would mean bigger profits for business and inflated costs for steel, all to the inevitable detriment of schools, hospitals and roads.

This bill mandates nothing other than a tougher choice, rather than positive outcomes. The Greens' bill before the House fails to acknowledge what we all know to be true—that there are but two steel manufacturers in Australia. To require these two manufacturers to produce 90 per cent of steel products for Australian infrastructure fails to acknowledge that these same two steel manufacturers do not produce everything that governments require. Indeed, based on the shutdown of power supplies in South Australia, where one of the two manufacturers is located, I would have thought the time of this Parliament would have been better spent discussing the critical need to address energy security, which is fundamental to preserving our steel industry in the Illawarra.

Even the chief executive officer [CEO] of BlueScope Steel, Paul O'Malley, spoke against the imposition of steel quotas and in favour of a more holistic, sensible approach to procurement. When even the CEO of Australia's largest steel manufacturer is telling us that steel quotas are not the answer—and simply will not work—we must ask, "What is this bill really about?" I want to see real reform that works, not protection that has failed every industry it has ever touched, with the Australian car manufacturing industry being but one example. I want to see practical and believable change that delivers for regions, our workers, the industry, taxpayers and jobs.

Today I present my solution. Today I can announce the first step towards better standards. Today I can confirm that the Minister for Finance, Services and Property will bring together the key players who can deliver real change for a procurement forum in our region on 20 March 2017, which the Minister will attend. This forum will include those responsible for government procurement, and key industry stakeholders, including BlueScope Steel, fabricators and unions, will be invited to attend. This group will seek out sustainable, practical and real reform that supplements the work the Government has already done in this regard.

This steel procurement forum is but one of many ways the New South Wales Government is committed to a sustainable and meaningful dialogue with those at the veritable coalface. We will be meeting with key industry stakeholders to discuss a review of existing procurement rules and procedures. The forum will be held at the University of Wollongong, which is particularly fitting, given the initial focus of the university as an offshoot of the University of New South Wales—where research and development support for the local steel industry was initially based.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kiama is entitled to be heard in silence.

Mr GARETH WARD: I will invite the Secretary of the South Coast Labour Council, my friend Arthur Rorris, to attend. Whilst I may not always agree with Arthur, he is a constructive and sensible contributor. In the limited time I have left, I would like to highlight some of the glaringly obvious problems with this bill. In reading this bill and its flawed provisions, I have become convinced this legislation is not only short-sighted but that its provisions are poorly drafted. The financial penalty provisions in clause 6, subclause (1) (b), of the bill are uncertain in their operation because the measure of "quality of steel" under clause 6, subclause (2), is not defined—so the penalty cannot be calculated. The construction of the duty of audit under clause 6, subsection (1) (d), is unhelpfully not defined, which leaves one to wonder who would do such an audit and whether it would have any meaningful rigour—and thus any real impact.

Clause 7, subclause (2), is completely counterintuitive. The effect of clause 7, subclause (2), will be to disrupt the cash flow of many small businesses while waiting for the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal to report. This will mean small contractors will be disadvantaged by more red tape whilst lacking the cash flow to enable them to work on government contracts—all to the benefit of large companies who will be able to load their price to take account of the delay and crowd out smaller players. Many local fabricators may have thought that this bill would help them. I would ask them to consider the impact of this clause before assuming this bill does anything to benefit them. The bill also contains clause 7, subsection (3). The cumulative steel usage report has to specify the origins of any steel under the contract. [*Extension of time*]

Mr Ryan Park: No!

Mr Paul Scully: No!

Mr GARETH WARD: You are denying me time? You are actually denying me the opportunity to speak on this bill? What an absolute disgrace—trying to shut down debate in this Parliament. For the record, the member for Keira and the member for Wollongong just said no.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Keira to order for the first time. I call the member for Newcastle to order for the first time. The member for Kiama is entitled to be heard in silence. I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the first time.

Mr Nick Lalich: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 86. Government members have made it quite obvious that they do not support this bill, they do not support steelworkers and their families, and they do not support Australian steel.

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

Mr Nick Lalich: Therefore, I move:

That the question be now put.

The House divided.

Ayes38
Noes46
Majority.....8

AYES

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

NOES

Anderson, Mr K
Barilaro, Mr J
Brookes, Mr G
Coure, Mr M
Dominello, Mr V
George, Mr T
Gulaptis, Mr C
Henskens, Mr A
Johnsen, Mr M
Maguire, Mr D
O'Dea, Mr J
Perrottet, Mr D
Roberts, Mr A
Taylor, Mr M
Upton, Ms G
Williams, Mrs L

Aplin, Mr G
Berejiklian, Ms G
Conolly, Mr K
Crouch, Mr A
Elliott, Mr D
Gibbons, Ms M
Hancock, Mrs S
Hodgkinson, Ms K
Kean, Mr M
Marshall, Mr A
Patterson, Mr C (teller)
Petinos, Ms E
Rowell, Mr J
Toole, Mr P
Ward, Mr G

Ayres, Mr S
Bromhead, Mr S (teller)
Constance, Mr A
Davies, Ms T
Evans, Mr L
Grant, Mr T
Hazzard, Mr B
Humphries, Mr K
Lee, Dr G
Notley-Smith, Mr B
Pavey, Mrs M
Provest, Mr G
Speakman, Mr M
Tudehope, Mr D
Williams, Mr R

PAIRS

Watson, Ms A

Stokes, Mr R

Motion negatived.

*Business of the House***SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: MEMBER'S SPEAKING TIME****Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit the member for Kiama to continue his speech for a further period of up to 30 minutes.

The House divided.

Ayes47

Noes38

Majority.....9

AYES

Anderson, Mr K
Barilaro, Mr J
Brookes, Mr G
Coure, Mr M
Dominello, Mr V
George, Mr T
Gulaptis, Mr C
Henskens, Mr A
Johnsen, Mr M
Maguire, Mr D
O'Dea, Mr J
Perrottet, Mr D
Roberts, Mr A
Speakman, Mr M
Tudehope, Mr D
Williams, Mr R

Aplin, Mr G
Berejiklian, Ms G
Conolly, Mr K
Crouch, Mr A
Elliott, Mr D
Gibbons, Ms M
Hancock, Mrs S
Hodgkinson, Ms K
Kean, Mr M
Marshall, Mr A
Patterson, Mr C (teller)
Petinos, Ms E
Rowell, Mr J
Taylor, Mr M
Upton, Ms G
Williams, Mrs L

Ayres, Mr S
Bromhead, Mr S (teller)
Constance, Mr A
Davies, Ms T
Evans, Mr L
Grant, Mr T
Hazzard, Mr B
Humphries, Mr K
Lee, Dr G
Notley-Smith, Mr B
Pavey, Mrs M
Provest, Mr G
Sidoti, Mr J
Toole, Mr P
Ward, Mr G

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.*Bills***STEEL INDUSTRY PROTECTION BILL 2016****Second Reading****Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kiama will come to order. Members who do not come to order will be removed from the Chamber. The member for Kiama has the call.

Mr Ryan Park: Mr Assistant Speaker—

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Is the member for Keira taking a point of order?

Mr Ryan Park: Yes. I move:

That the question be now put.

Mr Gareth Ward: Mr Assistant Speaker, we just resolved that question.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! If any member says another word they will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr Kevin Conolly: Point of order: There has been no intervening debate and the motion last moved was not to end the debate, so we should proceed with it.

Mr Michael Daley: To the point of order: The Leader of the House moved a motion to the effect that so much of standing orders be suspended as to allow the member for Kiama to speak for an additional 30 minutes. His time, and only his time, was extended. No other standing order was suspended, and the member for Keira is within his rights to move again that the question be now put.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! As the member for Keira has already spoken in the debate, he is not entitled to move the motion. The member for Kiama has the call.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (12:09): That gives us an insight into the character of members opposite. I have never seen the gag moved like that on any member when extensions have been granted by this Government time after time. Those who think that the member for Keira is the Illawarra's version of Bambi just saw his teeth in this Chamber. He is not interested in a discussion or a conversation. Sadly, the member for Wollongong, along with the member for Keira—

Business interrupted.

Motions

WORLD'S GREATEST SHAVE

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (12:11): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that the World's Greatest Shave is the Leukaemia Foundation of Australia's fundraising event, held annually since 1998.
- (2) Notes that funds raised by the World's Greatest Shave are used by the foundation to support medical research.
- (3) Notes the Government's support for leukaemia research through grants provided by the New South Wales Cancer Institute's research programs.

I am pleased that this motion has been accorded precedence. The World's Greatest Shave recognises the enormous difference that generous and selfless people make to those facing the challenge of living with or caring for someone who is living with a blood cancer. Today, 60,000 Australians are living with a blood cancer, and each and every day another five people are diagnosed. The World's Greatest Shave has been held each year since 1998 to raise funds for the Leukaemia Foundation of Australia and to support the wonderful work it does. More than \$200 million has been raised in that time. In 2016, \$17.7 million was raised by 20,000 participants. I acknowledge those participants from across our electorates.

The Leukaemia Foundation is a national, not-for-profit organisation dedicated to the care of patients and families living with leukaemia, lymphomas, myeloma and related blood disorders. The organisation was established as the Lions Leukaemia Foundation in 1975 when people requiring bone marrow transplants had to travel to Sydney or Melbourne from Brisbane. In 1992, what had become the Leukaemia Foundation of Queensland formed the Leukaemia Foundation of Australia.

The foundation's vision to cure sees the funding of research through its national research program, which is guided by an independent panel of leading researchers and clinicians. It achieves its goal of directly reaching 50 per cent of people newly diagnosed with leukaemia, lymphoma, myeloma and other related blood disorders. Many more people were supported anonymously through the extensive use of the foundation's online information and resources. Since its national research program began in 2005, the Leukaemia Foundation has invested more than \$38 million in research and support to help reduce the impact that these cancers have on Australian families.

The foundation funds vital research into the causes, the epidemiology, the diagnoses and treatment, the psychological impact, the management and the cures for blood cancers.

As well as funding vital research, the Leukaemia Foundation provides a range of support services free of charge to people with cancer and their families in metropolitan and rural regions throughout Australia. It produces a range of booklets, fact sheets and resources, including its booklet on understanding leukaemia, lymphomas, myeloma and related blood disorders. The booklet is available in nine community languages as well as English. It also conducts seminars, workshops and programs to provide information on diagnosis and treatment, and supporting physical and emotional health and wellbeing.

The foundation also assists with practical support, which I referred to yesterday. For example, it provides accommodation and transport for people who need to relocate for prolonged treatment. In 2015-16 alone, the foundation accommodated 777 families, more than 52,000 nights of accommodation were provided, and 166 units were made available to families. In 2015-16, Leukaemia Foundation volunteer drivers—Blood Buddies, as they are known—gave more than 1,500 hours of support and travelled more than 1.5 million kilometres transporting more than 15,000 people to and from hospital for life-saving treatment for blood cancer. The Leukaemia Foundation recognises that it would not be able to do all that it does for people with blood cancers and their families without the many people who volunteer their time to this important cause.

Leukaemia is cancer of blood cells, and it usually starts in the bone marrow. It is usually classified as acute or chronic and lymphocytic or myeloid subtypes, all of which have different prognoses. The incidence and mortality rates of the disease have decreased over the past 10 years. In New South Wales in 2012, for example, there were 1,145 new cases and 480 deaths. Overall, leukaemia accounts for 2.7 per cent of new cancers in New South Wales and 3.74 per cent of cancer deaths. One in 56 males and one in 86 females will develop leukaemia by the age of 85. It is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in children under 15 years of age, although the majority of new cases of the disease are diagnosed in people aged 65 years and older.

Lymphomas, which account for almost 50 per cent of all blood cancers, are usually divided into two main types: Hodgkin's and non-Hodgkin's lymphomas. By far the majority of lymphomas are non-Hodgkin's. Mortality from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma has also declined over the past 10 years. In New South Wales in 2012, there were 1,705 new cases and 487 deaths from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma accounts for 4.1 per cent of new cancers and 3.5 per cent of cancer deaths in New South Wales. The five-year relative survival rate for non-Hodgkin's lymphomas in this State is 65 per cent, with one in 36 males and one in 49 females developing non-Hodgkin's lymphoma by the age of 85. Myeloma, which is also known as multiple myeloma, is a cancer of white blood cells. In myeloma the cells that are affected are the plasma cells that produce antibodies to help fight infection. Mortality has again declined over the past 10 years. In 2012, in New South Wales there were 568 new cases of multiple myeloma and 271 deaths. Multiple myeloma accounts for 1.3 per cent of new cancers in this State and 1.9 per cent of cancer deaths.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (12:18): I take this opportunity in my capacity as the shadow Minister for Medical Research, and on behalf of the Opposition, to lend our support to the World's Greatest Shave and the wonderful fundraising work undertaken by the Leukaemia Foundation. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, it is estimated that more than 3,000 of the people who are diagnosed with a form of leukaemia every year will sadly pass away. Leukaemia is the most common cancer for infants and young adults under the age of 24. Since 1998 the World's Greatest Shave has taken a fun approach to fundraising by working with institutions, organisations, schools and businesses to encourage adults to wax, shave or colour their hair to raise crucial funds for medical research. From 16 March to 19 March, shaving and hair-dyeing fundraising events will be taking place in many institutions and organisations throughout the State.

Blood cancer is the third most common cause of cancer death in Australia. It claims more lives than breast cancer or melanoma. However, the rate of leukaemia deaths has been on a downward trend in the last 10 years. Survival rates and treatment for individuals with leukaemia and other blood cancers have greatly improved because of more effective treatments which have been discovered through medical research. Advances in medical research have played a tremendous role in improving survival rates following a diagnosis of cancer. Medical research has been aided by the work of the Cancer Institute NSW.

The Carr Labor Government established the Cancer Institute NSW in July 2003 with the purpose of reducing the devastating impact of cancer in our community. The Cancer Institute NSW was Australia's first statewide cancer control agency. In 2004 the Carr Government initiated the first State Cancer Plan in Australia. The two-year plan between 2004 and 2006 delivered significant improvements in reducing smoking rates, improving screening services, providing new staff and technology in hospitals and increasing cancer research in our hospitals and universities. The Labor Government initiated a further two State cancer plans. The 2007-10 plan was supported by a further plan in 2011 by the Coalition Government.

The Coalition Government has followed through on a fourth cancer plan in April 2016 to continue the great work of Labor's vision of coordinating a whole-of-government approach with non-government organisations [NGOs] and research institutions to reduce the burden of cancer in our community. Survival rates for people with cancer in New South Wales have increased significantly since the implementation of the State's first cancer plan and are now among the best in the world. Early detection and best practice treatment of cancer have led to the drop in death rates. According to the Cancer Institute NSW, for those diagnosed between 1995 and 1999, 41.8 per cent of people with leukaemia in New South Wales survived five years after diagnosis. That improved to 49.6 per cent for those diagnosed between 2005 and 2009. In 2012 there were 480 deaths caused by leukaemia, accounting for 3.4 per cent of all cancer deaths in New South Wales. By 2021 it is expected that this rate will decrease to 404 individuals and account for 2.4 per cent of cancer deaths in New South Wales.

Labor has always championed investing in medical research because of the long-term benefits to be gained when New South Wales is at the forefront of discoveries which can greatly improve health outcomes for people. In 2009 alone more than \$520 million was allocated by the Labor Government for infrastructure investment in the education and medical research sectors. This funding established the platform we are on today which has enabled higher education, research and vocational education institutions to focus on their medical research efforts for a number of diseases.

In terms of capital projects, Labor invested \$228 million for our leading medical research institutes including the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, the Woolcock Institute of Medical Research, the Children's Cancer Institute, the National Institute for Virology and the Westmead Millennium Institute. In the same era in 2009 Labor also provided \$64 million to 11 major medical research institutes to access a range of infrastructure funding and resources not available through other grants. New South Wales is very fortunate to have amazing health professionals and professionals in the medical research sector who are very passionate about making a real difference in this area. I pay tribute to the many universities, hospitals, healthcare providers and institutions that are undoubtedly making a huge difference when it comes to supporting families but also in advancing treatments to eradicate cancer.

Initiatives such as the World's Greatest Shave are instrumental in helping organisations such as the Leukaemia Foundation to fund their medical research programs. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the many millions that the foundation has raised for medical research specifically related to curing blood cancer. More than \$38 million has been raised since 2005. The Leukaemia Foundation hopes to raise \$17 million from its fundraising drive this year. On behalf of the New South Wales Opposition I acknowledge the amazing efforts of the Leukaemia Foundation to advance treatment and work towards a cure; to support families in dealing with grief, loss and depression; and to assist with the many other factors that play a role in reducing cancer in this State.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) (12:25): Along with other members in this place, I support this motion. I commend the member for Port Macquarie for putting forward the prioritisation of this motion for today as we will not be able to address it as a topical issue next week as Parliament will not be sitting. I acknowledge the member for Port Macquarie, who was a palliative care nurse prior to becoming a member of Parliament. I acknowledge her compassion, which is evident in the job she is doing as a member and in the fact that she moved this motion to acknowledge such a wonderful institution and event that is now supported by the community.

As members are aware, the World's Greatest Shave goes from strength to strength each year. It has been taking place in the Camden community since its inception. I participated for six or seven years up until two years ago. At my last World's Greatest Shave in Parliament House the then Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, shaved my head. It was very clean and smooth. She did a very good job. I do not know what the Minister is doing now but if she thought about barbering I am sure she would do it very well.

Mr Kevin Anderson: Is "barbering" a word?

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: We will have to ask our New Zealand colleagues. I am not sure. My point is that I have not participated for the past two years not because I am an objector or for any reason of protest but because my hair never grew back. I now have a permanent little circle on my head so I thought, "No. Swallow your pride. It is time." I return to the motion. The Cancer Institute NSW provides funding. As the member for Port Macquarie and the member for Bankstown have said, cancer is an insidious disease. Every person in this House and every person in the community knows someone who has been affected by cancer in some way.

As other members have said, unfortunately leukaemia is one of the most prevalent cancers in children up to 15 years of age. It is a nasty disease that causes great sadness. The World's Greatest Shave is a wonderful initiative. My role today is not to speak as those have before me or as those will after me but just to encourage those people who are not follicularly challenged or who would like to put a colour or dye through their hair to get behind this. Support this initiative because it is a wonderful way to contribute to finding a cure for this insidious disease, something we are all trying to work towards.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (12:29): I speak in support of the important motion moved by the member for Port Macquarie. I join the member for Camden in thanking her for acknowledging the importance of the World's Greatest Shave, which is being held from 16 to 19 March. The World's Greatest Shave is a fundraising activity that raises funds for research to develop a cure for blood diseases. More than 12,000 Australians will develop leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma this year, which equates to approximately 35 people being diagnosed every day. It is probable that members in this place will know someone who has been diagnosed with a blood cancer. Certainly they would have met people in their electorates who have struggled with this insidious disease. Blood diseases claim more lives in Australia than breast cancer and melanoma. Other cancers are well known. The community must learn more about blood diseases.

The Leukaemia Foundation funds cancer research with money raised from the World's Greatest Shave and helps to support people suffering from the disease. The Leukaemia Foundation is the only Australia-wide charity that is dedicated to the care and cure of people with those diseases. The member for Camden mentioned that many members in this place have participated in shave for a cure. As he said, his first shave resulted in his hair not growing back. I have to claim that also happened to me. I know we are not supposed to use props in this place, but I will show a photo of me having my head shaved. When I was principal at Point Clare, all the male teachers agreed to have their heads shaved in front of 560 students and the local radio station crew. Close to 2,000 parents turned up to support us. Despite it being a rainy morning, it was a fun experience. The students loved seeing us having our heads shaved. Luckily, we did not have to rely on the former Minister for Health to shave our hair because one of the parents was a hairdresser.

Many people deserve recognition. I have previously acknowledged Sian Demer in this Chamber. Last year I participated in *Dancing with the Stars* to raise funds for the Cancer Council NSW. I was trained by Sian at the Latin Dance Sensation at Erina, which is in the electorate of the member for Terrigal, who is in the Chamber. I am sure he will be roped into dancing one day. This picture I am holding shows a before and after shot of Sian having her head shaved. It is a significant experience for women who have beautiful hair. I congratulate the member for Port Macquarie on bringing this motion and those who participate in the World's Greatest Shave.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (12:33): This motion should be supported, and it is nice to know it has bipartisan support from members across the Chamber. There are 60,000 Australians living with a blood cancer and each day another five people will be diagnosed. The World's Greatest Shave recognises the enormous difference that generous and selfless people make to those who are living with or caring for someone who has a blood cancer. In 2016, \$17.7 million was raised by 20,000 participants and the World's Greatest Shave goes from strength to strength each year. I commend past participants for shaving or colouring their hair and the businesses that supported them. Many members in the Chamber have participated in the World's Greatest Shave. I have not shaved my hair but in 2014 I coloured it blue. It looked like I had grey hair and I was asked by a lot of people if I had stopped dyeing my hair. It became a conversation starter at every function I attended and when people asked about my blue and/or grey hair, it gave me an opportunity to talk about the great work of the Leukaemia Foundation. I raised \$1,000, which went towards helping people through their struggle in a time of need.

I acknowledge and thank Buffy McDonald, who is the coordinator of the Young Adults Disabled Association in Liverpool. She took part in the World's Greatest Shave last year and shaved off her mass of blonde hair in honour of John Eastwood, who is passionate about giving his time to helping people with a disability in south-west Sydney. The Leukaemia Foundation uses funds raised from the World's Greatest Shave to help people with difficult logistics that can impede their treatment. It also supports medical research. The Leukaemia Foundation of Australia provides accommodation across New South Wales to meet the needs of some patients undergoing treatment for their blood cancer. People receive support, advice and information from health professionals and are assisted with transport to and from treatment centres. The Cancer Institute NSW provides funding for cancer research with grant recipients nominating relevant tumour groups. The career support program of the Cancer Institute NSW focuses on attracting new cancer researchers to New South Wales and supporting existing researchers to become more skilled and internationally competitive.

Between 2011 and 2016, the Cancer Institute NSW awarded 19 multiple-year career fellowships for research that included a focus on leukaemia or lymphoma, with associated funding of approximately \$7.6 million. The funds are put to good use. It is great to see that the World's Greatest Shave is now one of Australia's top five fundraising events and it is the most important fundraiser for the Leukaemia Foundation. Members may not want to shave or colour their hair, but I encourage them to spread the word about the World's Greatest Shave in their communities. This year the fundraiser runs from Thursday 16 March to Sunday 19 March. We must support all participants who will shave, wax or colour their hair or beards. Members can also support the Cancer Institute NSW, which is the pillar organisation in NSW Health and is Australia's first statewide cancer agency. I thank the member for Port Macquarie for moving this motion. The more our communities hear about the World's Greatest Shave, the more people will support the cause.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (12:38): In reply: I thank the member for Bankstown, and shadow Minister for Medical Research, the member for Camden, the member for Wyong and the member for Holsworthy for participating in the debate. I will make note of the issues that were discussed, but on behalf of all members in this House I congratulate all of those people who take part in such a selfless act. It may not be as difficult for blokes, but it is a tough call for girls who take the bold move to shave their hair off. I make it clear to the House that I will not be shaving my hair, although I might consider colouring it.

I must mention Cathy Porter, a young lady from Port Macquarie in my electorate. Last weekend she shaved her head for a cure and in the process raised \$7,000. She held the fundraising event at the Wauchope Showground as part of a family bush dance. It is important to note that this issue is very close to Cathy's heart. Cathy is a blood collector for pathology company Douglass Hanly Moir Pathology, which is based in Port Macquarie. She has seen many patients suffering from cancer and leukaemia. That has had an impact on her and made her think about how she might be able to assist—as others do in our community—to support the Leukaemia Foundation. She says that over the past few years she has seen an increase in the number of blood cancer patients locally. Her target was \$5,000 but—true to form in the Port Macquarie-Hastings community—people dug deep and raised some extra funds. Cathy now has a No. 2 cut and says that she loves the feel of her new hairstyle. Even Cathy's husband, Rob, shaved his chest. Maybe that is something that the men in the Chamber could think about doing. Rob raised an extra \$218. I congratulate Cathy and Rob on supporting the good work of the foundation.

I invite members to look up the World's Greatest Shave website, which they could share with their constituents. If people enter their postcode they will be able to learn about where there are activities that they can support. If people do not want to shave their heads they can make a donation. For example, in Port Macquarie on 18 March at the Bunnings store there is a barbecue and shave. I thank the Port Macquarie Lions Club members who are hosting that. All the proceeds and donations will go to the Leukaemia Foundation. Thanks to the expertise of the Gossip Hair Studio, people will be able to have a shave and colour if that suits their style. Later in the afternoon—between three o'clock and six o'clock—at Port City Bowling Club, there will be raffles and sausages. Attendees can have a colour or shave, with all proceeds going to the foundation.

I again remind the House about the great work of the New South Wales Cancer Institute, which does an absolutely amazing job. Yesterday I spoke briefly about its fantastic work. Its research is critical, and all of these activities will support that great work. Everyone, at some point, will be impacted by knowing someone who has contracted a blood cancer or other type of cancer. It is critical that communities continue to support these great causes. In closing, let me say, let us all go get shaving.

