



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Assembly**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Sixth Parliament  
First Session**

**Tuesday, 28 March 2017**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Tuesday, 28 March 2017**

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

**The