Motion agreed to.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (12:42): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that only five Hunter councils conducted elections on 10 September 2016.
- (2) Notes that as a consequence there was uncertainty and inconvenience in the Hunter as residents were not sure if they would be fined for not voting, when in fact they did not need to vote.
- (3) Calls on the Minister for Local Government to explain why there was such confusion with council voting across New South Wales.

Last September, some of my constituents went to the polls to elect their local representatives. The bulk living in the Wallsend electorate did not get a chance to have their say; however—thanks to the Baird and Berejiklian governments' mismanaged council amalgamation agenda—people did not know what they had to do. My office was inundated with calls from residents who were unsure where to vote, when to vote, or even if they had to vote at all. It was a symptom of the uncertainty Wallsend residents living in the Newcastle local government area have been forced to grapple with over the past two years.

Even as the new Premier hoes down talk about mergers in rural areas, the future of Newcastle City Council remains uncertain. Finally, the Premier declared that the marriage between Newcastle and Port Stephens was annulled, but that uncertainty caused much local anxiety—and the failed merger kept Newcastle City Council under a cloud, preventing council from getting on with work vital for the city. The local government reforms undertaken by the Baird Government were a slapdash, hurried affair from the very beginning. I have been told by council staff members and elected representatives involved that trying to meet the Fit for the Future criteria was a Sisyphean task. One said:

The goal posts kept shifting, the process was murky and we couldn't help feeling that the outcome would be decided on the whim of the Local Government Minister alone.

It was 20 October 2015 when it was reported that many Hunter Councils failed to meet the Minister's Fit for the Future criteria. In that opening salvo, Newcastle and Lake Macquarie were deemed unfit, while Port Stephens was found to meet the criteria. Eighteen months on, Lake Macquarie was found fit to stand alone and went on to hold its elections last September, returning a full-bodied and diverse council led by a popularly elected local mayor. The Minister for Local Government changed his mind on Port Stephens, once declared fit, and decided it was to be merged with Newcastle. It was estimated the merger could cost the ratepayers of the two councils between \$20 million and \$30 million—a drop in the pond compared with the \$590 million already spent by the Baird Government on amalgamations statewide. That is now wasted money. From the beginning, the concept was a dud. A young constituent who grew up in Port Stephens said the idea of the merger of the two councils was ridiculous. He said:

Port Stephens and Newcastle are very different places, with different needs.

Indeed they are. He continued:

Port Stephens is a great deal more rural than Newcastle. If the new council was centred on Newcastle, residents in the more remote parts of Port Stephens would lose out.

I agree; they would. A local resident told me:

It feels like the western suburbs of Newcastle don't get enough attention from Council as it is. How is it going to be any better if Council has to cover an even bigger area?

Last November, it was reported that council elections in Newcastle could be pushed back as far as the 2020s. President of Local Government NSW, Keith Rhoades, was quoted saying:

They say the delay will 'reduce the potential for voter confusion and additional cost', but I wouldn't be worrying too much about voter confusion. As we've just seen in the Orange by-election, voters are anything but confused about this Government and council amalgamations. Is it not odd that the Government is now worried about voter confusion into the future when it was not very concerned in the past? Indeed, the Minister seems to be very confused. One of the biggest problems is the confusion of the Baird and Berejiklian governments about the whole nature of mergers, non-mergers and where we are headed. There is a great deal of uncertainty in the Newcastle council area and among my residents. Now that the Premier has hit the reverse button, it is time for full accounting. His farce cannot go on any longer. It has gone on far too long. When will the new Premier and the Minister for Local Government explain to my constituents why this expensive, ill-considered and ultimately pointless policy was allowed to drag on for so long? We await the answer.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (12:49): I thank the member for Wallsend for bringing forward this motion on local council elections. She is an active member and she frequently brings forward notices of motion. She should be applauded for her advocacy for her constituents. I listened intently to the member's contribution to this debate. She started by stating that the plan for local council amalgamations was cobbled together quickly. I remind the member for Wallsend the plan was four years in the making and involved extensive consultation at the local government level. I note the member for Wyong and the member for The Entrance are in the Chamber, and both have been very vocal in opposing council amalgamations on the Central Coast. They have run scare campaigns, but the reality is the community is benefiting from amalgamations to the tune of \$10 million that will be invested in community-based projects to be rolled out as part of the process. I ask the member for Wyong and the member for The Entrance whether they are opposed to the amalgamation, given that our communities will benefit from the process.

Mr David Harris: What is the cost of the amalgamation?

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

Mr ADAM CROUCH: I am sure they will both attend the openings of those projects, happily shaking hands and saying how wonderful the projects are for their communities, while at the same time spending hours pontificating about council amalgamations. I laughed when I saw a protest held on the forecourt of the Gosford City Council chambers opposing amalgamations, because there was a massive crowd of one person. The reality is that council amalgamations, while difficult and sometimes a bit cumbersome, result in benefits for ratepayers. The NSW Electoral Commission was responsible for the majority of elections held on 10 September 2016. The commission was acutely aware of the risk of voter confusion arising from the fact that not all councils held elections on the day. The member for Wallsend said she was inundated with phone calls about the election date. I remind the member that State members of Parliament are elected to answer such calls from their constituents. I was more than happy to field questions from people on the Central Coast about when council elections were being held. It was very clear from day one, 12 May, that elections would be held on 10 September. The commission paid for extensive advertisements saying that councils would go to elections on 10 September, as is the practice for every council election across the State.

Those opposite are bleating about what these advertisements cost. That is the cost of democracy and making sure that everybody is informed. Those opposite could choose not to pay for such advertisements. When they were in government, they notified councils of amalgamations via fax on a Friday night with no consultation, no deliberation, no community involvement. The reality is that this Government took a responsible course of action with Fit for the Future, a project four years in the making, and councils like the Central Coast Council and the people of the Central Coast are reaping huge rewards from the process. As I said, there was an extensive information and advertising campaign to inform electors in the wider community about councils that were holding elections on 10 September and of their voting responsibilities. Four councils did not participate in those elections, and they were Dungog, Maitland, Newcastle and Port Stephens.

I have spoken to the member for the Upper Hunter, and he told me that at every opportunity he informed community members that Dungog residents would not participate in the election. I would have hoped that the members for the electorates of Maitland, Newcastle and Port Stephens had done the same thing. Unfortunately, that obviously was not the case. Instead they complained about amalgamations rather than telling constituents what was happening. I commend the member for Wallsend, who was happy to take calls and inform her constituents about what was going on. That was the right thing for a State member to do. Those opposite can run campaigns opposing council amalgamations, or they can do the right thing, like the member for Wallsend, and inform voters about what is happening.

The then Minister for Local Government issued media releases in late August urging everyone who was not enrolled to vote to check whether their council was holding an election on 10 September. In addition, electors who were uncertain about whether they were required to vote on 10 September were encouraged to visit the NSW Electoral Commission website where they could check their enrolment details and look up their street address to find out whether they needed to vote. This could also be done by phone or, in some cases, by calling their State member to ask for advice on what was going on. My office was more than happy to take calls from anybody on the Central Coast wanting to know when council elections were being held. I also did extensive media interviews notifying my electorate about elections.

The Office of Local Government issued a circular to councils in late August 2016 encouraging councils holding elections on 10 September to take their own steps to inform electors in their areas of the requirement to vote. Councils were encouraged to do this by way of information placed on their websites, media releases, paid advertising, mail-outs and social media. The Office of Local Government circular contained a definitive list of which councils were holding elections on 10 September and which were not. Ordinary local government elections were held on 10 September for councils that had not merged and were not subject to a merger proposal. That included the Central Coast Council that will go to elections on 9 September 2017, for the benefit of the member for The Entrance and the member for Wyong—in case they missed the announcement. Councils subject to merger proposals with a decision pending had their elections deferred. These councils include the councils of Dungog, Maitland, Newcastle and Port Stephens.

Again I commend the member for Wallsend for bringing forward this motion. As I have clearly outlined, there was every opportunity to clarify exactly when elections were being held and for which councils leading up to 10 September 2016. It is a pity that those opposite, especially the member for The Entrance and the member for Wyong, try to jump on the bandwagon to criticise council amalgamations. Instead they should have informed constituents when council elections would be held. I look forward to seeing them at the release of the Stronger Communities Fund project.

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (12:56): I support the motion of the member for Wallsend on local council elections. On behalf of the Labor caucus I note that the member for Wallsend is held in high regard for the way she uses the notices of motions process to raise issues on behalf of the Opposition. I also record my personal appreciation for the work the member does on behalf of the Labor caucus. The motion goes to the Government's local council amalgamation process, which is sometimes referred to as Fit for the Future. The motion addresses the question of democracy regarding local government and how that is being affected by the amalgamation process. The amalgamation process covers a lot of things, but it does not have a lot to do with democracy. There has been a good amount of gerrymander as part of the process, as was evident in relation to Parramatta where the closest Labor voting areas of Granville were excluded from the new City of Parramatta Council. The initial proposed boundaries for City of Botany Bay council tried to destroy a strong Labor council, which shows that the amalgamation process is about a bunch of things but it is certainly not about democracy.

Mr Adam Crouch: Point of order: Temporary Speaker, I ask you to draw the member back to the leave of the motion moved by the member for Wallsend. The motion has nothing to do with Parramatta; it is to do with councils in the Newcastle region.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith): Order! The member for The Entrance will return to the leave of the motion.

Mr DAVID MEHAN: I will, but I make the point that I sat and listened to the member for Terrigal, with his big mouth in this place, without interjecting.

Mr Adam Crouch: Point of order—

Mr DAVID MEHAN: I heard him talk about Central Coast councils and I did not take a point of order.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith): Order! The member for The Entrance will resume his seat.

Mr Adam Crouch: Members should not cast aspersions on other members.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith): Order! The member for The Entrance will be a little more respectful.

Mr DAVID MEHAN: I will not use the term "big mouth" again when referring to the member for Terrigal in this debate. I withdraw it. Much confusion has been created as a result of this amalgamation process, and that confusion has undermined democracy in our area of the Central Coast that borders the Lake Macquarie council area. The member for Swansea has told us that half of her electorate voted last year, while the other half is looking at the prospect of maybe voting this year. There is still a lot of uncertainty in the Central Coast community. I try to quell people's concerns about whether or not there will be an election this year, but the whole process this Government has followed in amalgamating councils has created a tremendous amount of confusion—and a tremendous amount of waste.

The money wasted by this process could have been better spent on hospitals, teachers and fixing the social problems in our area. Eighty-one councils conducted their elections last year. We do not know how many councils—the member for Terrigal could not tell us—will be conducting their elections this year, because the Government just does not know. The nature of this process has caused confusion and it has undermined democracy. It is an excuse for imposing cuts to government services and it has been handled appallingly.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (13:00): When it comes to local government reform we can count on this Government, this team of individuals. I acknowledge the Minister for Multiculturalism, who just walked into the Chamber. He is an outstanding Minister. We can count on this team when it comes to local government reform, because we get it right—unlike those opposite. What did Labor do in its 16 years in government? It sent a Friday night fax to amalgamate councils in the inner west. There was no consultation. It sent a Friday night fax—and I will explain to the member for The Entrance what a fax machine is afterwards—to amalgamate some country councils in New South Wales. There was no consultation—no discussion whatsoever. I feel for the people who lost their jobs as a result. I feel for those communities that were forced to just take it on the chin—because there was no consultation. It was a midnight thought bubble of the then Premier of New South Wales, Bob Carr, and his Minister for Local Government, who was—who was it? Who knows?

Mr David Mehan: You're telling the story.

Mr MARK COURE: They do not even know. They do not even know who the Minister was. I will tell them in a second.

Mr David Mehan: Point of order: As I was reminded earlier—

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith): Order! What is the member's point of order?

Mr David Mehan: The point of order is that the speaker should address the motion.

Mr MARK COURE: All you have to do is say, "Standing Order 76".

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith): Is the member's point of order taken under Standing Order 76?

Mr David Mehan: Yes. Thank you for helping me, Mr Temporary Speaker. You are always helpful. That is what we on this side like about you.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith): Order! The member for Oatley will return to the leave of the motion.

Mr MARK COURE: It is good that the Labor leadership has taken my advice to give those who will see out the remaining two years of this term the opportunity to speak on motions like this. It is good to see the Labor leadership taking my advice by giving some of their one-termers a shot, a go at getting up on their feet and debating.

Mr Ray Williams: You are running Labor's strategy in here.

Mr MARK COURE: I am running Labor's strategy, it seems. I acknowledge the member for Wallsend for moving this motion, but I remind the House that on 18 July the New South Wales local government elector information campaign began. It communicated messages to all the councils that are amalgamating and to all the councils that were having elections. I will let other speakers expand on that.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (13:04): I too thank the member for Wallsend for moving this motion. I am conscious that today is Thursday. Those of us on this side of the House call it "stand-up Thursday", and the last contribution was certainly a lot of stand-up comedy, but it did not have much substance. Let us get to some of the facts. The advertising campaign across the State was so ineffective that, in the 77 council areas where elections were conducted, around 524,000 eligible voters failed to vote. A bit more than half a million eligible voters failed to vote because the Government's advertising campaign was so ineffective.

In 2012, when 137 councils had their elections, 12 per cent of the electorate failed to vote for whatever reason—usually because they did not like their local council, so they exercised their right not to cast a vote. But in 2016, with 77 council elections—about half that of 2012—20 per cent of eligible voters did not vote. That was probably, as the member for Wallsend has rightly pointed out, because they were very confused. Government members want to deny this. They want to talk about how they are out there answering phone calls and doing advertising campaigns and all that. But the reality is that one in five voters did not vote. They did not vote because they did not realise their council was having an election. Government members can pontificate all they like, but the reality is that there was confusion in the electorate. That is the serious aspect of this motion. People can call each other names and all sorts of things, but the reality is that the Government failed in its fundamental responsibility to make sure that people were able to exercise their democratic right to vote.

On the Central Coast—I am covering this because it was raised by the member for Terrigal—all the elected councillors were undemocratically sacked and an administrator put in place. I do not like to do this, but I will quote one of the councillors who voted for amalgamation—Councillor Greg Best, an Independent. It was reported in the media last week that he admits he made a mistake, that the \$10 million that was mentioned by the member for Terrigal was "nothing more than a cheap bribe". That is what he called it. When they costed what it would take to amalgamate, the estimate was \$100 million—\$100 million to amalgamate Gosford and Wyong councils. For that, there was a bribe of \$10 million for community projects.

The biggest issue that people on the coast have is that they were not given their democratic right to decide whether or not amalgamation should happen. In a democratic society, when one has two already large council areas, one would have thought it important to go to the voters and ask whether or not they wanted an amalgamated council. But this Government did not do that. This Government was very arrogant and just said, "You are going to amalgamate." A lot of people are now very upset that the administrator, an unelected official, is making major decisions about the Central Coast—and there is no-one they can go to. They cannot go to their local elected official and ask to have representations made on their behalf. Meetings are held secretly and only selected people can comment. All of those community members are coming back to me, the member for The Entrance and the member for Swansea. They would not go to the member for Terrigal because, as the member for The Entrance said, he does not answer his phone. [*Time expired.*]

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) (13:09): I oppose the motion moved by the member for Wallsend.

Dr Hugh McDermott: Don't do it. Has your council merged?

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: The member for Prospect referred to Camden council—an excellent council that is fit for the future. In 2016 Labor councillors were elected to Camden council. Interestingly, in 2012 Liberal Party councillors ran the first time but they were crucified and only five of the nine councillors were elected. This time around four of the nine Liberal councillors were elected. To their credit, three Labor Party councillors were elected, yet some people are still saying they do not want the major parties represented on councils. Seven of the nine Liberal and Labor candidates were elected, which indicates to me that people want the major parties represented on councils. Camden council, a very good council that is fit for the future, now comprises Liberal, Labor and Independent councillors. They have their stoushes from time to time but they are working together for the community and they are getting things done. I have the utmost respect for the member for Wallsend, but I want to make two points about her motion which is in the following terms:

- (1) Notes that only five Hunter Councils conducted elections on 10 September 2016.
- (2) Notes as a consequence that there was uncertainty and inconvenience in the Hunter as residents were not sure if they would be fined for not voting, when in fact they did not need to vote.
- (3) Calls on the Minister for Local Government to explain why there was such confusion with council voting across New South Wales.

The New South Wales Electoral Commission, which is responsible for council elections, was acutely aware that there might be voter confusion. I am sure that the majority of members who are present in the Chamber today were not members of Parliament in 2004. In 2004 the Labor Party amalgamated 22 councils with no consultation or money to support them. In contrast, this Government consulted the community and its dealings were open and transparent. At the time the Minister for Local Government issued a number of media releases urging people to enrol and to vote. The Electoral Commission's website contained a portal— [*Time expired.*]

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (13:13): In reply: I thank those members representing the electorates of Terrigal, The Entrance, Oatley, Wyong and Camden for their contributions to debate on this important motion. I thank the member for Terrigal for his complimentary remarks but he did not mention that the Government took four years to decide whether or not to amalgamate councils. How did the Government get it so wrong? The member for Terrigal did not refer to the community concern about council amalgamations, which is why I moved this motion today. The member for Terrigal spoke about democracy but that was not evident in these council amalgamations, which caused voters a great deal of confusion. I hope that the Government has learnt its lesson and there is no confusion in future.

The member for The Entrance referred also to democracy and about the 81 councils that conducted elections last year. The Government has not yet indicated which councils will conduct elections this year, which is confusing for the community. I thank the member for Oatley for his reference to fax machines and for explaining how the Labor Party got it right. However, I disagree with the member for Oatley. This Government did not get it right when it amalgamated councils; it got it wrong. This Government failed. The member for Wyong, who spoke eloquently in debate, referred to the cost of the advertising campaign. The Government could have put those funds to better use. He said that in 2016 half a million voters failed to vote—something that this Government should take into account.

Voters are still confused. The member for Wyong hit the nail on the head when he said that this Government failed our community. We must ensure that we have democratic council elections but that is not what occurred. Communities were not told whether councils would or would not be amalgamated; they did not know what was going on. I should have provided the member for Camden with a copy of my motion as he did not seem to know what it was about. He said that this Government consulted the community and that its dealings were open and transparent, but that is not what occurred. I urge all members to support this important motion.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith): The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes36

Noes45

Majority.....9

AYES

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
Robertson, Mr J
Warren, Mr G

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
Scully, Mr P
Washington, Ms K

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
Piper, Mr G
Smith, Ms T F
Zangari, Mr G

NOES

Anderson, Mr K
Barilaro, Mr J
Conolly, Mr K
Crouch, Mr A
Elliott, Mr D
George, Mr T

Aplin, Mr G
Bromhead, Mr S (teller)
Constance, Mr A
Davies, Ms T
Evans, Mr L
Gibbons, Ms M

Ayres, Mr S
Brookes, Mr G
Coure, Mr M
Dominello, Mr V
Fraser, Mr A
Grant, Mr T

NOES

Gulaptis, Mr C	Hazzard, Mr B	Henskens, Mr A
Hodgkinson, Ms K	Humphries, Mr K	Johnsen, Mr M
Kean, Mr M	Lee, Dr G	Maguire, Mr D
Marshall, Mr A	O'Dea, Mr J	Patterson, Mr C (teller)
Pavey, Mrs M	Perrottet, Mr D	Petinos, Ms E
Provest, Mr G	Roberts, Mr A	Rowell, Mr J
Sidoti, Mr J	Speakman, Mr M	Taylor, Mr M
Toole, Mr P	Tudehope, Mr D	Upton, Ms G
Ward, Mr G	Williams, Mr R	Williams, Mrs L

PAIRS

Park, Mr R	Stokes, Mr R
Watson, Ms A	Berejiklian, Ms G

Motion negatived.

TAHMOOR RAILWAY STATION UPGRADE

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (13:25): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Commends Transport for NSW (Sydney Trains) and the Government for responding to the needs of Tahmoor residents with the upgrades and installation of ramps that have made Tahmoor railway station accessible for all.
- (2) Acknowledges that the access upgrades will particularly improve access for people who are frail and elderly, parents with young children in prams and people with a disability.

It gives me great pleasure to speak about some of the good things the Government has done at Tahmoor railway station. However, before I do that I will paint a picture of the condition of the station before the Coalition came to office. Before 2011, for 16 years the Labor Government had failed to invest in train station upgrades in my electorate. That was sad because mums with prams, the disabled and the elderly found it extremely difficult to access their local stations. That was made evident to me when in 2009 or 2010 local resident Eric Third, who is a member of the Wollondilly Shire Council's Disability Access Advisory Committee, invited me and the then Labor member for Wollondilly, Phil Costa—for whom I have a great deal of time—to spend a day with him while he travelled from Wollondilly to Macarthur railway station and returned. I do not blame Phil Costa for the neglect of the railway stations in my electorate; it was the Labor Government's doing.

I thought the exercise would be a learning experience, so I went along. The problem is that when we arrived at Tahmoor railway station we confronted an extremely high concrete ramp. It was so high that even as fully abled people Phil Costa and I could not climb it. Mr Third also struggled to access it in his motorised wheelchair. When we tried to go down the ramp we went so fast that it was hard to stop. It was bad enough for us, but it was dangerous for someone in a wheelchair. After that experience, I announced that if I were elected I would take up Mr Third's cause and the cause of many elderly people, people in wheelchairs and people with prams and work to have the station upgraded.

I am pleased to inform the House that in October 2015, after spending \$1.5 million, that upgrade was delivered as part of the Coalition Government's Transport Access Program, an initiative that delivers accessible, modern, secure and integrated transport infrastructure where it is most needed. This initiative is particularly important to my electorate because, as members know, Wollondilly is where the city meets the bush. It is not the city, but it is also not the country. More than 70 per cent of my constituents travel outside the borders of my electorate each day to access work, education and recreation, and trains are their primary mode of transport. As a result, life is made much more difficult for people who have trouble accessing the stations.

It was a pleasure to have worked with a number of fantastic community advocates, including Mr Third and Jean Newton from Warragamba, to secure this much-needed railway station upgrade. They highlighted the difficulties experienced by many people trying to access rail transport. Early work was carried out during a planned rail closedown to minimise the impact on customers and to ensure the safety of workers. Temporary access ramps were put in place with safety hoarding and temporary lighting to ensure commuters were not inconvenienced during the project. Following on from this—there was still more to do—major works commenced on the existing pedestrian crossing over the railway line, which involved the steel plates on the crossing being

replaced with a rubber surface to improve safety for commuters crossing the railway lines to access the platform on the other side. The Tahmoor railway station does not have an overhead crossing bridge with an elevator to change platforms or to exit the station from another side.

This station does not have an overhead crossing bridge with an elevator to change platforms or exit the station from another side. Commuters must cross the railway lines when safe. New accessible ramps on both station platforms have been installed to improve access for everyone, particularly the elderly, those with limited mobility and families with children in prams. We all want our children to be safe when they travel on our transport system and some of my constituents approached me about getting security cameras at the station. As I said, my electorate is in a semi-rural area and many of my constituents travel to the city for work. When many of them leave home in the morning and return in the evening it is dark.

Business interrupted.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith): I will now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.15 p.m.

Visitors

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: Welcome to all our guests in the gallery this afternoon. I hope you enjoy question time in the bear pit. I extend a very warm welcome to the legal studies students and teacher from Armidale High School, guests of the Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Assistant Minister for Skills, and member for Northern Tablelands. I also welcome the student leaders from St Ursula's College Kingsgrove, Hurstville Boys Campus and Peakhurst Campus of Georges River College, Blakehurst High School and Marist Catholic College Penshurst, guests of the Parliamentary Secretary for Transport and Infrastructure, and member for Oatley.

I welcome Mr Rob McComb, who is in the gallery today as a guest of the member for Upper Hunter. I also welcome the Mayor of Temora Shire Council, Councillor Rick Firman, OAM, who is accompanied by Mr Michael Harper, chairperson of the Temora Business Enterprise Group. They are guests of the member for Cootamundra, whose electorate is in a beautiful part of the world. I welcome Father Michael Maclean of St Mark's Parish, Drummoyne, guest of the member for Drummoyne and the member for Fairfield.

Documents

NSW OMBUDSMAN

Reports

The SPEAKER: In accordance with section 31AA of the Ombudsman Act 1974, I table a report of the NSW Ombudsman entitled, "Oversight of the Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994, Annual Report 2015-16", dated February 2017. I order that the report be printed.

Members

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Due to matters beyond her control, the Minister for Family and Community Services will be delayed and the Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Disability Services will answer questions on her behalf.

Question Time

CBD AND SOUTH EAST LIGHT RAIL PROJECT

Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (14:19): My question is directed to the Premier. In December 2014 the Premier said that the cost blowout on the CBD and South East Light Rail was caused by customer improvements. She knew when she made that statement that it just was not true, did she not?

The SPEAKER: Order! That question is bordering on being ruled out of order under the standing orders, but the Premier is happy to take the question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:19): I am very happy to take this question, especially given the record of the Opposition. Apparently it was a new revelation today that in October 2014 I was advised that there would be an increase in the budget for the light rail project. Apparently that was a new revelation—wrong! On Thursday 23 October 2014 I put out a press release that said there was:

... an increase in the overall budget of the project, and the NSW Government will now work with the Connecting Sydney consortium over the coming weeks to finalise this major contract.

So those opposite are wrong again. In October I received advice that our estimated total costs would be higher with the final budget—and guess what? I put out a press release in the same month saying the same thing.

Mr Ryan Park: What did you say it was due to?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Keira will come to order. I remind the member for Keira that he is on a call to order from earlier today.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: And guess what? In the same release I said that we would be negotiating with the successful proponent to release the final cost once we had it—and guess what? In December of the same year I put out a release saying the final budget of the project would be \$2.1 billion.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Strathfield to order for the first time. If the member for Strathfield does not come to order she will be placed on three calls to order and removed from the Chamber.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Last time those opposite raised this issue, they had not even bothered—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It had better be relevant.

Mr Michael Daley: It is under Standing Order 129. The question goes to the reason for the blowout. We know there is a blowout.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra did not understand the question. The Premier has the call.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We know the member for Maroubra wants the CBD south-east rail link extended to his electorate, but that is another matter. I received advice in October and distributed a media release in the same month to advise the public. That is in stark contrast to the Leader of the Opposition. He put out a press release stating that he would publish his diaries every two months. He says to the public, "Trust me. I will let you know what is in your interests." He said he will publish his diary every two months, and it was not until I raised the matter in this place that we realised he had not done it for seven months. He then published his diaries.

This must be a first. Normally leaders of the Opposition are in government when they break promises; he is breaking promises while he is in opposition. It is the only policy the Opposition and he has already broken it. I am proud of the light rail project and all of our projects. On this side of the House we build infrastructure, whether it is roads, rails, schools or hospitals. I stand by our record on infrastructure any day of the week compared with that of members opposite.

REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour) (14:25): My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional New South Wales, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business. What measures is the Government putting in place to fast-track delivery of key infrastructure projects in regional New South Wales?

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional New South Wales, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business) (14:26): I thank the member for Coffs Harbour for his question. He is focused on regional communities and delivering key infrastructure projects for the regions. He has been a member—in and out of Government—for a long time. He is a fighter for his community. He has shown that he can deliver, whether it be the \$200 million commitment by the Government for the Coffs Harbour bypass, or some of the best tourism attractions such as the World Rally Championship in Coffs Harbour. He is a member who is focused on regional New South Wales.

Over the past six years the Government has made tough decisions to bring the budget into the black. By doing so, we have been able to plan for the future and build the infrastructure that our communities in metropolitan Sydney and in regional areas rightly deserve. The fiscal management of the Government is seeing unprecedented investment in infrastructure across the State. There are cranes in the sky in Sydney and in regional New South Wales. More than 400 projects are happening in regional New South Wales.

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO: We have delivered unprecedented investment in infrastructure such as hospitals, schools, roads and rail—issues that matter to our communities.

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Those opposite are great at making announcements and then cancelling announcements. The only industry that benefited from those opposite was the printing industry.

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Every time they made an announcement they released another flashy new flyer. Then under new leadership it was cancelled and then re-announced, over and again. They had 16 years of non-delivery. We have made an unprecedented investment in infrastructure. They will never know the issues we face as a Government because they do not know how to make tough decisions. They do not know how to put the budget in the black and, most importantly, they do not know how to plan for the future and make investments that will enable infrastructure and create more jobs.

We heard the Premier's response to an earlier question and that we are proud of our track record on the investment in infrastructure across the State. We are changing lives and changing communities. We are creating a legacy of opportunities for young people to gain skills and get jobs. Jobs have been created right across the State on the back of record investment by the Government. What we will be focused on, and what we are keen on right now, is making sure we deliver to all corners of the State. Regardless of how large the project is, or how small, we know how important it is for regional communities.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order. If members want to go home, that is fine. They will be called to order very quickly and removed from the Chamber.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: That is why today the Premier and I announced Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie, a former Australian Army chief—someone who understands logistics and what it takes to deliver on the ground—as the Regional Infrastructure Coordinator. We want Lieutenant General Gillespie to oversee the infrastructure program of this Government in regional communities. He is already out and about engaging with communities and with local governments and agencies of government. This is about making sure that the Government continues to deliver on the commitments that we have made. Government members know how important our word is. We know how important commitments are to our regions. We allocated the funds; we have put money aside from the sale of poles and wires and from the surpluses for projects all over regional New South Wales. These are projects that will change the economies of regional communities.

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO: This Government is investing in hospitals so that we have the best health care in regional areas so that people do not have to come to Sydney to get the best health care.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the third time. If she continues to interject she will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: This Government is investing in roads and bridges so that when our kids are travelling to school by bus they will be able to get to school safely. The Government is investing in the schools to make great teaching and learning environments. We want kids in regional and rural New South Wales to have the same opportunities and enjoy the same investment as kids in the city. Today's announcement will help this Government deliver on the commitments that we made. *[Extension of time]*

I thank the member for Coffs Harbour for requesting that extension of time, because I know that he is interested in this answer. When Ms Berejiklian became the Premier she said, "We are going to accelerate investment in infrastructure. We are not going to hold back." Why will we do that? We will do that because we can, because we put money aside to do so. The Government is going to work with communities right across the State. Whether people live in regional New South Wales or in the city, they deserve their fair share.

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO: This is not about announcements or a glossy brochure like the ones those on the other side of the Chamber are known for. This is about actual delivery on the ground, creating jobs, building infrastructure and changing communities. Right across the board, this Government has a proud record of investments in regional hospitals. One of the most significant investments we have seen in regional New South Wales—over \$2 billion—is being made in hospitals. This Government is making sure that it delivers in places like Inverell. There we have made a commitment to deliver a brand-new hospital to service the community. This Government is investing not just in the big centres but also in the small centres.

Through Bridges for the Bush, this Government is working with local government to deliver bridge connections that are so important for freight. This Government is fixing country roads and working with local government to make sure that our country roads are fit to service our communities. Our Resources for Regions

model—program funding of \$234 million—is already invested in infrastructure and amenities that are changing those communities affected by mining.

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO: This Government is investing in regional airports and in fixing mobile black spots because we know how important connectivity is for our communities. Today's announcement is about the Government working to deliver our ambitious infrastructure program.

CBD AND SOUTH EAST LIGHT RAIL PROJECT

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:33): My question is directed to the Premier. This letter from Transport for NSW, which was obtained under the Government Information (Public Access)—GIPA—Act by the *Sydney Morning Herald*, clearly shows that the Premier, as the former Minister for Transport, was provided with a report entitled—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Strathfield must ask a question rather than state facts that I have not seen. The member may proceed with her question, but I remind her to take care with her wording.

Ms JODI McKAY: The letter clearly shows, as the Premier referred to in her previous answer, that, as the former Minister for Transport, she was provided with a report entitled "Sydney Light Rail Update Briefing—Budget". The Premier referred to it in her previous answer. This was about cost increases on the CBD light rail in October 2014. Will the Premier release this briefing—

The SPEAKER: Order! I am tempted to rule the question out of order because it asks for confirmation of a media report, which is out of order.

Ms Gladys Berejiklian: I am happy to answer the question.

Ms JODI McKAY: This comes from a GIPA request.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have not seen it. I need to see it, but the member for Strathfield cannot pass it to me now. The Premier may answer the question if she wishes, but it should be ruled out of order.

Ms JODI McKAY: Will the Premier release this briefing to prove that she was telling the truth then and now?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:34): Clearly the member for Strathfield did not listen to my previous response but I will repeat it for her. I put out a media release on Thursday 23 October 2014 saying:

There is an increase in the overall budget of the project. The New South Wales Government will now work with the connecting Sydney Consortium over coming weeks to finalise this major contract.

I said that more than 2½ years ago.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is being relevant to the question she was asked, which was dubious. What is the member's point of order?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The member for Maroubra has referred to the same document, so he should sit down.

Mr Michael Daley: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The Premier should answer the question.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Again, members of the Opposition have not done their homework. All they needed to do was look at all the things I have released on this issue. It is not that hard. I have barely said a word—

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! I have ruled on the matter of relevance. Does the member for Strathfield have a different point of order?

Ms Jodi McKay: My point of order is relevance.

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

Ms Jodi McKay: I have both of the Premier's releases; she talks about customer improvements.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Strathfield will resume her seat. I place the member for Strathfield on three calls to order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I know that those on the opposite side of the Chamber cannot handle this, but the people of Sydney are looking forward to the light rail project. Those opposite should take the advice of the member for Maroubra and back the project. The member for Newcastle should back the light rail project in Newcastle. The members in Western Sydney should back the projects for Parramatta light rail. The member for Strathfield, who asked me the question, should back the WestConnex project.

[Interruption]

I will get to you, don't worry. We will get to St George.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I ask those on the opposite side of the Chamber: What have they got against infrastructure? Why will they not support all the projects that our communities want done? Why will they not support reducing traffic on residential streets? Why will they not support all our upgrades?

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Strathfield that she is on three calls to order. If she continues to interject she will be removed from the Chamber for the rest of the day.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Opposition never understood infrastructure, and it never will.

REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (14:37): My question is addressed to the Premier. The people of New South Wales would like to know what measures the Government is putting in place to fast-track the delivery of key infrastructure projects in regional New South Wales.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:37): I thank the member for Tamworth for his question and to say to him and his community that when the Deputy Premier and I visited his electorate just a few days after I became Premier we received a very warm welcome, especially given that we made a major announcement about funding for the Northern Inland Centre of Sporting Excellence. That is a wonderful project for members of that community. There are scores and scores of such projects across New South Wales. Today the Deputy Premier and I announced that we will not only deliver these scores of local infrastructure projects across the State, but also deliver them as quickly as possible in every single corner of New South Wales.

Along with the Deputy Premier, I was very pleased to announce the appointment of former Australian Army chief Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie as our Regional Infrastructure Coordinator. He will be charged with accelerating the rollout of infrastructure across the State. He will be focusing on all of these local infrastructure projects—some of them very small and some of them larger in scale. Our message to the community is that whether you live in the suburbs or in regional or rural communities you can be assured that your electorate will receive its fair share. This is off the back of the Government being in a strong economic and financial position to have the billions and billions of dollars we need to spend on infrastructure. If those opposite had stayed in government, the cupboard would be bare and there would be no money to spend on infrastructure.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: They had deficit after deficit, and from the Leader of the Opposition down they still do not know the difference between capital expenditure and recurrent expenditure. How on earth could they be trusted to deliver anything in this State when they could not even manage the economy and could not manage the budget? This Government is proud to be delivering on the ground. We are proud of our record to date. I take this opportunity to commend the Government's team for delivering on health infrastructure at Tamworth Hospital, Wagga Wagga Hospital, Dubbo Hospital and the Blacktown Hospital stage one upgrade. There have also been other projects we are very proud to have delivered, and we will continue to deliver more.

In relation to education, new schools have been opened recently. These include schools in Anzac Park and Spring Farm. I am very pleased that we have also upgraded Mowbray Public School and commenced construction at Wentworth Point Public School. There are very few places in New South Wales where there is no action on the ground and infrastructure construction happening. Our message to the community, whether through the Minister for Roads and Freight, the Minister for Health, the Minister for Education or the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, is that the community should expect much more infrastructure spending. We are

providing better sporting facilities and more infrastructure to support local communities going about their daily business. Today's announcement is a strong message—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Port Stephens is on her final warning. She has been called to order three times.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Today's announcement is about our commitment to having a strong budget and strong economy to deliver infrastructure. It is important for us to have Ministers who are capable of making major decisions to deliver for our communities. It is also important to have the assistance of an expert such as Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie to make sure he cuts through any red tape to deliver these projects as soon as possible. Those opposite left the cupboard bare, and there is not a single infrastructure project that they support. They left us with a \$30 billion infrastructure black hole.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We on this side of the House are proud of what we are doing, and there will be more to come.

CBD AND SOUTH EAST LIGHT RAIL PROJECT

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) (14:42): My question is directed to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. The Government Information (Public Access)—GIPA—response I have from the Minister's department dated 7 March 2017 confirms that in October 2014 the then Minister for Transport received a report detailing the actual reasons for the cost blowout on the CBD and South East Light Rail project. Is the information contained in this supplementary response and the way it is drafted the Minister's way of demonstrating that it is the Premier and not the Minister who is at fault for the deception and disarray that has engulfed this project?

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Infrastructure) (14:43): I am very happy to outline what happened in 2014. The member for Maroubra asked for more money to be spent on light rail. He said, "I asked the Government to give a further commitment", and that indicates more money for the electorate of Maroubra when it comes to transport. The Premier has outlined an answer to this question very well. The Premier made it crystal clear that in October 2014 she put into the public domain that there was going to be a change to the original cost estimate to reflect the actual build cost for light rail. There is no doubt that those opposite are confused in relation to this project. Speaking of confusion, I note that the shadow Minister for Transport is very confused. When the shadow Minister was the member for Newcastle she was "Jodie McKay". Now she is the member for Strathfield she is "Jodie McKie", like "Hyacinth Bouquet" and "Hyacinth Bucket".

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The Minister's response is completely irrelevant to the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is remaining generally relevant. I will listen further to the Minister's answer.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: There is no doubt those opposite are very confused about light rail. We have a fantastic build happening across this city. No doubt at its core and its heart is the \$2.1 billion construction build in relation to the CBD and South East Light Rail project. I can assure members of the House, having sat through project meeting after project meeting, week in and week out, that the project is on budget and on time. As to other infrastructure projects being undertaken by this Government, we will continue to build for this city and this State. We will continue our \$73 billion infrastructure program over the next four years across regional New South Wales and metropolitan New South Wales. We will continue to build infrastructure for communities right across New South Wales. One thing I know is that those opposite have an aversion to infrastructure.

Dr Geoff Lee: They hate it.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: They hated building. We all remember the 12 projects they promised when in government, but they ended up building only half a rail line during the 16 years they were in power. We all remember the Tcard experiment. But there is no doubt that if those opposite want to continue down this path, we are happy to answer questions about infrastructure every day of the week. The fight at the next State election will be about infrastructure. I wish the member for Newcastle well with his continued opposition to light rail, because the Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Nuatali Nelmes, is reeling him in. She is getting preselection votes. The member's staff are talking in the bar in Parliament and saying that the member for Newcastle is gone. Nuatali is coming after the member for Newcastle.

RURAL AND REGIONAL TOURISM

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) (14:47): My question is addressed to the Minister for Tourism and Major Events, and Assistant Minister for Skills.

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

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN: Minister, how is the New South Wales Government boosting tourism in rural and regional New South Wales?

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

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Tourism and Major Events, and Assistant Minister for Skills) (14:48): I acknowledge the work that the member for Upper Hunter is doing promoting his electorate and I acknowledge the beautiful area that he represents. It is a real tourism destination, particularly the lovely community of Gloucester, where my father lives. I also acknowledge the year 12 legal studies students from Armidale High School and teacher Scott Howey. I am sure they will learn a lot from their experience of question time today.

As all of us on this side of the House know, without doubt rural and regional New South Wales has some amazing attractions, both natural and man made. Each is unique and each is central to the local community and the local economy. In my electorate of Northern Tablelands, visitors come from everywhere to experience the mineral waters of the Moree Artesian Aquatic Centre, which I know the member for Wyong enjoyed on his visit, as did the Minister for Health on his. It is very good to bushwalk in the national parks, to fossick for sapphires in Inverell or to enjoy some of the food and wine of the region.

The good news is that this Government is helping and partnering with rural and regional communities to enhance and develop their tourism appeal, and thereby increase the number of people they attract. This results in benefits to the local community—it creates jobs, drives visitation and helps local businesses. I am very happy to report that, on top of our \$43 million new investment in the six destination networks across regional New South Wales, and our \$6 million regional conferencing strategy, this week we have launched another very exciting initiative for rural and regional New South Wales: the Regional Growth—Environment and Tourism Fund. This is a new \$300 million fund to support—

Mr Kevin Humphries: How much?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: It is \$300 million. I am sure that the member for Barwon will be asking for a lot of this money to go out his way, representing, as he does, a vast tourism mecca in western New South Wales. This fund is all about giving rural and regional communities a chance to increase tourist numbers and to drive job creation and growth in that sector. The Deputy Premier announced earlier this week that the first \$100 million is available now for applications from councils, State government agencies, Aboriginal land councils, other Aboriginal groups, community groups and non-government organisations. We on this side of the House have deliberately made the criteria for this fund broad. Why? It is because we want to hear from regional and rural communities.

We want to hear their innovative ideas and their solutions to, perhaps, bottlenecks or pinch points that are preventing events from growing or more people getting out to those areas. We want to make sure we hear what they have to say and then invest, get this money out the door, to help country communities do what they do best: be resilient and develop their own solutions to their own local issues. We want to help them get more people out to rural and regional New South Wales. We on this side of the House, especially those of us from country communities, know what a vital role tourism plays in local economies. Doubling visitation in this State is good for country New South Wales, for rural and regional New South Wales, because it equals goals, it equals jobs and it equals employment for people servicing the needs of the extra people visiting for an event or simply to take in an attraction.

I urge people in rural and regional New South Wales to start thinking now about the environmental and tourism infrastructure that will help grow and diversify their local economies and provide long-term benefits for their communities, such as those in the electorate of the member for Upper Hunter. When this \$300 million is combined with government and private sector contributions, it will help to protect and enhance our most precious environmental assets in rural and regional New South Wales and to build new tourism attractions to get people out and about—not just our domestic tourists but our international visitors as well.

Regional tourism already contributes \$14.4 billion to the State's economy and directly employs more than 84,000 people in rural and regional New South Wales. Whilst those figures are impressive, on this side of the House we want to do more. We want to do a lot more, and that is where this fund will be absolutely vital. This Government has committed \$6 billion to regional and rural areas from Rebuilding NSW. This is in addition to our

\$110 million contribution for regional tourism infrastructure that supported the expansion and growth of airports dotted right across the landscape. This Government is investing in country New South Wales and there is no greater friend to tourism in rural and regional New South Wales than the people on this side of the House.

MINISTER FOR ENERGY AND UTILITIES

Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (14:53): My question is directed to the Premier. Given the widespread criticism inside the Government of the performance of the Premier's hand-picked Minister for Energy and Utilities, Mr Harwin, does he retain the Premier's confidence and is the Premier content for him simply to act as her Minister for Michael Photios?

The SPEAKER: Order! The question contains imputations against a Minister in the other place.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:54): I will start by saying that of course I have confidence in all my colleagues. But, given the Leader of the Opposition has opened that Pandora's box, I think it is worth going to the life and times of Luke Foley. He started off as a trade union official. Then he went—

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order: Under Standing Order 129, I raise the issue of relevance.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has just begun her answer. It is too early to take a point of order on relevance.

Mr Guy Zangari: She has to be relevant to the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! I place the member for Fairfield on three calls to order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: He went straight from the trade union movement to Sussex Street—and last time I mentioned Sussex Street the member for Lakemba stood up and said that that was casting aspersions on his reputation.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! I have ruled that it is too early to take points of order on relevance. Does the member for Maitland wish to take a different point of order?

Ms Jenny Aitchison: I refer to Standing Order 73. It is appalling that the Premier cannot speak with any respect about her own Minister and has to resort to speaking about our fabulous leader.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I never thought members of the Labor Party would twitch so much at the mention of Sussex Street, but they are obviously very wound up. He spent his time on Sussex Street as the main organiser for the Left during some of the darkest times in the Australian Labor Party's history down in Sussex Street. Then he went to the Upper House and replaced his former factional ally, Ian Macdonald. Then he did over the member for Maroubra and everybody else because he wanted to be the leader.

Mr Gareth Ward: And Barbara!

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am going to get to Barbara. Stop stealing my thunder! Do members not love it that no-one is jumping to the defence of the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr Clayton Barr: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129. While you recognised earlier that the Premier had only just opened her remarks, she is now halfway through and she still has not answered the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! Given the nature of the question, I will allow the Premier to continue.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Do members notice how those opposite are not jumping up enthusiastically to defend the Leader of the Opposition? Next he did the numbers again—and we all liked Barbara Perry. Obviously Labor's head office has mixed feelings about this as well. I will tell members how I know, and I was very interested to discover this: If members look up "member for Auburn" on the Labor Party's website, who do they think is there? Barbara Perry!

Ms Jenny Aitchison: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! I have said previously that if members ask a provocative question it will probably get the answer it deserves. The question should have been ruled out of order, but the Premier chose to answer it. I will not uphold points of order on relevance.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: I refer to Standing Order 73. The Premier should stand up for her Minister. His reputation is being impugned, but she is not standing up for him. Clearly she does not have any confidence in him.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maitland will come to order or she will be removed from the Chamber.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I want to issue a qualification. The last time we checked this was at 8.00 a.m. on Wednesday 15 February. That is about two years after she ceased being the member for Auburn. So can someone please look it up now to see whether it is still the case?

Mr David Harris: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! These are time-wasting points of orders. I will keep ordering the clock to be stopped. The Premier will have time to answer the question.

Mr Gareth Ward: You got beaten by Darren Webber.

Mr David Harris: You preselected a crook, that is your problem.

The SPEAKER: Order! Ministers and Government members will come to order.

Mr David Harris: I draw your attention to the fact that the use of props causes disorder, and it is doing so. I ask that the Premier stop using props and causing disorder.

The SPEAKER: To what prop is the member for Wyong referring?

Mr David Harris: The piece of paper she keeps holding up.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: My colleagues have very helpfully let me know the Labor Party website still has Barbara Perry as the member for Auburn after two years. It took them a few seconds to fix it and yet—

Mr Luke Foley: Point of order—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I have finished my answer.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT INQUIRIES

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) (15:01): My question is addressed to the Minister for the Environment, Minister for Local Government, and Minister for Heritage. What are the findings of the public inquiries into North Sydney Council, the former City of Auburn Council and the Murray Shire Council?

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Local Government, and Minister for Heritage) (15:01): I thank the member for Parramatta for his question and his interest in good governance in councils across this State. The reports from the three inquiries are a timely reminder that some councils, mayors, councillors and staff have failed their duty in delivering for their communities. For a few, it is about them rather than what is in their community's best interests. There are petty rivalries, there are unruly and childish antics in council meetings and shoddy practices—

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will not interject during this answer; it is a serious issue.

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON: This is a serious issue. Those shoddy practices, those petty rivalries and those childish antics that we have seen in those councils must be banished forever. We need our councils across New South Wales to be professional and ethical and to work for their communities. I will spend a few minutes reflecting on these reports, which I will table today. Richard Beasley, SC, conducted a review of the former Auburn Council. In his report he found that former deputy mayor Salim Mehajer may have breached the disclosure provisions in the Local Government Act. That issue related to the sale of council-owned property to a company associated with him.

Mr Mehajer is ineligible to stand as a councillor, as we know, because he has been disqualified by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission from managing corporations for three years. The commissioner has recommended that a review be conducted into road-closing procedures to give residents the opportunity to comment on those proposals and to lodge objections, if that is appropriate. Of course, this is important because the unauthorised road closures that occurred for Mr Mehajer's lavish and loutish wedding reception in Lidcombe prompted all this focus on the council. It really was the wedding that killed the council.

Mr Beasley praised the new Cumberland Council administrator for not proceeding with a number of planning proposals where adverse findings were made. Mr Beasley did not have any adverse findings against any individual councillor or current or former staff member. He recommended that the Act be amended to allow a commissioner appointed to a public inquiry to have the power to compel witnesses to answer questions and it is

clear from this report, as those in the House will see when I tender the reports, that this lack of ability on his part hampered evidence being brought before that inquiry.

I turn now to the North Sydney Council report prepared by Tom Howard, SC. Mr Howard found that certain decisions had been made and administrative measures undertaken that had been symptomatic of dysfunction. That included, for a time—believe it or not—the mayor not being able to access her own office. Ultimately the inquiry highlighted the need to improve conduct at council meetings and actions under the code of conduct.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members who are not interested in this report will take their conversations outside the Chamber.

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON: I have decided in light of that finding to issue that council with a performance improvement order and to provide a temporary adviser, and I will do so today. The third report I am releasing was written by Anthony Hudson and it relates to the former Murray Shire Council. It is fair to say that, shamefully, the councillors were at war with one another and some of them were at war with the general manager. That created an unhealthy and unworkable council. Merging the council with the former Wakool Shire Council to establish the Murray River Council means those divisions, of course, are no longer an issue, and that is a good thing. Put simply, an administrator in that merged council has provided a fresh start and it has made that council work for the community, which is what this Government expects.

The Government will consider all the recommendations in these reports in greater detail. I will also refer these reports to the Independent Commission Against Corruption and to other appropriate bodies for their consideration. New South Wales deserves the best councils and those who serve as councillors or are there working must meet the highest standards of integrity and professionalism. This Government expects no less than integrity and professionalism and councils serving their communities.

ORANGE HOSPITAL CAR PARK

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (15:08): My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Given that the Minister's predecessor announced \$1 million for a new 160-space car park at the Orange Hospital on November 1 last year and promised it would be funded no matter who won the Orange by-election, when can my constituents of Orange expect the new car park to be completed?

The SPEAKER: Order! I hear Opposition members saying that was a good question. It is the type of question they should ask.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research) (15:09): I thank the member for Orange for his question. The member has now been in this place for a number of weeks and he would know that the Liberal-Nationals Government has fuelled a hospital building boom across the State for the past five years. In fact, he might become a member of the Liberal Party or The Nationals because of what this Government is doing. We have allocated close to \$6 billion for new hospitals across the State, and of that about \$2 billion has been allocated to regional hospitals. It does not matter where anyone goes, they will find work being undertaken on our hospitals across New South Wales, not only in Orange.

I well recall the issue that the member raised in his question. I visited Orange with The Nationals candidate, Scott Barrett, and we talked about a range of issues, including the hospital and the car park. From memory, he told me that about \$40 million had been spent upgrading the hospital facilities. The new member for Orange is correct; I do recall that another \$1 million was allocated on 1 November when he was in Orange with the former Minister for Health. Like me, I understand that the member has spoken to the chief executive of the local health district. A number of options are being considered to deliver on that promise. It does not matter who is the local member, the Government will deliver on that promise.

There is a shortfall of about 160 car parking spaces, and they must be provided. I thank Scott McLaughlin for his work with the council. I understand the member has been briefed, so he would know that a number of options are being considered. I give the member a 100 per cent guarantee that the Government will deliver on that promise. I made it to The Nationals candidate, Scott Barrett and to the Leader of The Nationals, and I now make it to the new member for Orange: The project will be delivered. As part of the broader building boom across the State—

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting and making fools of themselves.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I look around the Chamber and I see that members are extremely happy about what this Government is building across the State. The electorate of the member for Wagga Wagga has had an allocation of \$282 million and another \$180 million is still to come. The electorate of the member for

Port Macquarie is getting \$170 million, and I will be opening a new mental health facility as soon as I can get there.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 73. The Minister is not doing himself any favours by pork-barrelling.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. If the member for Maitland takes a similar point of order she will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: We call it delivering for patients in regional New South Wales. What about the fantastic member for Lismore? The Government has spent \$100 million in his electorate. It has also spent money in Wagga Wagga, Dubbo, Port Macquarie and Bega. I forgot the \$10 million spent in Lockhart in the electorate of Wagga Wagga. This Government has also spent money in Tamworth, Armidale, Parkes and Forbes. It has spent \$80.3 million on the great community hospital at Byron Bay. I will give the local member some credit, but The Nationals member Don Page also worked hard for that. This Government will build hospitals across New South Wales. [*Extension of time*]

I like the member for Orange. In fact, I will send him membership application forms for the Liberal Party and The Nationals. The Government has already spent \$91.3 million on Dubbo Base Hospital. I could go on all day. This Government is doing so much across New South Wales. We intend to ensure that the hospital building boom we are experiencing continues for as long as we are in government.

REGIONAL PLANNING

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) (15:15): I address my question to the Minister for Planning. Will the Minister update the House on regional planning development and related matters?

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Planning, Minister for Housing, and Special Minister of State) (15:15): I thank the member for his question and for the excellent work he does representing the electorate of Albury. I take this opportunity to acknowledge my 83-year-old father. He is one of the millions of people who watch Parliament on the internet every sitting day. I love you. This is a government for all the people of our great State, especially the three million citizens who call regional and country New South Wales home. Last Friday I had the great pleasure of travelling to Albury where, together with the local member, I outlined the our Riverina Murray Regional Plan. The plan is about investing in infrastructure and making the region a vibrant economic zone.

In fact, the region has already received significant investment in infrastructure, including some \$270 million for the Wagga Wagga Rural Referral Hospital redevelopment; \$70 million for the Gocup Road upgrade; \$19.5 million for the Wagga Wagga courthouse; \$18 million for the Deniliquin police station; and \$11 million for the Riverina Highway upgrade, to name just a few. The regional cities of the area—Albury, Wagga Wagga and Griffith—will play a vital role in providing more homes, jobs and services. Importantly, the local towns and villages will build on their unique qualities and competitive strengths to thrive.

This Government is looking 20 years into the future of the eight regions that cover most of the State. Under the Labor Government, the New South Wales planning policy was about the next election cycle. The Liberal-Nationals Government is looking at generational cycles. By 2036, our regions will have changed. For example, the population of the Riverina-Murray is projected to increase by more than 11,000 people. Our communities will age, our population will grow, we will need more houses, and greater demands will be placed on public utilities. The economy will change and there will be new jobs and changes in the way traditional jobs are done. We must be prepared and create the future that we want for our kids and grandkids. We want to create a diversified, resilient economy that builds prosperous communities.

My priority and the Government's priority—and the greatest economic challenge facing this State—is housing. Over the next 20 years the majority of housing forecast for this region will be delivered in towns, urban centres and what in 20 years we will likely call cities. There are significant release areas planned for a projected demand of 12,600 homes in the Riverina. Of course, it is important to remember that we are not planning only for ourselves; we are also planning for our children. We want them to have homes they can afford near jobs in which they can thrive.

Some members opposite might find the issues facing rural and regional New South Wales amusing. They do not care. Fundamentally, the Riverina Murray Regional Plan is about planning for population growth. Members opposite should be very interested in that. No-one needs population growth more than Country Labor, whose members are starting to look a little thin on the ground after the exit of the former member for Monaro. With population in the Riverina-Murray area projected to grow substantially, maybe they will be able to scrape together

a small branch by 2020. Who knows, they could also put out a new issue of *Country Labor Dialogue*, which is the Country Labor paper of review that has not been published since 2014.

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

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: The last time Labor spoke to country New South Wales was in 2014. What scintillating content did Country Labor contribute to the media landscape in that issue? Let us see. Here we have Steve Whan digging a hole for himself. But who gave poor old Steve the shovel? Was it the Czechists of the Labor Soviet Left forcing him to dig his own grave? No? Poor Steve. What faction was he even in? Was the Left holding him as some sort of bourgeois hostage or was he a vassal of the Right? Or worse, of course, had they just forgotten about him totally? We have not forgotten about Steve—oh, no, we have not. My little birds are everywhere reporting on the movements of the various Labor factions, subfactions and personality cults. Forget about the CIA listening to you through your TV; I am listening everywhere and I know about all the conversations happening in corridors and stairwells about who has the numbers and where, when it is on and when it is not on. The Special Minister of State knows everything. [*Extension of time*]

We know everything. But I am not the only one planning. There are other plans being made in this place every morning. Labor's strategy meetings are not about the number of questions in question time; they are about other numbers. The Centre Unity faction is made up of three groups. We call them Group Alpha, Group Bravo and Group Charlie. Group Charlie—that is the McKay, Park and Car faction—is moving on Daley's Group Bravo faction, where the member for Bankstown is looking at coming across to form some sort of evil alliance to undo the good work that the deputy leader is doing in order to again move behind what they call the new heavy lifters in the shadow Cabinet, being McKay, Car and Park. They are going around calling the rest of their colleagues shirkers, lurkers and wastrels. They are the new brains of the operation.

It gives me a great sense of pleasure to be able to say that, thankfully, Group Alpha, which is run by Minns and Kamper, is still the predominant faction in the place. We are very grateful for that. Keep up that great work. Poor old Clayton is currently unaligned; he is effectively the Manchurian candidate. He is going to get the call one day with the code word. He will remember everything and he will come home behind the new leader. We are only the ones with positive plans for New South Wales. We are the ones who are going to deliver the real plans for the people of New South Wales.

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**.

Social Housing Maintenance

Petition requesting that the Government retain and properly maintain social housing, 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**.

Committees

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Report: Procurement of Government Infrastructure Projects

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): The question is that the House take note of the report.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (15:26): I speak about the report of the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure inquiry into the best practice for procurement of government infrastructure, which I tabled in the House on 23 February 2017. The strategic importance of the provision of government infrastructure to the future wellbeing of society cannot be underestimated. The committee looked into world's best practice with regard to the procurement of government infrastructure projects with particular reference to: the best process of gateway decision-making on the efficacy of public-private partnerships compared with other procurement methods; the best procurement process and documentation; the desirability of the standardisation of procurement processes and documentation; the desirability of a standard national process and documentation for the delivery of government infrastructure within a Federal structure; methods to achieve optimal contestability in tendering for the supply of services with respect to government infrastructure; and any other related matters.

From the evidence we gathered, it is fair to note that New South Wales is a leader when it comes to public-private partnership [PPP] procurement practice. Some people in our community still have apprehensions about the use by government of PPPs or privatisation. Frequently the Labor Party encourages and fuels those concerns through dishonest campaigns such as those we saw during the poles and wires 2015 election campaign. PPPs, however, have some distinct advantages over public sector infrastructure provision. PPPs involve a shifting of risk—sometimes patronage risk and sometimes other risk—to the private sector away from extra costs that may be borne by taxpayers if their Government directly provides the infrastructure. PPPs are also frequently delivered more quickly and more cheaply than public sector procurement. The profit motive of the private sector facilitates these outcomes and also provides an incentive for innovation and creativity.

Another distinct advantage to PPPs is the way in which the design, construction and long-term maintenance of public assets can be bundled together. Direct procurement by government can result in a cheap up-front cost with long-term high maintenance costs. By taking a whole-of-life attitude to the procurement and maintenance of infrastructure, a lower long-term cost to the taxpayer can be achieved through PPPs. The Coalition Government has implemented positive reforms to its procurement processes and encouraged increased interest and competition in the PPP market.

However, there is always room for improvement. In particular, the committee found that, while a wealth of experience and knowledge exists across the public sector, procurement practices vary by department. For this reason the committee recommended that the New South Wales Government investigates whether it should establish a centre of procurement excellence that would assist agencies in ensuring consistent procurement practices, improve skills and knowledge by sharing lessons learned from projects and maintain best practices across the New South Wales Government.

Another area that the committee identified for improvement was the level of information required from bidders throughout the procurement process. Stakeholders offered strong evidence that many of those requirements are redundant and onerous in the early stages of the bidding process. This results in rising bid costs which, in turn, are passed on to the Government. For this reason, the committee recommended that unnecessary information should be eliminated and, where practical, procurement contracts should be reviewed and standardised. The committee made further recommendations with the aim of reducing bid costs, including the provision of a clear, consistent and transparent pipeline of infrastructure projects. Apart from minimising bid costs, this will also increase contestability in procurement.

Stakeholders provided compelling evidence that inadequate forward planning impacted directly on bid costs and a more consistent and transparent pipeline of projects would result in reduced bid costs. The committee recognises the importance of contestability relating to procurement practices. It heard from key stakeholders that the allocation of project risk may often prevent some from bidding. In response to this, the committee recommended that the NSW Public Private Partnerships Guidelines include clear principles for the allocation of project risk and, additionally, that the Government assess whether the contracting out of proportionate liability provisions should be prohibited across government contracts.

Lastly, the committee received evidence about the importance of the quality of steel used in infrastructure projects, and the impact of imported steel on the steel industry and the quality of construction. The committee

considered the steel requirements in government procurement and recommended that the Government investigate the best means to ensure that steel used on government projects complies with the Australian standards. In arriving at our conclusions, we were greatly assisted by the submissions and evidence received from industry participants and government representatives from New South Wales and other jurisdictions. I thank them for their valuable time in assisting the committee with its work. I particularly thank the governments of New Zealand and Canada, as well the New South Wales Department of Treasury representatives for sharing their knowledge and practices with the committee.

I thank my fellow committee members for their dedication and collegiality. It has been a pleasure and an honour chairing our meetings, as well as working with other members and hearing their contributions while completing the report. This is my last act as the Chair of the committee. I thank Legislative Assembly committee staff Jason Ardit, Emma Wood, Jacqueline Linnane and Abigail Turingan for the expertise and the professionalism they applied in assisting the committee members and me.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (15:31): I make a brief contribution on the report of the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure. The shadow Minister for Transport, and shadow Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight and I represented the Opposition on this committee. Committee members had a productive dialogue. Procurement does not get a great deal of attention, but the way in which it is achieved is critical. I—and perhaps one or two other members—am extremely interested and passionate about public policy, particularly public policy that drives economic outcomes. It may not be a headline issue, but if governments of all persuasions do not get it right we will waste taxpayers' money and miss out on opportunities for benefits to filter through to rural and regional communities.

There was some debate and dissent about the recommendations that were made in the final report, but we enjoyed participating in those discussions. I acknowledge the submissions that various people made to the committee. They were detailed and gave all members an enormous amount of understanding. I hope that people in Treasury and Finance, especially the large building agencies in health, transport and education, take careful note of those submissions. Those people who work in the sector have spent a considerable amount of time preparing their detailed submissions. They have also looked at contemporary ways in which we can reduce red tape and ensure that small and medium players can access the market. I am passionate about equal opportunities and ensuring that we get the best value for money.

We had a debate on steel procurement in this place today. The Opposition would like the Government to take a different view. I am interested in the long-term benefits that procurement can bring. Although the bottom line is important, we must look beyond it. We cannot pay a premium for everything. Members have a responsibility in this place to ensure that the money from taxpayers is used wisely so that we obtain the best economic benefits that will last as long as possible. The steel industry is dear to my heart because I come from a region that is heavily involved with steel and I know that procurement decisions can have an enormous impact. Communities in my electorate follow steel procurement carefully, which is why Labor will continue to look at ways to ensure we benefit from the way it is procured. The Government is a large procurer of infrastructure and goods and services and we must continue to ensure it is done in the best way possible. Although committee members did not always agree, I acknowledge the Chair and my fellow members for their efforts and deliberations. I enjoyed the discussions we had on this important issue.

Report noted.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE (PAC)

Report: Examination of Auditor-General's Performance Audit Reports December 2014 - June 2015

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): The question is that the House take note of the report.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) (15:36): I speak on the Public Accounts Committee report entitled "Examination of Auditor-General's Performance Audit Reports December 2014 - 2015", which was tabled on 7 March 2017. It is the second report of the Public Accounts Committee's performance audit review program to be tabled in the Fifty-sixth Parliament. The 10 performance audits examined by the committee during the most recent inquiry were entitled: "Learning Management and Business Reform [LMBR] program"; "WestConnex: Assurance to the Government"; "Security of Critical IT Infrastructure"; "Vocational Education and Training Reform"; "Managing length of stay and unplanned readmissions in NSW public hospitals"; "Country Towns Water and Sewerage Program"; "Large construction projects: Independent assurance"; "Government Advertising 2015"; "Implementing performance audit recommendations"; and "Efficiency and effectiveness in tax collection".

After considering agency responses to each audit, the committee conducted a more detailed examination of five of the audits by way of a public hearing held on 7 November 2016. The audits examined at the hearing

were those entitled "Learning Management and Business Reform program"; "Security of Critical IT Infrastructure"; "Large construction projects: Independent assurance"; "Government Advertising"; and "Efficiency and effectiveness of tax collection". The committee found that in the majority of cases the responsible agencies had implemented most of the recommendations of the Auditor-General. However, after further examination, the committee has made six additional recommendations for three of the performance audits, targeting the Learning Management and Business Reform program, information technology [IT] security infrastructure, and tax collection.

The first set of recommendations addresses the past deficiencies in planning and implementing the Learning Management and Business Reform program. The committee remained concerned that the expenditure in the program was significantly underestimated and that the costs and benefits expected throughout the life of the program were clearly not defined and have not been fully realised. The LMBR has been a large-scale, complex and long-term business transformation program, which has required the preparation of a rigorous business case. The committee notes that the Auditor-General found that planning at the outset involved a lot of uncertainties about the detailed requirements of the system and the associated cost and time line. Therefore, this committee recommendation was made to prevent further cost overruns. The committee supports another Audit Office review of the next stage of the program to assess the effectiveness of project management, governance and changed management processes.

In this age of increased reliance on digital information, it is essential to ensure that critical IT infrastructure is safeguarded and robust enough to withstand external threats. To this end, in its second set of recommendations the committee urges Transport for NSW and Roads and Maritime Services to provide the Auditor-General with a formalised and comprehensive policy designed to identify, assess and record all such electronic security risks. The committee's last set of recommendations are addressed to the Office of State Revenue [OSR] and are designed to assist in increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of tax collection in New South Wales. The committee believes further investigative research by OSR into new methodologies as well as improved performance reporting will greatly assist its work.

In the area of government advertising the committee commented that Destination NSW, in rejecting one of the recommendations, prompted the committee to explore the reasons for the rejection by taking further evidence at a public hearing. The committee noted that Destination NSW and the Audit Office appear to have a difference of opinion in relation to the way the campaigns are defined to trigger a cost-benefit analysis. After hearing from both agencies, the committee finds that this is not a major concern requiring any further action. In conclusion, I thank the Auditor-General, Ms Margaret Crawford, and the staff of the Audit Office for their cooperation in this inquiry. I also thank my fellow committee members and the fantastic committee secretariat for their assistance during the inquiry process and in the preparation of this report. I commend the report to the House.

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (15:41): As deputy chair of the Public Accounts Committee, I make a brief contribution to debate on the committee's report. I draw the attention of the House to chapter 3 of the report—the Security of Critical IT Infrastructure. As the Chair outlined succinctly, in the past two decades the integration of process control systems with other networks has increased the risk of unauthorised users obtaining access to these systems and potentially threatening the operation of critical infrastructure. Given the importance of critical information technology infrastructure in operating and maintaining things such as traffic signal networks and the Sydney metropolitan water supply system, the Auditor-General conducted a performance audit to examine the security and integrity of those systems. One can understand the importance of those systems to the community of New South Wales. The main agencies reviewed in the audit included Transport for NSW, Roads and Maritime Services and the Sydney Water Corporation.

The Auditor-General made a number of recommendations for those agencies, including Transport for NSW, with respect to traffic lights. With the large number of traffic lights across New South Wales and the age of some of them, there was certainly room for improvement. The agency responded to those recommendations. With respect to the Sydney Water Corporation, the audit report concluded that the corporation was adequately equipped to deal with the impact of security incidents and had well-developed testing procedures for security incidents and major outages, and had provided relevant training for staff. Those measures appear to have been satisfactorily addressed by the agency. In completing its review the committee was satisfied that the relevant agencies have fulfilled the requirements of the Auditor-General's recommendations and had responded to the reports. There were some formal policy improvements to be made, and they were noted. As the Chair has indicated, the committee appreciates the cooperation from all those agencies involved in their responses to the Auditor-General's report. I commend the report to the House and I commend the work of the Chair of the committee.

Report noted.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 32/56**

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): The question is that the House take note of the report.

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) (15:44): I thank the House for the opportunity to speak about the Legislation Review Committee's thirty-second digest for the Fifty-sixth Parliament. The committee reviewed three bills introduced into Parliament in the sitting week commencing 21 February 2017. The committee identified issues in relation to two of those bills. In addition to this, the committee reported on one regulation. I will now outline some of the observations of the committee. The Biosecurity Amendment Bill 2017 is before the House following the Minister's consultation with stakeholders. The principal Act was passed in 2015 and the Minister is in the process of introducing regulations and making amendments to the principal legislation to ensure that the Act works as intended.

One issue identified by our committee is that this bill authorises the regulations to outline when it will be mandatory for the relevant authority to suspend or cancel the accreditation of a biosecurity certifier or auditor. The committee commented because the regulations will be authorised to prescribe the circumstances in which a person's right to work can be suspended or cancelled. However, the principal Act contains some safeguards. The relevant authority must invite the certifier or auditor to make submissions about the proposed suspension or cancellation. There is also an appeals process available through the Land and Environment Court. Due to these safeguards, the committee made no further comment on this bill.

The State Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2017 amends several Acts that relate to the taxes and duties functions of the Office of State Revenue. The focus of these amendments is to ensure that clients in similar circumstances have similar outcomes, combat tax avoidance, reduce red tape and harmonise New South Wales practices with other States and Territories. Our committee commented on the amendment that allows information obtained in the course of work under the legislation to be disclosed to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. Whilst this has privacy implications, the committee understands that such information is relevant to the regulation of the not-for-profit and charities sector. In these circumstances, the committee did not consider this to be unreasonable.

The Liquor Amendment Regulation 2016 was made following the Callinan review. It relaxes the existing lock-out and last-drinks restrictions in the case of live entertainment venues in Kings Cross and the Sydney central business district [CBD]. Our committee has noted the ongoing restrictions on individuals wearing clothing, jewellery or accessories that identify a number of additional motorcycle organisations. We recognise that this may trespass on personal rights and liberties, including freedom of association. Given those individuals may be able to enter the premises if the identifying garments or accessories are removed, the committee made no further comment. The regulation continues the freeze on licences in the Sydney CBD. The committee recognises that this may have an adverse impact on the business community. Given the public policy aims of the regulation in relation to alcohol-fuelled violence, the committee made no further comment on this issue.

The regulation applied the lock-out and last-drinks provisions to additional premises. Again, the committee noted that this may have an adverse impact on the business community. However, the committee again noted the broader public health and safety objectives of the regulation and made no further comment. There is a number of ways in which the committee brings issues to the attention of Parliament and the Executive. We prepare the digest, which is tabled each sitting week and published on the internet. I deliver take-note speeches—such as the one I am making now—to highlight to everyone in this place the issues of concern to the committee in relation to the bills being debated. I also write to the responsible Ministers advising them of the comments outlined in the digest. I would like the House to note that when I write to the relevant Minister I do not seek a response; rather, I bring particular issues to the Minister's attention for consideration. As always, I thank the committee staff and members for their assistance, and I commend the digest to the House.

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (15:49): My contribution to debate on the Legislation Review Committee report entitled "Legislation Review Digest No. 32/56" will be brief. The report is a consequence of the committee's meeting held on 7 March. I support the comments of the Chair of the committee, the member for Upper Hunter, and I acknowledge the comments contained in the digest. I wish to report on the interesting discussion we had in relation to the utility or otherwise of collating notifications made to relevant Ministers or members when the committee comments on legislation. We discussed collating the notifications in order to assess whether the comments had been addressed by the Ministers or members, and if so how they were addressed.

This assessment would determine whether the committee was having any effect on the issues raised about legislation. We had an interesting discussion, and at the conclusion of the discussion the collation was voted down by Government members. I am sure we will return to the idea, as it goes to the efficacy of the committee and

whether our comments are noted and given the necessary attention by members. I commend the report to the House.

Report noted.

Matter of Public Importance

KIDNEY HEALTH WEEK

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (15:50): As shadow Minister for Medical Research and on behalf of the New South Wales Opposition, I am proud to introduce this matter of public importance on Kidney Health Week. Kidney Health Week is an initiative of Kidney Health Australia, with the purpose of raising awareness of kidney health and the importance of the prevention and early detection of kidney-related diseases. Kidney Health Week commenced on Sunday 5 March and will conclude on Saturday 11 March. Historically, Kidney Week has been celebrated in May, but this year Kidney Health Australia moved it to coincide with World Kidney Day, which is recognised globally on the second Thursday of March each year. According to Kidney Health Australia, two Australians sadly die every hour due to kidney-related diseases, and an estimated 1.7 million Australians are presently affected by one clinical sign of chronic kidney disease. In most circumstances, due to the asymptomatic nature of kidney disease, many of those affected may not be aware of their condition. Kidney disease is for this reason often referred to as a silent killer. Many individuals are not aware that their kidney function has been affected unless they have consulted a doctor.

A healthy kidney is instrumental in the overall health and wellbeing of our bodies. Most people are born with two kidneys, usually the size of an adult fist. A person can function normally in most instances with just one kidney, but a human being will die if both kidneys do not function and dialysis is not received regularly. The kidney is the organ responsible for processing and cleaning a person's blood supply, which is circulated through the kidneys up to 12 times per hour. The kidneys filter and clean the blood, primarily to remove waste and toxins. Kidneys also play a role in maintaining blood pressure, water balance and vitamin D activation.

One of the biggest risk factors leading to the increased prevalence of kidney-related disease in New South Wales and throughout Australia is obesity. At present Kidney Health Australia estimates that approximately 63 per cent of Australians are overweight or obese, with this figure expected only to increase in the coming years. A person's weight, particularly excess weight, has been proven to correlate directly with the development and progression of chronic kidney disease. Conditions such as hypertension and diabetes, which are likely to coincide with obesity, also significantly increase the chances of being diagnosed with kidney-related disease. Approximately one-third of chronic kidney disease diagnoses are related to obesity, and a person who is obese is twice as likely to develop an issue with a kidney when compared with a person with a healthy body weight.

Sadly, there are some regions within our State that are disproportionately affected by higher instances of obesity, and so people in these regions are at greater risk of developing a kidney-related disease. Western New South Wales has a 71 per cent obesity rate. South-eastern New South Wales has a 69 per cent obesity rate. The Hunter and Central Coast have a 68 per cent obesity rate. Nepean-Blue Mountains has a 67 per cent obesity rate, and Western Sydney has a 65 per cent obesity rate. By preventing obesity we know that we can help to eradicate many types of diseases, and one of those is kidney-related disease.

Given the asymptomatic nature of kidney disease, it is important to get kidneys checked by local general practitioners [GPs]. I know all members of Parliament encourage our constituents to visit a local GP and understand the value of having regular health checks. I work with many different groups in my electorate of Bankstown trying to encourage members of community groups to speak to a broader range of community members. Many of these community members come from multicultural backgrounds, for example, and are affected by different socio-economic circumstances. We emphasise the value of having regular check-ups by GPs for the health of family members, and we talk about the need to have regular kidney checks. I acknowledge the valuable work that Kidney Health Australia does in promoting health education for different age groups in community organisations and neighbourhood centres. Kidney Health Australia encourages organisations to speak to their clients and make sure that they understand the need to have regular kidney checks.

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (15:56): It is a pleasure to speak in debate on this matter of public importance acknowledging Kidney Health Week, which was raised by the member for Bankstown. It is important to note that the health of our people affects the state of the nation. We have heard about the rising cost of health care for all forms of government—an issue that is difficult to tackle. We know that prevention is better than cure. Prevention relies on awareness, and improving awareness is helped by World Kidney Day. On this day we are given the opportunity to talk to family members, friends and colleagues about kidney health, which will lead to better quality of life for the people of New South Wales. As the member for Bankstown said, kidneys are the unsung heroes of our bodies. They perform very important functions including blood pressure control, water

balance, cleansing the blood and vitamin D activation. Around 1.7 million Australians under the age of 18 have some sign of chronic kidney disease.

Risk factors for kidney disease include diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity. Obesity is an issue with a high profile, and that is why the promotion of sporting activities has been pursued by members on this side of the House through initiatives such as local sports grants. Children are encouraged to play sport and eat healthily, with school breakfast initiatives contributing to healthy lifestyle choices and instilling good eating habits in future generations. Kids need to be encouraged to play outdoors and purchase healthy foods from school canteens. In my electorate of Seven Hills the Lords Recreation Centre soccer team particularly focuses on encouraging children from disadvantaged communities to play sport. Also, Seven Hills High School provides school breakfasts for children who otherwise would not have a healthy breakfast to help improve the health of these children.

Speaking of the Seven Hills electorate, the great Westmead Hospital is located in my electorate, as is the Westmead Children's Hospital, which is home to the New South Wales Centre for Kidney Research. The centre has a group of some 30 researchers, doctors, scientists and administration staff who are working towards the goal of improving kidney health. The Centre for Kidney Research is one of the oldest and largest kidney research groups in the Southern Hemisphere. The centre provides insights into new treatments, methods of diagnosis, prevention and the enhancement of the quality of life of children and adults with, or at risk of, kidney disease. This work is supported by the State and Federal governments. The centre's research aims are to identify the causes of disease, to find treatments for these—including methods of prevention—and to evaluate the evidence for current treatments.

On this day it is important to recognise this work and to encourage all those in our community, all those we work with, to discuss this issue. We need to make sure we take the appropriate tests and that we have the necessary discussions with our doctors. We need to look after each other and look after ourselves. That is the most important thing, to look after ourselves—because we need to contribute to those around us and we need to make this a better place. One of the best ways to do that is to raise awareness about serious chronic illnesses like kidney disease. I thank the member for Bankstown for raising this important matter today.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (16:00): I too thank the outstanding member for Bankstown for raising this important issue in the House. This week, 5 March to 11 March, is Kidney Health Week, and today is World Kidney Day. The theme is "Kidney Disease and Obesity. Healthy Lifestyle for Healthy Kidneys". I take this opportunity to congratulate Kidney Health Australia on the great work it does in raising awareness of this terrible disease. It does a marvellous job in education, research, advocacy and support to improve and save the lives of Australians affected by kidney disease, and I commend it for that. Kidney disease is one of the few downsides to our massive improvement in living standards over the past two centuries. Chronic kidney disease is a lifestyle disease driven by our diets—rich in calories, sugar and salt—and exacerbated by a lack of exercise. With 63 per cent of Australians overweight or obese, including me—

[Interruption]

I do not know about the member for Fairfield, and I am too much of a gentleman to make any reflection on the member for Bankstown, who is interjecting. With 63 per cent of Australians overweight or obese, the incidence of kidney disease is reaching crisis point. Being overweight makes one 1.5 times as likely to contract kidney disease as someone at a healthy weight. For obese people, the risk is doubled. In the 2017 report on obesity and chronic kidney disease, Kidney Health Australia referred to kidney disease as "a hidden impact". Kidney disease can be hard to detect, simply because symptoms may not show up until it is too late to stop it. The remarkable thing about kidneys is that they work 24 hours a day filtering our blood and keeping our systems free of toxins and waste. They are resilient and will continue to function when they have lost 90 per cent of their function. At that point they shut down and chronic disease sets in. As I have pointed out, the risks associated with kidney disease are high.

One of the advantages of contributing to debates on matters of public importance is that it often reminds members of Parliament like me of important issues and increases our own awareness, as well as that of the general population. I was certainly prompted, after reading the speech that had been drafted for me, to remember to get a blood test and a kidney test organised with my general practitioner [GP] for tomorrow—something everybody in Australia should do. So rather than sleeping in after Parliament tomorrow morning, I will be seeing my GP at 8 o'clock. I thank my young staffer who drafted this speech. He has referred to me as "a man not as young as he used to be". That is what one would expect from a 22-year-old staffer. But the reality is that everybody needs to see their GP and get themselves a kidney check so urgent intervention can be undertaken should kidney disease be detected. *[Time expired.]*

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (16:04): By leave: I support this important matter of public importance—Kidney Health Week—introduced by the member for Bankstown and note the comments made by

all those members who participated in debate this afternoon. However, I would like to focus on some of the symptoms of kidney disease of which we should all be aware. These could include nausea; vomiting; loss of appetite; fatigue; weakness; sleep problems; changes in how much one urinates; decreased mental sharpness; muscle twitches and cramps; swelling of the feet and ankles; persistent itching; chest pain—that is if fluid builds up in the lining around the heart—shortness of breath if fluid builds up in the lungs; and high blood pressure. It has been mentioned in the debate this afternoon that obesity—being overweight or obese—puts one in a higher risk category for developing chronic kidney disease.

I also echo the sentiments of the member for Bankstown in thanking Kidney Health Australia, which is driving this Kidney Health Week campaign from 5 March through to 11 March 2017—with today, being 9 March and World Kidney Day, the most important day of that week. Kidney Health Australia is running community events such as the Kidney Kar Rally, the Kidney Health Research Walk, the Big Red BBQ, the Inspired Adventures and, of course, the Kidney Health Golf Day. But it does not end there. There is more that it does in providing awards and recognition, especially for doctors, carers and nurses. The organisation has some special awards, including Operation Angel, which recognises unsung heroes in the kidney sector, and its service excellence awards. These are important.

The organisation also provides information sessions in forums, including the Your Kidney Forum and the How to Use Your Kidney Forum. They also provide much community support. There is a Kidney Club that provides support for children living with chronic kidney disease. It is especially important to ensure that children understand what they need to do to avoid chronic kidney disease. This year the theme around the world is "Kidney Disease and Obesity. Healthy Lifestyle for Healthy Kidneys", and it is important to emphasise the statistic that one-third of chronic kidney disease cases in Australia could be related to excess weight. I am running out of time, so I again thank the member for Bankstown for bringing this important matter of public importance before the House today.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (16:07): In reply: I thank those members representing the electorates of Seven Hills, Heffron and Fairfield for their support for today's matter of public importance. I echo their sentiments about encouraging their constituents to have those very necessary health checks. It was remiss of me not to mention earlier the type of treatment that sufferers of kidney disease must undertake. It is important to note that there is no cure for kidney disease. In the instances where a transplant is not available, which is most cases, patients have to rely on dialysis—and that treatment process often requires patients to attend a hospital three times a week to be attached to a machine for four to five hours while their blood is being filtered and cleaned of toxins.

I can only imagine—and I have spoken to a number of constituents who undertake this treatment, and I know of one in particular who has, for a number of years now, regularly attended the local hospital to undertake such treatment—how difficult it is for the families. It impacts on one's work life and one's personal life when one has to factor in this type of treatment every week of one's life. That is disruptive for one's family and for oneself. That is why, as all three members indicated in their speeches, prevention needs to take precedence over treatment or trying to find a cure—and the best prevention is to remind people to be as healthy as they can be and to seek support at the earliest sign that their health is deteriorating.

I take this opportunity to again acknowledge Kidney Health Australia on, most importantly, the education that it undertakes and its campaign highlighting the instances of the disease. This morning I had a chance to speak on the motion about the Leukaemia Foundation and medical research, and the good news that fewer people are being diagnosed with leukaemia, the results are improving, and people are surviving longer. Sadly, the same cannot be said for kidney disease. As Kidney Health Australia has predicted, by 2020 more than 30,000 patients—close to 32,000—will be affected by kidney disease. That tells us how important it is for us as members of Parliament to get the message out there that people must look after themselves and look after their kidneys.

Community Recognition Statements

FUTSAL PLAYER ANGUS STEWART

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (16:10): I inform the House that 11-year-old Angus Stewart from Tinonee has been selected to tour in Malaysia with the Australian under-12 Futsal team. The team will be away for a fortnight in November. They will be playing in a number of local competitions and will also feature in a tournament involving the other international teams towards the end of the tour. Angus gained a place in the squad following the national championship played at Penrith. He was a member of the Manning Far North Coast side. Manning Far North Coast did not have a great campaign, missing out on the finals, but Angus did enough to impress selectors.

Angus started playing Futsal about four years ago. Last year he signed with Furious 8, who won the Manning Futsal premiership. They are currently leading the competition in their bid to defend the title. Angus is a member of the Tinonee Eagles Soccer Club and will go into under 12s this year. Angus started playing soccer with the Eagles when he was five, following his older sister in the sport. He would eventually like to try out for the Football Mid North Coast teams and he will see how it fares at Tinonee this season. Angus is also captain at Tinonee Public School.

TRIBUTE TO ARTHUR WATSON

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (16:11): Today I congratulate an inspiring Old Guildford resident, Mr Arthur Watson, who has umpired an outstanding 750 cricket matches. Arthur's impressive record of achievement includes umpiring 365 first grade games, 60 second grade, 83 third grade, 129 fourth grade, 92 fifth grade and 21 shires association matches. Arthur has also umpired three one-day men's internationals, 10 first class matches and a women's one-day international. Arthur is a well-regarded local and has umpired some of our nation's cricketers over the last 45 years. As an avid fan of the cricket and co-patron of the Fairfield Liverpool Cricket Association, I express my profound gratitude to Arthur for his invaluable contributions to cricket and our local community. Howzat?

NORSKE SKOG YOUNG ACHIEVER OF THE YEAR

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) (16:12): Congratulations to Brooke Dickie who was named the 2017 Norske Skog Young Achiever of the Year at the Sport Albury Wodonga Awards dinner last Friday. Eighteen-year-old Brooke has been a champion water polo player at a junior level and her prowess resulted in a place on the Australian team for the FINA World Youth Women's Water Polo Championships held in December 2016. Brooke has moved from Albury to Sydney to join the Sydney University Lions in the National Water Polo League and now trains at the New South Wales Institute of Sport. Her dream is to represent Australia in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. Well done, Brooke! May your dreams become a reality. Congratulations also to chairman Rob McDonald and the team at Sport Albury Wodonga on a great evening celebrating the sporting achievements of our young people. This event grew out of the Albury Wodonga Festival of Sport and on the 25th anniversary of the World Cup cricket match in Albury it was an honour to sit beside Graeme Hicks, the founder and inspiration for the festival.

SYDNEY SECONDARY COLLEGE BALMAIN CAMPUS OVAL

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (16:13): I bring to the attention of the House the outstanding work of Balmain and District Football Club, Sydney Secondary College (Balmain Campus) and parents and citizens committee in successfully applying for a Community Building Partnership Program grant for the refurbishment of the school's top oval. I acknowledge president of the Balmain Football Club David Birds, registrar Paul Avery and Nat Hughes, principal of the Sydney Secondary College Judy Kelly and, from the Balmain campus, Lee Wright, former principal John Levingston, former deputy principal Janice Cuke, relieving principal Julianne Beek, the current Balmain principal and school leaders Francis Smith and Angus McGlyn. From the parents and citizens association, I acknowledge Dave Bennet, immediate past president Cathy Robinson, current president Paul Avery, treasurer Jacob Messer, secretary Kathryn Reynolds, and events officer Steve Carter, executive member. The new playing field is a great improvement and I was delighted to facilitate this grant and to be part of the recent opening. Congratulations to all involved.

TRIBUTE TO SENIOR CONSTABLE BRUCE WHITWELL

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (16:14): I acknowledge Senior Constable Bruce Whitwell of Sylvania, who after 45 years of service to the NSW Police Force has hung up his police hat for the last time. Bruce joined the force at the age of 21 in general duties but quickly moved into the traffic branch. In 1986 he began in highway patrol, which is where he has loved working for the past 31 years. Bruce has served under 11 New South Wales police commissioners, has seen the service name change multiple times and has witnessed how technology has transformed the entire profession. He has gone from using a typewriter to do reports and barely having a radio in the police car, to using car computers and automatic numberplate reading systems. Many in the service consider Bruce a living legend as he carries out his duties with professionalism, courtesy and compassion. His many years of commitment have been crucial in maintaining the peace, good order and safety of our local area. I thank Bruce for his 45 years of service to the NSW Police Force and dedication to serve and protect our local community.

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Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale) (16:15): I congratulate Mr Sotiris Tsouris on his recent award of the Medal of the Order of Australia at the 2017 Australia Day Honours. Mr Tsouris gives a great deal of his time to charitable and community work, and has been one of the most prominent advocates for the Cypriot community in New South Wales for many years. For nearly four years Mr Tsouris has served as President of the

Cyprus Community Club of New South Wales, a fantastic facility and community hub in Stanmore that has played an important role in the development of the entire Hellenic community in Sydney for more than 80 years.

Given the celebration of International Women's Day yesterday, I should also note that one of Sotiris' achievements within the Cypriot community was encouraging more women into leadership positions than ever before. I believe community advocates like Mr Tsouris, who work tirelessly in these voluntary roles, are a large part of the reason that multiculturalism has been such a success in Australia. Given the historical and continuing oppression faced by the Cypriot people, it is particularly important that representatives of that community are acknowledged and celebrated by the Australian Government, and I put on the record here today my respect for Mr Tsouris and his work.

MRS ELIZABETH SZILAGYI 104TH BIRTHDAY

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) (16:16): I recognise Mrs Elizabeth Szilagyi's recent birthday. Elizabeth has recently celebrated her 104th birthday and could well be the oldest Southern Highlands resident. Elizabeth is originally from Hungary and has lived in London, Canada, Sydney and Wingello and for the past 24 years has lived in Bowral. Elizabeth became an Australian Citizen in 1968. She travelled to Hungary in her nineties to visit nieces and nephews still living there. She has assisted in kindergarten classes and was a milk bottle delivery girl in her earlier years. Elizabeth is a fantastic stalwart of our local community. The community of Bowral loves her to bits and we take this opportunity to wish her a very happy birthday.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (16:16): Yesterday the world celebrated International Women's Day. Globally, women are paid less than men, are under-represented in business and politics, and in many places have less access to health care and education than men. This needs to change. I acknowledge some of the outstanding women leaders in the electorate of Prospect: Kerrie Denton, who is the manager of the Cassia Support Centre in Pendle Hill, which supports hundreds of socially vulnerable families; Jessica Chironna, from Smithfield, a teenager who has been recognised as one of the best apprentice tradespeople in Australia; and Ellie Carpenter, from Pemulwuy, who at the age of 16 is playing professional soccer for Australia in the Western Sydney Wanderers and has already scored an international goal.

I also acknowledge Carmen Lazar, founder of the Assyrian Resource Centre, who actively works towards helping refugees build a new life; the team at Fairfield Parent Support Centre who provide invaluable support for socially vulnerable women in south-west Sydney; the New South Wales Secretary of the Australian Tamil Congress, Varuni Bala, and Padma Thangarajah, the first woman to be president of the Tamil Seniors' Association, who both live locally; and finally the Iraqi Women's League who bring together women who have seen violence in the Middle East. I congratulate them all.

WINSTON HILLS FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (16:17): I pay tribute to the community work of a constituent of mine, Rodney Carra of Winston Hills, and his team on the Winston Hills Football Club committee. Rodney took over as president of the club from the community stalwart Grant Walton at the end of last year with a vision to see the club prosper in the decades to come. I was lucky enough to meet Rodney a few weeks ago to discuss his plans and the hard work already being undertaken to ensure a successful season in 2017. The club now boasts around 450 junior members in mixed, girls' and boys' sides. Since being established in 1970 the club has been at the heart of the Winston Hills community. I also inform the House that McCoy Park, Toongabbie, where the Winston Hills Bears play home games, has been recently upgraded by the City of Parramatta, which will be of benefit to all players, spectators and local families. Well done Rodney, and go the Bears in 2017.

MANDAEAN CULTURAL DAY

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) (16:18): Today I recognise the Mandaean Cultural Day held at Liverpool at the Whitlam Leisure Centre on Saturday 11 February. The event was organised by the Sabian Mandaean Association in Australia. Mandeans have been subject to considerable repression and violence in their countries of origin, most especially in Iraq. There are now more Mandeans in Australia than in any other country in the diaspora. Facing a threat to their continuing existence and having proportionately more Mandeans in Australia, a day to proclaim and showcase Mandaean culture was a matter of great importance to the community and I was delighted to be present for the event and join in that celebration. The gathering was addressed by religious leaders Rishema Salah Chohaili from Australia, who spoke in Aramaic, and Rishema Sattar Jabbar Hillo. Also contributing to the event was the President of the Sabian Mandaean Association in Australia, Yassmen Yahya, and the Children of Light Choir, a choir of Mandaean children who presented several Mandaean hymns. It was a pleasure to attend this meeting.

INABURRA SCHOOL WORLD'S GREATEST SHAVE

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (16:19): I congratulate Inaburra School, and particularly the year 12 students, who have raised a record \$70,000 for the World's Greatest Shave. I wish them all the best for the World's Greatest Shave.

ASSOCIATION OF THE SS CROCIFISSO ANNUAL FESTIVAL

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) (16:19): On Sunday 26 February I had the great pleasure of attending the annual festival held by the Association of the SS Crocifisso. This festival celebrated the Most Holy Crucifix of Terranova, a religious statue from Reggio, Calabria. The festival started with a mass at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, led by Father Anthony Fregolent. The procession then moved to Mounties oval, where the afternoon festivities included a concert, fireworks, food and rides for the kids. It was great to see many generations of the Italian community, young and old, participating in the festival and continuing a tradition spanning decades. I thank Domenic Luci, the president of the association, for hosting and inviting me to attend this wonderful community event.

TRIBUTE TO JOYCE DONOVAN

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (16:20): I am extremely pleased that Joyce Donovan of Gerringong has been officially recognised in the New South Wales Government's Women of the Year Awards held in Darling Harbour earlier this week. Aunty Joyce, as she is affectionately known in the Illawarra and more widely, is a leader who has earned the respect of the Aboriginal community that entitles her to be called an elder. Aunty Joyce felt so strongly about unveiling the scourge of child abuse that she travelled all over New South Wales, sleeping on floors and living out of her car, gaining support for marches against child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities.

Following the success of the walks and the Purple Ribbon Project, she was asked to coordinate an annual candle vigil to recognise that there will be no more silence over child abuse. She travelled thousands of miles conducting healing ceremonies for victims of domestic violence and bringing her message that it takes a whole community to raise a child. Joyce has worked tirelessly for more than 40 years on behalf of local Aboriginal communities and was the driving force behind the establishment of an Aboriginal Medical Service in Wollongong. On a personal note, I have been very fond of Joyce and I thank her for her outstanding efforts on behalf of our community.

KIRKETON ROAD CENTRE

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (16:21): I congratulate the Kirketon Road Centre [KRC] and Director Dr Ingrid van Beek. The centre celebrates 30 years of world-leading operation this year. Dr van Beek celebrates 28 years working with the centre first as a clinician, later as director. KRC is a centre of excellence working with vulnerable, marginalised and alienated people who usually struggle to get health care, including at-risk young people, injecting drug users and sex workers. The approach adds to the general practitioner services with innovative and responsive outreach, consumer partnerships, support groups, needle exchange and drop-in clinics. Dr van Beek has been an inspiring advocate for effective health services for those most at risk of harm. She has shepherded KRC through pioneering drug and HIV service provision and championed the establishment and operation of the Kings Cross Medically Supervised Injecting Centre. I thank KRC for many years of service. I thank Ingrid van Beek for her outstanding commitment and record of achievement and wish her well on her retirement.

LOWER CLARENCE HOSPITAL AUXILIARY SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (16:22): I was thrilled to attend the sixtieth anniversary of the Lower Clarence Hospital Auxiliary last Sunday. President Sandra Bradbury and her wonderful team of volunteers do a fantastic job within the community. This amazing group has raised an enormous amount of money from a small community over a long period for the Maclean Hospital. The hospital benefits the entire Lower Clarence community. Over the past 10 years they have raised a staggering \$915,000. I acknowledge the other committee members: Edie Quick, Margaret Annand, Rhonda Shaw, Alida Morley, Rita Nutt, Janine Adams, and Maggie Combley. Congratulations to all volunteers who have worked so hard for such a worthy cause over the past 60 years. They have our heartfelt thanks.

1ST ALEXANDRIA SCOUT TROOP

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (16:23): Recently I visited the 1st Alexandria Scout Troop to inspect their hall and present them with a cheque for their \$9,000 Community Building Partnership grant to upgrade its kitchen facilities. What I saw there truly amazed me. The troop is a truly great scouting success story. Until recently, the troop and its hall on Henderson Road had been defunct for two decades. Now, thanks to the hard

work put in by Scott Lyall and the campaign run by the Friends of Alexandria Scouts, alongside South Metropolitan Region Scouts, the troops reopened their doors last week to huge community acclaim.

Since then, the troop has brought in more than 50 scouts and cubs, and is looking to expand this year to include Venturers, Rovers and a Joeys program. They are engaged with local schools, active in the community, and boast a diverse range of families. I was proud to be presented with my own 1st Alexandria Scout Troop scarf and woggle, which I will wear with pride. The scarf is red and green, the colours of our beloved South Sydney, and is infused with purple, the colour of the original Alexandria scout troop scarf. Congratulations again to the 1st Alexandria Scout Troop. I look forward coming back to inspect the new kitchen and offer any ongoing support I can.

TWEED UNITED FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (16:24): I congratulate Tweed United Football Club on securing a major sponsor for the 2017 season. The team were delighted to share the news that Jayco Gold Coast had committed to supporting them for the 2017 season. The Tweed-based caravan franchise are proud to have their branding on the back of players shirts for the 2017 season across all first and reserve grade teams. Well done to Tweed United, and good luck for the season.

NEPEAN MEN'S SHED

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (16:24): On Saturday 4 March, I had the privilege of attending the official opening of the Nepean Men's Shed new home, which is the largest men's shed in Australia. The Nepean Men's Shed benefits hundreds of members across our region, and I was delighted to see the progress they have made over the past few months. I am proud to support the work they do to help men get together, to socialise and to learn new skills while finding lifelong mates along the way. The shed members have worked hard to turn their new facility into a space to improve the health and wellbeing of men in my community. These blokes have waited a long time for this, and I am excited about the opportunities that the shed will provide to men across my electorate. I thank the Nepean Men's Shed for providing an indispensable service to the people of my community. I offer special thanks to Nepean Men's Shed President Mike Siegle and Terry Bray for inviting me along.

COMMUNITY MIGRANT RESOURCE CENTRE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) (16:25): I congratulate and pay tribute to Community Migrant Resource Centre [CMRC], which recently celebrated its twentieth anniversary. For the past 20 years, CMRC has provided an invaluable service to our community by giving specialised support services to newly arrived migrants, refugees, and humanitarian arrivals. CMRC employs more than 60 full-time, part-time and casual staff, who all do an amazing job. I thank them for their support and dedication to our community over the past 20 years. I also offer thanks to Melissa Monteiro, the executive director of the CMRC, who does a wonderful job running the organisation. I wish the CMRC all the best for what will hopefully be another 20 years of excellent service to our community.

STROKECHECK CAMPAIGN

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (16:26): Last month I took time out to support the StrokeCheck campaign. I visited the lovely staff at Amcal Chemist in Tuggerah and learnt all about strokes before undergoing the test. Thankfully, I am in the low-risk category. Many men and women my age are not. I highly recommend everyone get this free check-up and take on the advice they can give about how to live a healthier low-stroke-risk lifestyle. Recently some friends have suffered strokes, which can be debilitating or fatal. They can destroy the life of a victim and change forever the lives of those around them. In Australia, strokes are the second biggest cause of death after heart disease. There is a silver lining though. Modern medicine has taught us a lot about avoiding strokes. Many strokes can be prevented if symptoms are recognised and appropriate and timely treatment is sought. The next check-up session at Amcal Tuggerah is on 16 March. I know the staff there will take care of people, and I encourage everyone who can to get a free test.

TRIBUTE TO JUDITH RUTHERFORD, AM

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (16:27): Judith Rutherford has been a local councillor on Willoughby Council for more than 20 years. She is an active participant in her local community, including through Neighbourhood Watch, the Castle Cove Progress Association and the Federation of Willoughby Progress Associations. Last Tuesday, Judith was awarded the Women in Local Government Special Achievement Award in the company of Ministers Upton and Davies and Speaker Hancock. Judith was given a Community Service Award by the then Premier in 2000 for outstanding service to the community. She is also a Member of the Order of Australia, recognised for services to the community in promoting Asian arts and culture, advancing clinical

music therapy and services to local government, as well as the Nordoff Robbins Music Therapy Australia, which delivers clinical music therapy to aged-care homes, hospitals and special needs schools.

Judith is also Deputy Chair of the Australian Institute of Asian Culture and Visual Arts at the Art Gallery of NSW, and was National President of The Asian Arts Society of Australia from 2001 until 2010. Judith is the current Chair of the Willoughby Council's Cultural Event committee, and Co-Chair of MOSAIC, Willoughby Council's multicultural committee. Judith continues to serve as a councillor, and was awarded a 20-year long service medal in 2015, having served as deputy mayor from 1997 until 1999.

METRO MALA YALAM COMMUNITY AWARDS

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (16:28): On Sunday 26 February, I had the pleasure of attending the Metro Mala Yalam 2017 Community Awards. Metro Mala Yalam was established in 2013, and is a bilingual media platform that delivers news to the Malayalee-Australian community. Each year it recognises leaders within the community and acknowledges their work and commitment in education and art, as well as outstanding community organisations and community heroes. I acknowledge and congratulate the following 2017 award winners: Susai Benjamin; K. P. Jose; Ms Manjula; Sreedevi Rames; Aysha Oniya; Kevin Shaji; Susie Abraham; Mittu Gopalan; Benila Ambika; Ashwin Nair; Sedunath Prabhakar; and the Canterbury Sporting Club. I also congratulate and recognise the work of Metro Mala Yalam's chief executive officer, Mr Kiran James, and editor in chief, Mr Santosh Joseph. I thank them for their leadership in the Malayalee community.

COOTAMUNDRA ELECTORATE SENIOR LOCAL ACHIEVERS

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Cootamundra) (16:29): Friday 3 March to Sunday 12 March is the NSW Seniors Festival. To celebrate this occasion, members of Parliament are invited to nominate seniors for making an outstanding contribution to their community. I am delighted to announce the following constituents are my 2017 Senior Local Achievers: Mrs Jenny Hetherington of Grenfell for her volunteer work with the Grenfell Sesquicentenary Committee; Mrs Barbara Guthrie of Junee for her volunteer work at the Junee Community Centre; Mr Chris Howard of Junee for his volunteer work at the Junee Community Centre; Ms Carole Clark of Young for her volunteer work with the Young Amateur Swimming Club; and Mr Phil Braddon of Cowra for his volunteer work with the Cowra Saint Vincent de Paul Society. These nominees have made a tireless contribution often over a number of decades to their local communities. On behalf of the Cootamundra electorate I thank them and congratulate them wholeheartedly on being recognised this Seniors Week.

Petitions

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Discussion

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (16:31): I proudly speak on behalf of the more than 10,000 New South Wales citizens who signed the petition we are discussing. I particularly thank Ilze Jaunberzins, her husband, Andres, and Hanna Thomas from Women's Watch. Ilze was formerly of the Tweed Valley Women's Service when it existed. I thank them for their real dedication to this issue. They have come all the way from Murwillumbah to hear this debate. I thank them and the many staff who worked in this service and the more than 10,000 people who signed this petition calling on the Government to reverse a shameful decision.

That shameful decision was to destroy an award-winning, effective domestic violence service in the Tweed Valley. This Government has made some shocking and devastating decisions but allowing a lead agency to terminate a contract based on unsubstantiated allegations is one of the worst. It was a contract that was being delivered by an award-winning service with a 30-year history in the provision of services to those experiencing domestic and family violence. With there being no support or recourse for the agency, the decision is truly contemptible. There are just no other words for it.

The Tweed Valley Women's Service offered vital support to women and their families who needed to escape violent relationships. It provided a safe location for them to reside away from the fear of violence. When the lead agency cut out that service, they razed it to the ground in terms of leaving it as a community asset that was not going to be used. This service had been exemplary in implementing the New South Wales It Stops Here policy. The Government abandoned the women of the Tweed Valley and the North Coast by standing by and doing nothing while the chief executive officer of this service, a woman who actively campaigned for the National Party at the last Federal election on a video on its candidate's Facebook page, bullied and intimidated them out of a service. For more than 30 years the service was an essential safety net for the women of the North Coast. Unfortunately, the member for Tweed and the member for Lismore were missing in action in representing their constituents on this matter. North Coast Nationals members of Parliament need to do more to represent their community.

In the past few weeks I have debated petitions from commercial fishermen in their area who are being shafted by this Government and now a couple of weeks later they are taking services away from women in their electorates. Those two members who ignored the cries for help from women in their community are sitting in this place today. I hope they have the grace and guts to look these people in the eye and tell them why they refuse to represent them. I thank the Federal member for Richmond, Ms Justine Elliott, who launched the petition in January 2016. She takes her role in representing the people of the North Coast seriously. I know she and many of her constituents are watching this debate on Facebook from the North Coast. The only thing those two members in this place can do is snipe from the sides, the little dogs that come down here and have a little yap, but they cannot meet with their constituents.

Mr Alister Henskens: Point of order: Referring to members of this House as "dogs" is unparliamentary and uncalled for.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I uphold the point of order. It is unparliamentary.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: I withdraw the comment about dogs. I say to those opposite that they cannot go around in their electorates and crow like the lazy roosters they are and act like feather dusters fluffing around—

Mr Alister Henskens: Point of order—

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: I withdraw. Is that now how you do it, Mr Deputy Speaker?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Maitland that she is on numerous calls to order. This type of behaviour will not be tolerated.

Mr Alister Henskens: My point of order is that the member is again making references to animals and members opposite her. The member for Maitland is a serial offender with these sorts of offensive analogies.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maitland will not use unparliamentary language.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: Once again, it is up to members on this side of the House to represent the constituents of the National Party members in this place as those opposite have once again abandoned rural and regional Australia. The 13 employees of the service provided women with a private, confidential place to go—and how were they treated? They were subjected to an on-the-spot audit with no criteria. The Minister failed to do it. And do members know what the breach of the contract was? It was for not servicing an area of the State—Ballina—which the Government had not put in the contract. It was due to the incompetence of the Government in not including people from that area in these contracts. They then let the lead agency terminate with no recourse. It is an absolute disgrace and those opposite should hang their heads in shame.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (16:36): The New South Wales Government is fully committed to addressing the terrible impact of domestic violence in our communities and supporting the people who are affected by it, particularly women and children. The New South Wales Government leads the nation in tackling domestic violence. It is leading the nation in creating and funding a system which is responding to one of the biggest social issues affecting the lives of women, men and children. The 2016-17 budget doubles the investment in specialist domestic violence initiatives to more than \$300 million over four years. This is in addition to the hundreds of millions of dollars the Government spends each year through mainstream services in justice, police, health, child protection, social housing and homelessness services.

For the first time in New South Wales, rather than having a patchwork of services the Government has created a system for dealing with domestic and family violence that responds in a consistent and effective way. Over the past few years the Government has been working hard to improve the service system through better cross-government collaboration and new funding to provide more responses to people affected by domestic violence. Under the Government's homelessness reforms, the responsibility to coordinate crisis services for women experiencing domestic and family violence in the Tweed and some other parts of northern New South Wales was entrusted to On Track Community Programs in 2014. On Track is now known as Third Sector Australia Ltd.

Following a transparent and rigorous tender process, which was open to all service providers, On Track was contracted to deliver the two domestic and family violence targeted specialist homelessness services for the Tweed, which includes the refugees. On Track entered into a joint working agreement and subcontract with Tweed Valley Women's Service to deliver the services. However, I am advised that in December 2015 On Track ceased the joint working agreement with Tweed Valley Women's Service. This decision followed a number of complaints and breaches of contract between Tweed Valley Women's Service and On Track, and was done in accordance with legal advice.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 73. The member is casting aspersions on the ability of that service. He has not met with the service properly to understand what happened there.

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

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: What a waste of space you are. The decision followed a number of complaints. I am advised that the decision—

Ms Jenny Aitchison: Point of order: You did not stop the clock for me, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I have not stopped the clock for any member. What is the member's point of order?

Ms Jenny Aitchison: It is under Standing Order 73. The member for Tweed called me a "waste of space".

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

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: I am advised that the decision to end the contract was not taken lightly.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you asking the member to withdraw his comment?

Ms Jenny Aitchison: I ask him to withdraw.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: No, I will not. On Track held lengthy discussions with the management of Tweed Valley Women's Service and management, and closely scrutinised relevant records relating to the termination of the contract. I am advised that in early 2016 the Tweed Valley Women's Service went into voluntary liquidation.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: Point of order: In saying the service went into liquidation the member is implying that it was the result of mismanagement. It was the result of the contract being pulled unfairly.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: The member is casting aspersions on the 13 employees.

Mr Alister Henskens: That is not a point of order. Sit down, you idiot.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: Don't you call me an idiot. You withdraw that comment.

Mr Alister Henskens: I will not withdraw. You're behaving like an idiot.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: That is outrageous.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! During question time the member for Maitland was warned three times by the Speaker not to dispute facts across the table. I remind the member for Maitland that she is on numerous calls to order. The member for Maitland will respect the House and let the debate continue.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: The standing orders allow me to dispute someone calling me an idiot.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: That point of order was not taken. I did not hear that comment.

Ms Kate Washington: It was thrown in. It was not the point of order.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Does the member for Port Stephens want to run this place?

Ms Kate Washington: No.

Mr Greg Warren: Point of order: I request that the member for Ku-ring-gai withdraw the comment.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I did not hear the comment, but a request has been made.

Mr Greg Warren: If I may remind the Deputy Speaker, the member for Ku-ring-gai said, "Sit down, you idiot."

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I did not hear the comment. Will the member for Ku-ring-gai withdraw the comment?

Mr Alister Henskens: I withdraw it.

Mr Chris Patterson: Point of order: Can the clock be reset? I can indicate to the House that leave will be given to the member for Ballina. I ask members to cease interjecting and to be respectful.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: How long is the member asking for the clock to be reset?

Mr Chris Patterson: A couple of minutes. Enough to allow the member for Tweed to finish his contribution.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The clock will be reset two minutes.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: I am advised that since being wound up a handful of former board members and staff have waged a misinformed campaign about domestic violence support services on the Far North Coast, and this includes the Federal member for Richmond, the Hon. Justine Elliot, who has been peddling lies and misinformation. I am advised that in February 2016 BRI Ferrier, the administrator for Tweed Valley Women's Service, raised concerns that former board members continue to represent themselves—

Ms Jenny Aitchison: Point of order—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The clock will be stopped.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: The member is trying to place on record that the Federal member for Richmond is a liar. That is both unparliamentary and in breach of the standing orders.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members will resume their seats. Members from both sides have made many questionable comments during this debate. I will not uphold erroneous points of order.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: That fact aside, the New South Wales Government did not have direct contractual arrangements with the Tweed Valley Women's Service, and as such it could not reinstate funding that was allocated to On Track after a rigorous tender process. The New South Wales Government has consistently provided the same answers to all stakeholders about these matters. On Track acted appropriately to discontinue its subcontract with Tweed Valley Women's Service in response to the issues identified. However, there has been no discontinuation of services to women and children experiencing homelessness or escaping domestic violence in the Tweed. Rather, revised arrangements have supported better service delivery in the area. I am advised by the Department of Family and Community Services that the women's refuge in the Tweed area has been refurbished and upgraded and available crisis accommodation has been expanded by 60 per cent.

Service delivery now includes a response 24 hours a day, seven days a week; an additional intake worker is located at the Tweed refuge to assess clients' needs by phone or in person; and there are now three offices open with full-time staff when previously there were only two offices open part-time. Services in northern New South Wales will receive an additional \$500,000 per annum for the next two years. The extra funding will enable extra after-hours intake, safety planning, support and additional accommodation options for women and children escaping domestic violence, including women and children in the Tweed. The service also provides brokerage for emergency purchases such as food and transport.

The facts are simple. Services to people in the Tweed affected by domestic violence are stronger than they have ever been. Labor had a shocking record on domestic violence when it was in office for 16 years. It offered platitudes on domestic violence when it was in office but did nothing. The Opposition has no credible policies in this area. The Government is proud to lead the nation in dealing with domestic violence and will continue to work hard for all the people affected by domestic violence in the Tweed and all parts of the State.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (16:45): I speak on behalf of more than 10,000 individuals, including the clients, staff and supporters of the Tweed Valley Women's Service who have petitioned the Government to immediately restore much-needed funding to enable them to reopen and operate this vital service. I take this opportunity to thank Jenny Aitchison, shadow Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault; local Federal member, Justine Elliot; and the Hon. Walt Secord for their tireless work opposing this callous closure. I also acknowledge the supporters and former staff members of the Tweed Valley Women's Service who are present in the gallery. This Government is a disgrace. Going Home Staying Home was the worst policy that the Government introduced. Your Government destroyed specialist women services.

Mr Alister Henskens: Point of order—

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: Thanks to your Government, women are living in the bush because they do not have any refuge. I have sat in empty refuges because Government members destroyed this sector.

Mr Alister Henskens: The member for Canterbury is pointing aggressively across the Chamber. Her comments should be directed through the Chair.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I uphold the point of order.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: When this Government dismantled women's refuges and specialist homelessness services in 2014, the Opposition ran a campaign across New South Wales to restore those services to ensure that there were women-only services. Members opposite took away specialist refuges that were built

and provided for women. Even Nick Greiner opened a refuge. Other Government members opened refuges. However, it has decided to outsource those services and dismantle existing services. There are now women who cannot receive any services because of what this Government has done. I commend the people in regional New South Wales for fighting. The Opposition will stand next to them every day until the next election to ensure that the member for Tweed and other North Coast members no longer hold their seats. They should be ashamed of themselves. People in regional New South Wales depend on those members, and they have done nothing.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (16:48): I speak on the Tweed Valley Women's Service petition. Members have provided different backgrounds on this matter and the member for Tweed, in particular, explained why the Tweed Valley Women's Service is no longer contracted to provide those services and why it is no longer operating. As the member for Port Macquarie, I can attest to the improvements that have been made by the Government to services that support people impacted by domestic violence throughout the State. For example, in my electorate of Port Macquarie, women have access to an excellent specialist homelessness service that provides women's refuges and support for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence: the Port Macquarie Hastings Domestic and Family Violence Specialist Service.

Women who require support in the southern part of the electorate can access services provided by the Great Lakes Manning Homelessness Support Service, based in Taree and delivered by the Samaritans. Both of these services were established as part of improvements to the specialist homelessness services system. The service in Port Macquarie is well supported by the local community and its staff know very well that it has my support 100 per cent. Yesterday I jointly hosted an International Women's Day event, attended by 370 people from the community, and all the funds raised, as they have for the past six years, went directly to our women's refuge. Both those support services provide refuge for women and children who are escaping domestic and family violence and are at risk of homelessness.

Mr Stephen Kamper: Point of order: What has Port Macquarie got to do with Tweed?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Port Macquarie remains relevant. There is no point of order.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS: Both services well support those women in the community who are escaping domestic and family violence and are at imminent risk of homelessness. They also deliver prevention, early intervention and outreach services to support women and children. In 2016-17, this Government is investing around \$1.33 million into those services alone. An additional \$569,000 over two years has also been allocated. The Government is doing things differently to improve lives, and through the support of the non-government sector we are implementing real change to improve the lives of some of our most vulnerable women and children.

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (16:51): By leave: I speak in the discussion on this petition on behalf of The Greens. I acknowledge past members of the Tweed Valley Women's Service who are in the gallery today. We do not support the closure of the standalone domestic violence service in Tweed Heads, the Tweed Valley Women's Service, which has served women and children in my community and the entire northern rivers region for more than 30 years. For decades the service has been successful in providing counselling, accommodation and support for women and children experiencing domestic violence. In an era when domestic violence statistics are considered at epidemic levels in Australia, it is hard to understand why this service is no longer being funded.

We are not suggesting that On Track will not be able to deliver excellent services to domestic violence sufferers and support for the homeless in the region, but why make a choice between the two services in a climate of such need? Why will there be the loss of a standalone service, given the extensive track record of success of the Tweed Valley Women's Service? John Lee, the founder and president of Tweed-based homeless support service You Have a Friend, has spoken publicly in support of the organisation, labelling it a "wonderful service". Carmen Stewart from Thrive2484 said the closure of the service came about through a shift in focus to homelessness rather than domestic violence. Ms Stewart said:

A lot of women accessed the service by presenting in person for support—a cuppa and a sense of safety.

In recent years an increasing number of older women have been accessing the service for support, ranging from financial help to social isolation. The history of a domestic violence specialised service in the Tweed has gone. In May last year a community forum in Murwillumbah was held to support the return of the women's service and was attended by my Greens colleague and member of the Legislative Council Dawn Walker, who is here today, and Richmond Federal Labor member of Parliament and Tweed Valley Women's Service patron Justine Elliot. To date, the Government has not taken any action to retain the service. Earlier this month, every single Federal Liberal and Nationals member of Parliament decided to vote against the bill to decriminalise abortion in Queensland, and from 1 July this year, Malcolm Turnbull is planning to rip \$34 million of funding from community legal centres, many of which provide domestic violence services to women and children fleeing danger.

Malcolm Turnbull yesterday proclaimed, "When you empower a woman you empower a family, you empower a nation," and he has previously claimed to support action on domestic violence. At the same time, his Government is cutting funding. At the last Federal election The Greens called for a \$5 billion 10-year commitment

to fund frontline services. The Federal and State Liberals and Nationals like to talk about gender equality, but talk is cheap. They need to put their money where their mouths are and ensure full funding is maintained for frontline services for women and children fleeing domestic violence.

Community Recognition Statements

MYALL LAKES ELECTORATE FUTSAL REPRESENTATIVES

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (16:54): Two local Futsal fanatics from Myall Lakes have been selected to represent Australia. Great Lakes College students Shari Lawrence, 15, and Jess Henwood, 14, will travel to Brazil as part of the Australian Futsal team in November. Their selection was a result of their outstanding performance at the National Club Futsal Championships in Sydney. The girls were on the same team at the championships, and said they were placed in a really hard pool of competitors.

The girls grew up down the road from one another and have played numerous sports together including outdoor soccer and rugby. At some points in the year, Shari and Jess train and play up to six nights a week across their various sports. Both said that without the help of their parents driving them around and purchasing equipment, their sporting achievements would not have been possible. Shari said, "Football Mid North Coast also do an amazing job." The cost for the trip is around \$8,000. Jess has a GoFundMe page set up to raise funds. They each hope to hold other fundraisers and seek support from businesses.

WOLLONGONG LOCAL SPORT GRANT PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong) (16:55): I congratulate Wollongong Athletics, Illawarra Cycle Club, Illawarra District Rugby League Football Club, Illawarra Dragon Boat Club, Illawarra Junior Baseball League, Illawarra Rugby Union Referees Association, Port Kembla Surf Life Saving Club, Unanderra Hearts Soccer Club, and Windang Tennis Club on the success of their applications for funding under the Local Sport Grant Program. All of those successful local sporting groups are sharing in nearly \$50,000 funding this year and represent top-notch, grassroots, community organisations who serve their local areas well. Importantly, these projects will help build sports participation—especially for disabled athletes and women. This is great, particularly as it follows International Women's Day this week. I am pleased to have been able to provide some funding assistance towards their projects. I look forward to greater participation with these sports in the future.

GOSFORD MUSICAL SOCIETY

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (16:56): The Gosford Musical Society turns 70 this year and has kicked off the 2017 program with the musical *Evita*. Jill and I attended the opening night last Friday. For Gareth Davis, directing his favourite musical of all time has been a dream come true. He believes attending the Gosford Musical Society's 1995 production was what made him get involved with the society in the first place, and when he heard it was on the program for this year he had to get involved. Although it is a small cast of 38 everyone has been fantastically committed. The set is amazing and the lighting very impressive. The crew and the cast of *Evita* have been absolutely outstanding. It was an amazing show. The Gosford Musical Society should be very proud of this production of *Evita* and I am looking forward to seeing future productions.

LAKEMBA LOCAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (16:57): Yesterday, on International Women's Day, I had the honour of attending the New South Wales Local Woman of the Year Awards with Lakemba nominee, Hasna Ahmad. Ms Ahmad is truly an unsung hero and was nominated for her extensive volunteer work in the local community, particularly with new migrants and refugees who have moved into the area. Outside of her already busy role as Wiley Park Public School's P and C president, Ms Ahmad goes that extra mile for newly arrived families. Ms Ahmad transports families to appointments, helps with shopping, and ensures that families are connected to support services that best suit their needs. Ms Ahmad takes it upon herself to assist in any way to support them in accessing settlement services.

Ms Ahmad gives of her time so willingly that her friend Ms Asenati Mareko has said, "I have not come around a person who is as selfless and truly puts these families before her own." People like Ms Ahmad often go unnoticed, without any recognition of the work they do. These local heroes are found in all parts of Australia and they make our nation a better place. On behalf of the people of the Lakemba electorate, I thank Ms Ahmad for her support in building a wonderful community.

HAWKESBURY LOCAL GRANDPARENT OF THE YEAR

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Hawkesbury—Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations) (16:58): I congratulate Sandra Wright, the local Grandparent of the Year for the Hawkesbury electorate. Sandra is a deserving recipient for this award. She is grandmother to four grandchildren and has supported and cared for

them in their growing years. Never did she expect the tragedy that unfolded on 23 February 2014, when her eldest granddaughter, Bridget Wright, died after being struck by a tree branch in the playground of Pitt Town Public School. Bridget was just eight years old. In the days, months and years ahead, the family looked to Sandra for strength and support in getting through this ordeal. She was the organiser of the family. She arranged the funeral, assisted in raising funds to help Bridget's dad, a single parent, and his remaining child, whilst at the same time she fundraised for Riding for the Disabled, where she volunteers two days a week. Sandra is a role model in the community. Her strength of character enriches the lives of everyone she connects with. She is a worthy recipient of the Grandparent of the Year Award.

TRIBUTE TO AUNTY BERTHA KAPEEN

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (16:59): I pay tribute to a proud Bundjalung Elder, Aunty Bertha Kapeen, who sadly died during the last weekend of February. She was born Bertha Bolt on the Aboriginal Reserve at Cabbage Tree Island in 1935, one of 13 children. She married David Kapeen in Ballina in 1955 and they went on to have eight children of their own. Aunty Bertha was the first Aboriginal postmistress on Cabbage Tree Island and, along with looking after her own children and grandchildren, she wrote a children's book called *Henry the Mullet*. Aunty Bertha felt passionately about the future of Aboriginal peoples and was Chair of the Bundjalung Elders Council for more than 20 years and a long-term member of the Ballina-Cabbage Tree Island Aboriginal Education Consultative Group of which I was also an associate member for 10 years. She championed the opening of the Aboriginal Child and Family Centre in Porter Park in 2013 and was highly active in Ballina Bundjalung Grandmothers Against Removals. She knew that education for Aboriginal people is vital, but equally she said:

The education of white society about Aboriginal history is the key to better understanding and living together as Australians.

Vale Aunty Bertha.

NEW SOUTH WALES JUSTICES ASSOCIATION

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (17:00): This afternoon I pay tribute to an organisation that does so much for community groups and small businesses in my electorate of Seven Hills. The New South Wales Justices Association, of which I was made a patron in 2015, assists more than 3,400 justices of the peace [JPs] across the entire State with its comprehensive training programs. This has a direct impact on the Seven Hills community, with our JPs being better equipped to perform their duties of witnessing and certifying important documents. The more proficient our JPs are, the more efficient our small businesses and community groups can be in their interactions with the Government. The New South Wales Justices Association will hold its annual conference on Saturday 6 May at the Merrylands RSL Club, which I look forward to attending. I am sure that the House will join me in thanking all the volunteers at the association who do such important work for all our electorates, including Seven Hills.

MALTESE WELFARE QUIET ACHIEVERS AWARDS

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (17:01): Last night I was delighted to join Maltese Welfare to recognise the quiet achievers in the Maltese community. For the past 17 years, Maltese Welfare has recognised the enormous efforts of volunteers in the community through its Quiet Achievers Awards. In previous years the focus was on Maltese seniors but last night for the first time they recognised people of Maltese descent of all ages from throughout the community who are giving selflessly to their local churches, supporting sporting teams, in the arts, helping the elderly and disabled, and supporting charity work. Some of them do so much that their list of voluntary activities sounds like five full-time jobs. I congratulate John Beale and the Maltese Elderly Thanksgiving Day Group on their certificates of appreciation. I congratulate also Charles Attard, George Attard, Eddie Busuttil, Ivan Cauchi, Victor and Rachel Floridia, Tony Mamo, Antoine Mangion, Victor Mifsud, Michelle Olliffe, Frank Joseph Sammut, Joseph Spitteri and Emmanuel Zammit on their certificates of recognition.

CRONULLA ELECTORATE PUBLIC SERVICE MEDAL RECIPIENTS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General) (17:02): I congratulate Cronulla resident Dr Pedro Harris, who was awarded the Public Service Medal for his remarkable achievements in delivering and managing state-of-the-art information and communications technology [ICT] systems within the public sector. Dr Harris has worked for several State government agencies over the past 25 years. His expertise and visionary approach have been instrumental in transforming the way government operates. Dr Harris was recently involved in driving New South Wales data centre reform and establishing two data centres, as well as the GovDC marketplace—a sort of ICT supermarket that brings buyers and sellers together. His work on these projects will lead to an estimated \$50 million in benefits for government over the life of the 10-year project and afford agencies greater flexibility in choosing their ICT solutions. Dr Harris has also been involved in the delivery of major ICT programs in the transport, planning and education sectors.

I congratulate Caringbah South resident Peter Riordan, who has been awarded the Public Service Medal for his outstanding contribution to industrial relations and education in New South Wales. Mr Riordan has worked in various roles within the Department of Education since 2003, holding the position of Deputy Secretary, Corporate Services since 2012. The experience and expertise that Mr Riordan acquired while working in the Department of Industrial Relations prior to his move to Education has enabled him to transform industrial relations within the New South Wales public education system. In 2011 the incoming government was able to pursue significant educational reforms.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I remind the Attorney General that he may make a private member's statement if he wishes to do so.

ST GEORGE MEN'S SHED

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (17:03): I acknowledge the St George Men's Shed in my electorate of Kogarah and President Bernie Dolan, Secretary Pat Murray, Treasurer Brian Smith and committee members Philip Fague and David Lawless. I commend also the newsletter, which is written by editor Levin Trivett and Brian Turner. Men's sheds provide company for men, mostly retired seniors with time on their hands but who are still useful. They are men who are prepared to use their skills on endeavours for the common good. I was lucky enough to organise Community Building Partnership grants for the association in the St George region, and I wish its members luck in the future.

MANNING VALLEY DRAMA STUDENTS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (17:04): I inform the House that former Taree High School students and a former St Clare's High School Taree student let their drama talent shine at OnSTAGE in Sydney. OnSTAGE features the most outstanding drama performances from 2016 Higher School Certificate students. Jamie-Lee Carter, Shania Winkley, Gregg Andrews, Mikaela Beckett and Ciahn Pertzelt of Taree High School presented a piece on the stigmas and stereotypes associated with public versus private schools. St Clare's student Nick Smith performed a monologue as the character Charles Bronson. They performed six times to large crowds, including students and teachers from the Manning Valley who had travelled to Sydney for the show. The group performers faced the challenge of moving away from home and each other, with the group now living in Sydney, Newcastle and the Central Coast. I received correspondence from one of the event organisers last week to say the kids performed fantastically, and I congratulate them on their efforts.

Private Members' Statements

HOUSING NSW AND CHRISTOPHER EMERY

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) (17:05): I draw to the attention of the House the difficulties experienced by a constituent of mine with Housing NSW and the Department of Family and Community Services [FACS], and their quite scandalous treatment of him. My constituent is Mr Christopher Emery, who lives in Housing NSW premises at Sadleir in my electorate. Mr Emery received a threatening letter from Housing demanding a maintenance survey inspection, in default of which a locksmith would be called to access the property. In the circumstances, this was not just heavy handed but frankly offensive. When my office raised this with Housing NSW, we were told that it was simply the standard letter. When Housing NSW spoke to Mr Emery he was told that it was a form letter. This simply aggravates the wrongdoing by Housing NSW—that is, this unacceptable behaviour has been inflicted not just on Mr Emery but apparently on other tenants as well. Mr Emery suspects, not unreasonably, that many would be too intimidated to protest.

Mr Emery is 62 years of age, and he does not expect to live beyond this year. His family moved into the premises in 1968 or 1969. Following the death of his mother, he became the tenant on the lease in about 1998. This has been his home for a very large part of his life. He now lives there by himself. In December 2016 Mr Emery received a letter dated 23 December from Michael Shade, Program Manager, LakeMaintenance, bearing the letterhead of FACS Land and Housing Corporation. The letter was simply addressed to "The resident". The letter said that a property assessment inspection was required for the property. A date of 24 January was allocated and a phone number was provided, if there was a need to reschedule the appointment.

On 22 December Mr Emery was diagnosed with small cell carcinoma. On 28 January he was diagnosed as being stage 4. He does not expect to live beyond this year. He commenced chemotherapy on 3 January 2017. Despite the catastrophic nature of this diagnosis, Mr Emery, with a greater sense of responsibility than many others might have, wanted to let Housing and the maintenance personnel know that the survey could not occur on the scheduled date of 24 January because he was to have chemotherapy that day. He had been given a patient schedule by Liverpool Hospital on 3 January, a copy of which I have seen, which nominated chemotherapy treatment for Mr Emery on 24 January at 10.30 a.m. Obviously he would not be at home so the survey would need

to be postponed. Because he had nominated dates all the way to April, it would be quite easy to nominate a day that would be convenient. That, one would think, should be simple.

In the week commencing 6 January or so, Mr Emery on three separate occasions telephoned the number nominated on the FACS LakeMaintenance letter. On none of those three occasions did anyone answer the phone. There was no answering machine. After this frustrating experience, Mr Emery then rang the 1800-Housing number and told staff the problem. The staff said they would contact the Miller office of housing and sort it out. Eventually he spoke to someone at the LakeMaintenance office on about 19 or 20 January and gave details of his medical diagnosis and treatment. This, in a logical world, should have solved the problem and the 24 January inspection should have been rescheduled. Not unreasonably, that is what Mr Emery expected to happen.

On 24 January—the scheduled inspection date—Mr Emery was to undergo chemotherapy commencing at 10.30 a.m. As he was going out the door to get to the hospital for his chemotherapy treatment, someone from LakeMaintenance arrived. With more good grace than many of us would muster, Mr Emery explained the situation and left for the hospital. The LakeMaintenance person left a note, a copy of which I have seen. Shortly after, in early February, Mr Emery received another letter. This was a letter from Family and Community Services from someone described as a client liaison officer of FACS Housing Services at Campbelltown. It was entitled "Notice access required for property assessment survey". It nominated a new survey date, this time 31 March. Obviously I have seen the letter. Quite bizarrely, it was dated 7 November 2016. Neither Mr Emery nor I have the slightest idea what that is about. The earliest the letter could have been issued, of course, was 24 January. At the very least, the letter has been erroneously backdated 2½ months. The inaccuracies do not end there.

The opening sentence of the letter reads "A contractor representing FACS Housing Services has made several attempts to access your property to undertake a property assessment survey (PAS) inspection and you have not responded". It is false to allege that several attempts were made to access the property. Only one attempt had been made. It is equally false to allege that Mr Emery had not responded. He had made quite a few attempts to respond and had eventually found someone he could talk to. And he responded again on 24 January. That is bad enough, but it gets worse. The penultimate paragraph of the letter reads:

If you cannot keep this appointment, arrangements for a locksmith will be made at a later date. This does not require an order through the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT].

Mr Emery says he has had enough of being bullied by Housing NSW. His reaction is entirely rational. Following a litany of incompetence and stupidity by Housing NSW, Housing NSW is so hopeless it threatened to call locksmiths to break into my constituent's house—remarkably arrogant and bullying behaviour by a department that could not care less about Mr Emery. No Housing NSW tenants should have to tolerate such behaviour. Given Mr Emery's state of health, the behaviour of Housing NSW is completely inexcusable. The Housing NSW response to these issues has made a bad situation worse. Housing NSW says it was a form letter which presumably was issued at a rate of knots. Heaven knows how many other tenants have received threatening and undeserved letters. How much of this results from a reduction in staff and the awarding of government contracts to the cheapest quote regardless of the level of service? Mr Emery deserves an apology and Housing NSW needs to dramatically improve its performance.

CHOPPERS FOR CHARITY

Ms SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast) (17:10): Today I refer to the beautiful village of Sussex Inlet in my electorate and, in particular, the recent Choppers for Charity event. I attended the event this year, as I have done for many years. This year Choppers was held from Friday 24 February to Sunday 26 February. Despite threatening weather the event was a great success. Tourism has always been crucial for Sussex Inlet and is important to the economy of the village. I am sure many members have visited Sussex Inlet as it is a beautiful part of the world. Tourism dates back to the 1880s when a migrant family from Denmark built a guest house called Christian's Minde on the eastern side of the inlet. The family were inspired by the area's beauty and tranquillity, and since then Sussex Inlet has become one of the most popular tourist destinations in the region.

Sussex Inlet is one of the most beautiful areas in my electorate—and there are many—with an array of activities such as fishing, coastal walking, bike tracks, wildlife, swimming spots, golfing, good shopping, eateries and great service clubs. The village has much to offer locals and visitors alike. Choppers for Charity was introduced to Sussex Inlet in 2001. It was then known as Harley's for Helicopters. It was the inspiration of founders Rex Williams and David Tarbert, with the support of Rotary and Lions, to say thank you to emergency services personnel after the 2001 catastrophic bushfires. The event was also a way to bring tourism to the area after the Christmas and new year break, and to raise funds for the helicopter service.

Choppers for Charity is now in its fifteenth year as a fundraiser for Careflight Helicopter Rescue and has become one of the busiest weekends at Sussex Inlet. Each year it raises between \$10,000 and \$20,000 for this lifesaving organisation. This year the event began at Sussex Inlet RSL Club on Friday night with a friendly game

of twilight bowls. I acknowledge the Sussex Inlet RSL Club for its annual commitment to the Choppers for Charity event. Another organisation that the community is fortunate to have is the Sussex Inlet Golf Club. It hosts the Saturday's activities including golf during the day, followed by trivia on Saturday night. I thank the Sussex Inlet Golf Club for its unfailing charitable contributions to this event.

On Sunday I joined the community to watch the parade. Participants assembled their motorbikes, cars, floats and mascots to ride down the main street, all in the name of charity. The rain held off and it was a wonderful day. A variety of stalls lined the waterfront, including Surf Art by Stu. He is a regular at Choppers and generously donated an exquisite artwork to the event. Global Crafts, Aloe Vera Cosmetics Australia, Beach House D'Lish, and Sussex Inlet Jumping Castles are fantastic local businesses that have supported Choppers for Charity for many years. The Careflight Helicopter was scheduled to arrive but as in past years was called away to an emergency. This was disappointing but that is its role. I commend the extraordinary men and women who work for Careflight in our community and across Australia.

I recognise the sponsors and countless small local businesses that came together to support the event including Sussex Inlet RSL Club, Sussex Inlet Golf Club, Bendigo Bank and Shoalhaven Zoo. The many sponsors make this weekend a success from Friday to Sunday. I pay tribute to the legendary David Tarbert. He is a well-known figure in the Sussex Inlet area. David has organised this event from its inception, rallied the troops and led with dedication. David will soon be handing the reins to his daughter, Leanne Wardrop, who will continue the great Choppers for Charity weekend. Each year the event has been well-organised. David has taken on this difficult task each year. I congratulate David Tarbert and Leanne Wardrop on accepting the challenge. I look forward to a bigger and better event next year.

COFFS HARBOUR FORESHORE

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour) (17:14): This evening I wish to discuss a project that I believe the Government can fund and should fund on the foreshores of Coffs Harbour. The foreshore is a magnificent place which has a picnic and recreation area that was developed 40 years ago or thereabouts by the service clubs in Coffs Harbour—Apex, Rotary and Lions. I was in Apex at the time and I was on the steering committee that guided the development of an area that had been an absolute mess for a long time. With the help of some RED scheme funding from the Federal Government we eventually finished that project. There are barbecues, barbecue shelters, bike paths and so on. In fact the late Wal Murray, when he was Deputy Premier, found funding during my by-election to put in a children's playground. That area is extremely well utilised every weekend. Unfortunately, there is not enough parking there.

Coffs Harbour now hosts—it will in November this year and we had it there in November last year—the super special stage of the World Rally Championship. It is held in that area as well. Once again, there is a dearth of parking. We need more parking in the jetty foreshore area. Property NSW owns a large tract of land which used to be a goods yard at the Coffs Harbour jetty. It has a very firm base on it—obviously, having previously been a goods yard for trains. I am looking to the Government to fund the sealing of that area. It would serve many purposes. It would provide a great starting area for the triathlon, which was held last weekend—I compliment the people who ran the triathlon for the great job they did—and it would also serve as an overflow parking area for any major events such as the powerboat championship round we had in Coffs Harbour, which was attended by 15,000 people. It would also serve as a service area for all the international vehicles that come into Coffs Harbour for the World Rally Championship run by Rally Australia in conjunction with the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile, or FIA. FIA runs two events each year: One is the World Rally Championship and the other is Formula One.

If we could get that area sealed by November this year it would create an opportunity for the whole of the World Rally Championship in Coffs Harbour to be held in one location. We could have our service park there, we could have the launch of the rally, and we could have the presentation to the winners at the end of the rally. I thank Destination NSW—Sandy Chipchase and Steve Keogh and others—for the great support it gives to the World Rally Championship in Coffs Harbour. I know it costs a lot of money, but it brings somewhere between \$13 million and \$15 million into our local community over a period of two weeks. I hope and trust that it will continue to support the rally at the level that it has in the past. Whilst I know there have been some issues in relation to the contracts—we did sign a new contract with Destination NSW in October-November last year—I hope it will continue with the existing contract.

I think we have an opportunity to stage the rally in one location. Obviously competitive stages in the bush would not be staged there, but if we had a service bay the launch of the rally, and the presentation all in one spot, would attract more crowds and get greater coverage. The rally itself goes to about 50 million viewers worldwide. We can utilise this area, which is currently fenced off and just growing weeds, as a hardstand area for the service park—and also as a staging area for events such as the triathlon. It would also provide parking for people who are there every weekend with their families. They would have the ability to park. It is a very busy

area. There are families and children crossing Jordan Esplanade. It can be dangerous. More parking would remove the danger from the area and provide an opportunity for parents to enjoy with confidence the facilities that have been there for more than 40 years. I ask the Deputy Premier or someone in the Government to provide us with the funding. It might be a couple of hundred thousand dollars; it might be more.

Mr Mark Coure: Ask the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: The Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight could do it, but I think the Pacific Highway is a more important focus for her. Improved parking facilities would be a great addition to the jetty foreshore area.

CRONULLA SENIORS FESTIVAL AWARDS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General) (17:20): This week communities across New South Wales are celebrating the annual Seniors Festival, the largest festival for seniors in the Southern Hemisphere. Presented by the Department of Family and Community Services, the festival, now in its fifty-ninth year, celebrates the contributions that seniors make to our community and aims to promote greater inclusivity for older Australians. Fittingly, this year's theme is "Let's do more together". As part of the 2017 festival I was delighted this week to present awards to some outstanding residents of the Cronulla electorate in recognition of their tireless contribution to the community.

John Kane is the 2017 Cronulla Local Senior of the Year. An ex-serviceman with the Royal Australian Navy, John was attached to HMAS *Voyager* at the time of the disaster off Jervis Bay in 1964. He was at the Jervis Bay naval base at the time of the collision and was one of the first people out on the rescue and recovery operation. Since his retirement John has been actively involved with Cronulla Sailability, which promotes sailing for people living with a disability. This is conducted on Sunday mornings from the Cronulla Sailing Club. Thanks to John's dedication and commitment, Sailability has been able to expand its program to local high schools so that young students with special needs can enjoy fun and challenging on-water activities.

Each year on Australia Day John and his wife, Marianne, sponsor and attend the annual Dan Kane Memorial Race at the Whitsunday Sailing Club at Airlie Beach. The event is held in memory of their son, Danny, who tragically died in a yachting accident. Danny was also a disabled sailor. For some years John also volunteered to assist people with disabilities, some of whom were going through rehabilitation, at the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia at Rushcutters Bay. This involved many hours of loading people on board, securing them and then unloading them. He now dedicates his efforts to the Cronulla Sailability events. Some years ago John suffered a back injury. He has limited movement, but he never complains and continues to do what he loves. John's story is truly inspiring. He is a thoroughly deserving recipient of the award.

I acknowledge the exceptional 2017 Seniors Week Local Achievement Awards finalists in Cronulla: Jackie Hull, Ted Bramble and Janet Kent. Jackie Hull was nominated for her outstanding work with the GyMEA Netball Club, of which she has been a member for 42 years. During that time Jackie has coached every year, sometimes coaching multiple teams at once. She has been a member of the executive committee and has also held many positions with the Sutherland Shire Netball Association. Jackie has received the club's most prestigious award—the Marj Groves Award—and was awarded life membership in 1986. Over the past 42 years Jackie has coached and managed several junior development squads and representative teams. Throughout the 1980s she coached a State league team. She currently sits on the Sutherland Shire Netball Association's under-10s practical grading committee and also the association's paper grading committee. Jackie has coached Kimberlee Green and Toni Anderson, both now playing for the New South Wales Giants. Kim Green has also played for the Australian Diamonds.

Ted Bramble was nominated for his ongoing work with Project Youth, which is a non-profit community organisation that provides support and opportunities for young people. Its programs include education support, crime prevention, health information and assistance for young people into employment. Ted has been a passionate, dedicated, enthusiastic and involved member of Project Youth's board of management for 12 years. He is also involved with Project Youth through his work as a practising solicitor, providing Legal Aid assistance to young people facing Sutherland Local Court. Among other things, Ted is long-term member of the Thomas Holt Villages board of management and has previously been on the board of trustees for Olsens Funerals. In 1995 he was honoured with life membership of the St George Sutherland Law Society, and in 2008 he received the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to law and the community.

Janet Kent was nominated for her extensive volunteer work in the Cronulla community, most notably with the Cronulla RSL. Janet has served on the committee for the Cronulla RSL 55 an -over club for 16 years. She has been a member and volunteer at St James' Anglican Church Kurnell for 15 years. She has been a member of the Kurnell Pensioners Club for 15 years and currently serves as its vice-president. She is a long-term member

of the Cronulla RSL Table Tennis Club, including eight years as its vice-president, and she has clocked up eight years with Cronulla RSL Quoits Club. Janet always goes the extra mile to ensure that everyone is enjoying being part of the group, and she takes an interest in their health and wellbeing. Often times the smallest gestures can make the biggest difference in the lives of others. I offer my congratulations to John Kane, Jackie Hull, Ted Bramble and Janet Kent on their fine achievements, their dedication, and their generosity of spirit.

T3 BANKSTOWN LINE

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (17:24): Following the release of the Sydenham to Bankstown State Significant Infrastructure Application Report, submitted recently by Transport for NSW to the Department of Planning, many of my constituents in the Bankstown electorate have shared with me their frustrations regarding the disruption of the planned conversion of the T3 Bankstown line between Sydenham and Bankstown to a metro. This report indicates that the T3 Bankstown line will be shut down for months on end, and on multiple occasions between 2019 and 2024. Eleven stations in total along the existing T3 Bankstown line will be shut down, including Bankstown, Punchbowl, Wiley Park, Lakemba, Belmore, Campsie, Canterbury, Hurlstone Park, Marrickville, and Sydenham.

The more than 36,000 passengers who rely on these services to commute to work and go about their daily business have been given very little information on what public transport services will be initiated to replace the well-functioning Bankstown line. All that Minister Constance has said to the Bankstown public is, "Look at the bigger picture in terms of the delivery of the metro." What does that mean for the Bankstown community when we have no access to public buses and the Inner West train line was removed by the Coalition Government in 2013? Previously, commuters could catch a train from Bankstown to the city via Strathfield, or Liverpool to the city via Regents Park. Will the Government reinstate this service during the construction phase?

The planned metro will come with strings attached. The area between Sydenham and Bankstown will be expected to house an extra 150,000 residents in what will undoubtedly become a sea of high-density residential units. There needs to be much greater focus placed on and analysis of the real cost of the metro for the Bankstown community. I acknowledge the comments of the Sydenham to Bankstown Corridor Alliance, which has stated publicly that we have a perfectly good rail line in the T3 Bankstown line, which can deliver all the potential benefits of the metro by improving the existing service.

There are valid concerns surrounding the metro that the Government cannot simply continue to brush aside. I note that the environmental impact statement will not be released until June 2017. The recent release of the Greater Sydney Commission's draft district plans has set a further target of 13,250 new houses within the next five years in Canterbury-Bankstown, compared to just 150 in Hunters Hill and 300 in Mosman. As part of the Sydenham to Bankstown Urban Renewal Corridor, it is expected that 36,000 new units will be built by 2031. Bankstown residents need to be assured that the Government will provide the necessary funding to build the social infrastructure we desperately need to cope with such a drastic population increase. Clearly, no such funding has been announced.

It is a disgrace that the Berejiklian Government is prepared to dump a tonne of units into Bankstown without making any commitment to widen our local roads, or to construct the new schools, healthcare facilities, car parks, and sports and recreation facilities to service those new residents. Despite my repeated requests on behalf of my constituents since this Government was elected in 2011, barely any funding from the State budget has trickled into the Bankstown electorate for much-needed capital works upgrades. The Government is ignoring congested roads such as Stacey Street and the massive maintenance backlog in our schools, such as Bankstown Girls High School, which has a staggering maintenance backlog of \$1.86 million. Condell Park Public School has the largest maintenance backlog of any primary school in the State, with more than \$1.6 million worth of outstanding repairs, but only \$68,000 was allocated in the budget. If the Government intends to increase the number of people living along this corridor, it should be making a commitment to increase classroom capacity. Professor Bill Randolph, the director of City Futures, stated last year: The new Sydney Metro promises a revolution in mass transit. However, the accompanying renewal of this corridor will affect one of the most socially and economically disadvantaged communities in Sydney. Perpetuating—or indeed enhancing—that disadvantage through wide scale displacement and unaffordable apartment building would be disastrous. This new urban paradise must not be just for those with deep pockets.

That begs the question: will this new Sydney to Bankstown Metro be nirvana or a nightmare?

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (17:29): The T3 Bankstown line will be converted to metro standards. We will see almost twice as many trains per hour which will be a huge win for residents of Bankstown as well as for many other people. The metro will transform transport from the south-west and the western suburbs into the city. We will see far more transportation into the city. Passengers will not need a timetable as trains will appear every five, 10 or 15 minutes. There will be new and direct access to major central business district stations including Pitt Street, Martin Place and Barangaroo. This will be a big win for the community of the member for Bankstown, which she already knows.

TRIBUTE TO GORDON BRAITHWAITE

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley—Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight) (17:30): There are days when our community mourns and we cannot be with them and today is one of those days. As this House sat the people of Bellingen gathered at 10 o'clock at the Anglican Church to mourn the passing of a giant of the Bellingen Valley, Gordon Braithwaite. Gordon Braithwaite was a good and decent man. He was a community man. He was mayor of the Bellingen shire for 14½ years and served as a councillor for 32 years. Gordon started life as a logging contractor and was elected in 1971 to council. He was passionate about his valley, and the Connell Park sporting field, funding for Bellingen and Dorrigo swimming pools, helping with the establishment of the nursing home in Bellingen, water supplies to Repton and Mylestom, his long and heavy involvement with two surf clubs, his work with senior citizens, and the development of the Valley Rose estate in Bellingen were things he could tick the box for when he was a councillor with Bellingen shire.

Darcy Browning wrote a beautiful tribute to Gordon Braithwaite in the *Bellingen Shire Courier-Sun*. The last time I was with Gordon, his beautiful wife, Doreen, to whom I extend my sincere condolences, and Darcy was on 19 November 2016 when we attended the seventieth anniversary of Urunga Surf Life Saving Club at Hungry Head in his last official engagement as club patron. Gordon was a patron of the club for more than 40 years. I am a new member to the club but his memory and his reputation are held in high regard. Gordon was the driving force behind the clubhouse extension. On 5 April 1987 at the official opening of the new clubhouse Gordon stated in his address, "This new surf club facility is undoubtedly one of the best and most attractive buildings on the coast."

Gordon was a very proud man. He was always interested in jobs and creating opportunities for young people. He respected so many in the Bellingen community and he was a very big giver. It is a very sad day. I wish I could have been with the members of the community in Bellingen today. I will see Doreen on Monday. I thank Gordon for his support of the whole community; he has been great to me over many years. I wish his wife well in the future. I also formally recognise the commitment and perseverance of members of the Hat Head Surf Life Saving Club which was recently renovated, with the help of a lot of money from this Government. However, it was mostly the work of the local community around Crescent Head and South West Rocks and in Hat Head of course. The club has come a long way since World War II. It holds competitions. I was delighted to see that members of the club are reaching out and getting new patronage by holding triathlons. Hat Head has a beautiful creek in which people can swim and if the tide is right they can swim with it and then run and bike around the community.

In 1957 a squad comprising Aboriginal children from the Kinchela Boys Home, now Benelong's Haven, were given tuition and training to gain their certificates. It was said to be the first all-Indigenous surf life saving squad in Australia and gained a lot of attention at the time. After these highlights the club went into something of a recess between 1960 and 1970 as people moved on in their lives, but carnivals began again sometime later. There was a three-way annual event between Greenmount, Hat Head and North Curl Curl surf clubs. Today the club is well attended and is reaching out to different parts of the community.

I attended the recent opening of the club's extension that was supported by the New South Wales Government and the Federal Government with the Federal member Luke Hartsuyker. That extension will certainly serve the club in the future. That work would not have happened without a lot of support and dedication from the local community and a lot of donations from local businesses. The Macleay Valley is one of the most generous communities in Australia and that was evident on the day of the opening. A lot of in-kind building work was done by local plumbers, builders and so on.

I give a big shout-out to the president of the surf club, Ken Parish; vice president Andrew Kirby; secretary Mike Stevenson; and treasurer Sue Croad. They all deserve recognition, as does the oldest club life member, John King, and all other club workers and supporters, past and present. Next time members are at Hat Head they should have a look at all the good work that has been done. It is not only another great achievement for the community; it also makes that community safer. I thank them and I say: Vale, Gordon Braithwaite.

PENRITH ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Western Sydney, Minister for WestConnex, and Minister for Sport) (17:35): Mr Temporary Speaker Provest, you represent a growing community and so do I. Penrith is one of the fastest growing communities in New South Wales. That growth is bringing with it a number of fantastic employment opportunities. Penrith now has an unemployment rate of 4 per cent—that is 1.9 per cent below the national unemployment rate. I talk to businesses in my community on a daily basis. Just recently I spoke to a business based in Emu Plains that has as many as 30 vacancies. That shows the strength of the local economy in and around Penrith. With that growth it is important that the community continues to see long-term investment in infrastructure. This Government is making sure that it is delivering for the people of Penrith.

There have been significant upgrades to the Penrith train station. A 430-space car park is currently under construction with lifts, closed-circuit television and lighting. The Government has also invested in interim car parking to make sure as few people as possible are displaced during the construction stage. This is just one part of what is happening around Penrith station. There are significant upgrades throughout the station. This is the biggest upgrade Penrith station has seen in its lifetime. As the community continues to grow with suburbs like Thornton on the north side of Penrith station, the Penrith central business district and opportunities stretching across the rail line, this upgrade to Penrith station will provide new access across the rail line. There is now a large canopy over the new concourse which will allow people to move across the rail line without having to use their Opal cards and get charged to go through the station. It will also improve our bus interchange and taxi and kiss-and-ride areas. Overall, it will improve the public transport experience for people in Penrith.

There are also massive upgrades coming this year for Northern Road. The four-kilometre section between Glenmore Parkway and Jamison Road in Penrith will be widened. As part of that widening a new bridge will be constructed over the M4 at Northern Road. It will be a significant engineering feat. The existing bridge was constructed 40 years ago in the early 1970s. It has well and truly outlived its purpose. It needs to be bigger to accommodate all of the additional cars that are coming in and going out of Penrith. There is a build-up of vehicles onto the M4 trying to access that bridge. My community has been calling for a much bigger bridge with greater capacity and it is something I as the local member and this Government are delivering.

My community is also a significant beneficiary of the work through the New South Wales and Commonwealth governments' Western Sydney Infrastructure Plan which is investing more than \$3.6 billion across our community. On this road there will be three lanes in each direction and four lanes in some of the more congested areas. We are installing new traffic lights and turning lanes at some intersections to improve traffic flow on the Northern Road. We are also doing a massive upgrade on the interchange in preparation for the M4 Smart Motorway project, which is being rolled out by the Minister for Roads.

The residents of Glenbrook and the Lower Mountains have also been calling for improved interaction of traffic signals in the area. The Government is investing \$5 million in the installation of new traffic signals at the intersection of Ross Street and the Great Western Highway. There have been a number of crashes and, sadly, a fatality at this intersection. New traffic signals will make the exit to Glenbrook and entry to the Great Western Highway safer. They will also change the operation of the intersection at Hare, Mann and Wascoe streets, which has been the bane of existence of many in the Glenbrook community for a number of years. We are also upgrading Mulgoa Road. Indeed, we are well through the design phase of the Jane Street and Mulgoa Road upgrade. The road network will be widened in this heavily congested area. This \$70 million project will reduce much of the flooding and allow more cars through. This is in addition to the \$576 million investment at Nepean Hospital and the construction of the Nepean River Green Bridge, which is something I committed to when I was first elected to this place.

FAIRFIELD HOSPITAL MATERNITY UNIT

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (17:41): I inform the House of one of the saddest things to have happened in my electorate. I call on the Minister for Health to restore community confidence in Fairfield Hospital by immediately releasing the details surrounding the two unexpected deaths in Fairfield Hospital's maternity unit in December 2015 that were referred to the Clinical Excellence Commission for investigation. Public hospitals are places of great importance to local communities—lives begin, lives are saved and lives come to an end there. It is at public hospitals that our community's best and brightest put into practice their years of hard work, discipline and specialist training at medical school. Everyone at some stage in their life will need health care and, importantly, the Government is responsible for providing health care to all who need it. Sadly, despite the efforts of everyone in our hospitals who works so hard to save lives, tragedies do happen.

As I said, in December 2015 two unexpected deaths in Fairfield Hospital's maternity unit were referred to the Clinical Excellence Commission for investigation. NSW Health has refused to confirm whether these were deaths of newborn infants or mothers. I ask members to take a moment to consider the gravity of such a tragic situation. People go to hospital to welcome a new member of their family into the world. It is a stressful time both physically and emotionally. Witnessing the birth of one's child stays with one forever, as does the painful memory of the death of a newborn child or a mother. Two families in Western Sydney will have to endure the reality of those two deaths in Fairfield Hospital's maternity unit for the rest of their lives. Sadly, we know the deaths were linked to under-resourcing. The public deserves to know why this has happened and how it has reached this stage.

The tragic deaths of two infants in Liverpool Hospital in recent memory highlight the vulnerability of an under-resourced health system. The affected families in the Liverpool Hospital tragedy showed tremendous courage in coming forward to speak about what unfolded on that fateful day. They believed that the public needed to know. They also hoped that, by coming forward, future tragedies could be prevented. No family should be put in that situation. Information relating to deaths caused as the result of errors in NSW Health should be published,

with patient names redacted for privacy. The community that uses Fairfield Hospital deserves to know what happened in December 2015. Cover-ups do not save lives; admitting failure and implementing changes to address these failures does. Community confidence is restored when this is done. In addition to the December 2015 deaths, according to a New South Wales Government-conducted survey, last week Fairfield Hospital was named as the worst hospital in New South Wales in which to give birth.

Mothers who participated in the survey stated that areas that were below the expected standard included cleanliness, waiting times, communication and patient involvement in decisions. Fifty-one per cent of mothers said they received conflicting information. Fairfield Hospital is under-resourced and staff cannot provide the standard of care that patients deserve. The chief executive of the Bureau of Health Information identified Fairfield Hospital and said that the State Government can do something about it. It must allocate adequate funds to the Fairfield Hospital in the next budget. No money was provided in the previous two budgets.

Our community is entitled to ask questions about why the hospital is in a state of disrepair. Our community deserves to know the true story behind the tragedy of the December 2015 maternity ward deaths and any information that is being withheld by NSW Health. I fear that more mistakes resulting in more tragedy are happening in more hospitals across New South Wales. The Government must disclose all of them to the public. It is clear that the source of its problems is that the State Government neglected to offer a cent towards upgrading Fairfield Hospital in the previous two budgets. The hospital and the community depend upon those upgrades, and the staff and the patients of Fairfield Hospital deserve better.

A simple and reasonable budget measure has the capacity to save lives. The Government should not delay in funding the upgrade to Fairfield Hospital, which will result in greater resources. The master plan has already been approved and only \$6 million is needed. The Government must admit its shortcomings and make public all of the mistakes in the New South Wales healthcare system. There should be no fear of scrutiny from the public. I call on this House to demand that the Government release all information related to the tragic deaths that have occurred at Fairfield Hospital.

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE RENEWAL PROJECTS

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (17:46): The people of Davidson enjoy arts and culture as well as convenient access to the Sydney central business district performance spaces. The Sydney Opera House is a most spectacular cultural icon that embodies the creative spirit of Sydney and captures the great natural beauty of New South Wales. When it was World Heritage listed in 2007, UNESCO described the Sydney Opera House as:

... a great architectural work of the 20th century ... [an] urban sculpture carefully set in a remarkable waterscape and a world famous iconic building.

The American architect Louis Kahn remarked on its elegant white sails in the book, *Sydney Opera House: Utzon design principles*, with the poetic words:

The sun did not know how beautiful its light was, until it was reflected off this building.

The Opera House is not only a sight to behold but also a significant generator of tourism and performing arts revenue, providing \$775 million annually to the economy of New South Wales. In 2013, Deloitte Access Economics appraised the Opera House at \$4.6 billion in national identity value. Approximately 8.2 million people visit its steps each year, more than 1.5 million people watch more than 2,000 performances, 400,000 people take tours, and millions more dine at bars and restaurants or experience digital tours, classrooms or live streams. I have enjoyed a significant number of performances at the Opera House. I represented the former Premier late last year and observed a display of young dance talent that was part of the recent Genée International Ballet Competition. In my former capacity as Parliamentary Secretary for Major Events and Tourism I witnessed the engaging and entertaining Circus 1903, which also had a range of international performers. The imagination, diversity and professionalism that the Opera House offers in performing arts continues to amaze me. Locals and visitors should be encouraged to attend events all year round.

As an enduring symbol of modern Australia, it is only fitting that the architectural and artistic legacy of the Opera House is preserved for generations to come. Therefore, the Government has committed \$202 million of the Cultural Infrastructure Fund to refurbishing the Opera House. Its renewal projects include upgrading acoustics in the Concert Hall, accessibility, efficiency and flexibility, repurposing office space into a creative learning centre for youth and families, removing the Northern Broadwalk marquee to make way for a superior function centre and remodelling the entrance and foyer under the Monumental Steps. This investment illustrates the New South Wales Government's continuing support of the Sydney Opera House and the cultural innovation it represents. I look forward to witnessing progress in these renewal projects and entering a new transformative stage of the Sydney Opera House's cultural legacy. Like you, Mr Temporary Speaker, I share an interest in the arts and I look forward to seeing many future great performances at our magnificent Sydney Opera House.

WAVERLEY ACTION FOR YOUTH SERVICES

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Local Government, and Minister for Heritage) (17:50): On Friday 24 February 2017, I visited Waverley Action for Youth Services [WAYS] to surprise the chief executive officer, Russell King, with a NSW Premier's Community Service Award for dedicating almost three decades of his life to helping young people through school and to find work. I was delighted to be able to present this important award in front of management committee president Leo Wassercug, staff and students during an afternoon class at WAYS.

WAYS is a not-for-profit community organisation that since 1979 has provided a range of education and support services to young people and their families across the eastern, inner and southern suburbs of Sydney. The organisation provides a range of social support services for children and young people including a youth centre, children's activities, music tuition, alternative education, counselling and employment and training services. The organisation's mission is to work with young people aged nine to 25 years to create positive future pathways for them. WAYS also provides workshops at local schools, including at my local public high school, Rose Bay Secondary College, that supplement the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education program within the school. Staff from WAYS come into the school to deliver workshop programs in areas such as alcohol and other drugs guidance, resilience, peer relationships and bullying.

Russell King is the heart and soul of WAYS and for more than 25 years he has shown his passion for improving the outcomes for those who have become disconnected from mainstream education in his role as chief executive. Russell has helped thousands of students transition back into the classroom when they have been disengaged from formal education, or into vocational and training programs, to improve their confidence and self-esteem and then to grow into young adults in charge of their own future. The Government has supported WAYS for many years through the Community Building Partnership program. We have helped the school from time to time with funding—for example, for a shade cloth for the outdoor learning area, and for the purchase of an additional high school bus, with the assistance of my colleague the member for Coogee and local resident Andy Ruwald. This bus is important because it helps transport those young people who are not going to school or to tertiary education to and from WAYS Secondary High School every day.

The New South Wales Government also helps co-fund the Bondi Blitz youth festival each year, which is a drug- and alcohol-free event held at Bondi Beach during Youth Week. This year the festival will showcase six live bands and two DJs behind Bondi Pavilion on Sunday 9 April. The funding will help the youth committee organise the event, including marshalling, setting up, promotion and stage management—all important ingredients to ensure a successful and fun festival. Russell King is a tremendous person. He is universally respected for his passionate advocacy and commitment to youth in my electorate, and his enthusiasm is infectious.

I have known Russell for years, since before my representation as the member for Vaucluse. He has a way about him. He is never off the job. Russell is not only a community leader who is universally respected; he is also a warm and generous person, and I cannot think of anyone more fitting to receive the prestigious award I had the honour to present to him last week. I commend Russell and his team—a leader must have a good team to be able to do the work a leader envisions—for their strong leadership and for doing such a great job in continuing to support disadvantaged youth in my local community and across the suburbs of Sydney.

WESTERN SYDNEY INCINERATOR PROPOSAL

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (17:54): I add my voice to the considerable outpouring of opposition to a very significant proposal that if approved will affect the communities of Greater Western Sydney. That proposal, currently before the Minister for Planning, is to build the largest incinerator in the Southern Hemisphere at Eastern Creek. Because I represent an adjacent electorate, my office is being inundated with messages from communities and residents opposed to this proposal. I am being inundated with phone calls, emails and messages on my Facebook page. I stand in this Parliament to make my views known on behalf of my constituents and the communities surrounding my electorate.

The upsetting thing for those of us who live in Western Sydney is that this is not the first time that we have copped this sort of treatment. Western Sydney is consistently treated as Sydney's dumping ground. Having to deal with the Southern Hemisphere's biggest incinerator is just another example of us constantly having to deal with Sydney's dumping problems. Much has been said on the public record about this proposal, and I am very proud that both of the councils in my electorate—Blacktown City Council and Penrith City Council—lodged submissions against this proposal. I make particular mention of Mayor of Blacktown City Council, Stephen Bali, Mayor of Penrith City Council John Thain, and Blacktown councillors Brad Bunting and Tony Bleasdale. I make special mention of Penrith councillor Todd Carney, who led the opposition in Penrith council and moved a motion to ensure that the council opposes this ridiculous proposal at Eastern Creek.

This incinerator will be one of the largest of its kind in the world—untested and unlike anything we have seen in this country. Serious questions remain about the environmental impact statement, which contains no guarantee that the development will comply with Environment Protection Authority guidelines. One thing that really perplexes me is that proponents say the incinerator cannot operate when outside temperatures reach 37 degrees. Anyone who knows anything about our part of Western Sydney knows that temperatures quite often reach 37 degrees. To my mind, and in the minds of many people in my electorate, that defies logic.

This is not the only problem. The proponents of this project aim to burn one million tonnes of garbage a year. They claim that this will have no impact on the environment or the health of people in our community. That is—literally—rubbish. Surely we can be forgiven for being sceptical about this. The smokestacks, which will rise to 100 metres, will be situated close to schools and homes, while trucks will transport waste from Sydney and across the State into our area. We will not cop it. This issue strikes a particular chord for people in my electorate, because, once again, we are fighting an inappropriate dump. Once upon a time, we were fighting this Government's plan to transfer radioactive waste from Sydney's North Shore to Kemps Creek. We will run another campaign to make sure we let the Government know that we will not cop yet another waste facility in Western Sydney. I proudly stood with members of my community during that fight and I will proudly stand with them again.

I want to make sure that everyone knows where I stand on this issue. I want to make sure that residents in places like Erskine Park, St Clair and Colyton know that we will stand with them against the impact of this waste facility. What is the local member, the member for Mulgoa, doing about this proposal? We have heard nothing but absolute silence from that member. The residents of her electorate are responding to that deafening silence by coming to members in adjacent electorates and asking them to stand up with them against this proposal. We say to the member for Mulgoa that we are listening for her response to this issue. We hear her deafening silence. We will closely watch what her Government does with this planning proposal and we will hold it to account if it decides to approve the building of a toxic incinerator in our community.

MIDCOAST COUNCIL

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (17:59): I have a good news story for the House: a progress report on the new MidCoast Council. As members are aware, MidCoast Council is made up of three councils—namely, the former Greater Taree City Council, Great Lakes Council and Gloucester Council. The new council is delivering significant benefits to the community through projects that are spoken of by residents. When the merger was first mooted I had some concerns, as did the community. However, after seeing the excellent way in which the three councils have pulled together, how well staff are working and the community consultation and engagement, I am now 100 per cent in favour of the merger.

I often spoke with constituents about the leadership culture that the merged council could bring, and the leadership of interim General Manager Glenn Handford and chair of the advisory committee Emeritus Mayor Jan McWilliams is first-class. I also congratulate committee members who were involved in the community engagement. After talking to the constituents and reading correspondence, I have discovered there is huge support for the merged council. When I walked through the door of the top pub at Wingham a few weeks ago people were cheering. I said, "What's this all about?" They said, "We're getting roadworks done here the like of which we've never seen before because of the merged council." How good is that?

When I visited Mooral Creek last year during an electorate tour residents said it was the first time they had seen not only a grader but also a roller to go with it. That might not mean much to those opposite, but to little villages and communities with dirt roads it is something special. For the first time in the history of New South Wales the State Government is supporting the merged councils. The council has been given \$20 million—\$5 million for merger costs and \$15 million for infrastructure. Through savings, the council has turned that into a \$30 million roads and bridges package for the MidCoast Council area.

From the \$15 million State Government funding for infrastructure, \$1 million will be allocated to local groups such as Forster-Tuncurry Girl Guides, which will receive \$25,000 to upgrade their hall and remove dangerous trees, while Cuddlepie Early Childhood Learning Centre and other community groups will share \$500,000, with another \$500,000 this year. The remaining \$14 million will go into the \$30 million roads and bridges package, which is a major concern in the area. It is great to see that State Government money, together with savings of about \$6 million identified by council, will go towards the program. Much of the work has been prioritised through community engagement and consultation. People have raised some concerns in the local media about the Manning Valley logo "Manning Valley Naturally". The logo is on billboards and many businesses have adopted it as part of their business name, including the internationally acclaimed and award-winning Wingham Abattoir.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): It is good stuff.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: Mr Temporary Speaker, you know how good that meat is. It produces what is known as "Manning Valley Naturally Beef". I assure everybody in the Manning Valley that there will be no logo change. The new council may think about its logo and what it will be, but certainly "Manning Valley Naturally" will remain. Great Lakes will remain Great Lakes, Gloucester will remain Gloucester and Taree will remain Taree. There will be no change.

HAWKESBURY-HILLS STUDENT LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Hawkesbury—Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations) (18:04): I congratulate students involved in the Hawkesbury-Hills Student Leadership Program in 2016. The program, which I founded in 2014, gives students an opportunity to be mentored throughout their final year at school by some of Australia's finest leaders. Importantly, rather than attend Schoolies Week the students choose to do something of much greater substance. In 2014 we trekked the Kokoda Trail. I had walked the Kokoda Trail when I was a university student and I was struck by the rows of gravestones commemorating young men in the Bomana War Cemetery outside Port Moresby. Those young men had died when they were a similar age to me at the time. They had died fighting for the freedoms that we enjoy today. In my view, there is no greater contrast than between the sacrifice those men made and how students celebrate those freedoms during Schoolies Week.

This year the students who participated in the program were mentored by Victoria Cross recipient Corporal Mark Donaldson as well as by former Premier Mike Baird, Virgin chief executive officer [CEO] John Borghetti, Commonwealth Bank CEO Ian Narev and the former Governor of New South Wales, Professor the Hon. Dame Marie Bashir. Last year's program culminated with a service project at Nyangatjatjara College's campuses near Uluru and Kaltukatjara in the Northern Territory. The students spent time in the classroom with local Indigenous students. We spent the week refurbishing the school and, most importantly, spending a lot of time with Indigenous students in the Northern Territory. Whilst the work we carried out over the course of the week was, in the scheme of things, relatively minor, the impact on the students was significant. They saw the contrast between how they live in great prosperity and how some of our fellow Australians live who do not share that prosperity. They experienced the way that many of our fellow Australians live. It was an eye-opener for some of the students.

This year's participants were: Mia Ecob and Tilly Harry from Colo High School; Gemma Healey and Brent Silvers-Remilton from Windsor High School; Sam Foster and Thomas Dobson from Arndell College; Lachlan Smith and Gloria Nasr from Castle Hill High School; Lauren Chapman and Jessica Parker from Gilroy Catholic College; Erin Kavanagh and Talia Morris from Oakhill College; Ann-Maree Sarkis and Jennifer Healey from Tangara School for Girls; Anna Coote and Cooper Lee from The Hills Grammar School; Matthew Orellana and Cynthia Choy from William Clarke College; and Paul Touma and Charbel Bouchahine from Redfield College. At the end of the program Tilly Harry said:

Our service work included painting, gardening and general maintenance, whilst also being immersed within the school community. We learnt just as much—if not more—than the students. As a HSC student, it is easy to get caught up in textbooks. This trip broadened our horizons and we gained an awareness of the inequities faced by Indigenous people.

Sam Foster said:

The highlight of the trip for me was definitely the two days we spent at Nyangatjatjara Primary School in Docker River.

Docker River is in the middle of nowhere, right on the border of the Northern Territory and Western Australia. He continued:

During those two days we picked up rubbish, hosed down sport equipment, sorted books and had the opportunity to spend time with the primary school kids in their classrooms.

The joy evident on their faces and their sheer wonder and excitement they displayed for life will stay with me for a long time. However, one cannot visit a remote Indigenous community such as Docker River and not notice the neglect and hardship all around. As we were leaving the primary school and saying goodbye, it broke my heart to think of the potentially horrifying and hard lives that most of these happy, joyful and smiling children I'd gotten to know would lead. It was a tremendous experience. On 30 March 2017 the leadership program will again be launched. The patron will be former Chief of the Defence Force, Air Chief Marshal Sir Angus Houston. I look forward to meeting the students.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (18:09): I commend the Treasurer and member for Hawkesbury for his young leadership program. It is a program to which he has committed over many years and it provides exposure to young people on aspects of and insights into Australian life that the community does not always see and experience. The member clearly encourages people to reach their potential in a personal and community sense. I commend him for the great work he is doing and wish the participants of the program all the best.

M5 EAST WIDENING

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (18:10): The duplication of the M5 East corridor is a necessary and important piece of infrastructure for Sydney. I believe it is supported by the majority of residents in the Kogarah

electorate. There have been heated discussions between Roads and Maritime Services, Sydney Motorways Corporation, the former Minister for Roads and me about this project. The issues ranged from the placement of tunnels, stacks, parks and play equipment to adjacent bike tracks. I understand that governments want to crack on with controversial but important pieces of infrastructure but they are refusing to acknowledge the deleterious impact they will have on local communities.

I am concerned about the treatment of two of my constituents who live in Eloura Street, Beverly Hills. These two families live directly adjacent to the building works associated with the widening of the M5 at Beverly Hills. Directly behind their houses—a matter of metres—a 30-metre trench has been sliced through to the roadway. It is an impressive and imposing piece of engineering. We are assured by the road builders that it is necessary for the roadway to be built. However, I believe there is compelling evidence that this violent change to the topography of the area has caused significant damage to some homes.

One resident approached me with compelling evidence that shows major cracks in sections of her house. She informed me that Fulton Hogan, the organisation responsible for managing the structural reports, "organised for its employee...to come to our family home for a pre-condition building and property assessment two and a half months after work has commenced". She believes that the Fulton Hogan independent assessors failed to adequately assess the family home prior to works commencing and failed to implement reasonable measuring devices to determine the impact of vibration, subsidence, noise and dust. I quote from the letter my constituent sent to the Premier:

On 22 October 2015 a structural engineer examined the state of the house...These records were used in the precondition report of our family home, records that were taken after work commenced, not prior. The same engineer returned and examined the house on 2 December 2016 as part of his post construction report. This report wasn't received by the constituent until February of this year.

The report denied that the obvious cracks that were not present prior to the commencement of construction were the fault of the WestConnex project. The letter further states:

In our opinion we cannot ascertain that these new and recurring defects are a direct consequence of the M5 construction works as they may be attributed to the continuous settlement and movement occurring through the building.

I draw the attention of members to the words "cannot ascertain". The burden therefore rests with the home owner to prove that building works with which they have nothing to do are responsible for the changes to their houses. How would a regular citizen have the wherewithal, capacity or expertise to determine these things? Fulton Hogan could not ascertain responsibility. In other words, bad luck for my constituents. Families in the area have reported to me that for 5½ years there was not a crack in the wall. In the past 2½ months, following the commencement of construction, the cracks have become longer and wider and now span from floor to ceiling. On 7 February this year parts of the wall started to fall onto the floor. There are myriad problems with floorboards and tiles, and doors that no longer close properly.

I have also received correspondence from another constituent who lives in the same street. Many of the problems I have already referred to have occurred on his property as well. This person, having been given similar advice from Fulton Hogan, approached his insurer with a claim. This insurance company, having inspected the site, determined that the damage was done by the construction of WestConnex and therefore would not be covered. This leaves local residents with nowhere to go—and, worse, local residents and members of Parliament were assured that this would not be the case. I can appreciate that in large and complex projects mistakes and damage will occur. But refusing to deal with valid claims will undermine community confidence in this project.

These are real stories from ordinary families who want their concerns dealt with honestly by those organisations. One of the residents has written to the Premier in a sincere manner asking her to inspect the damage done to her house. I will be writing to the Minister with responsibility for WestConnex, who has indicated a willingness to engage directly with those involved in this project, and asking him to intervene and protect the interests of residents whose properties have been adversely affected by the construction of this project.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 18:16 until
Tuesday 28 March 2017 at 12 noon.**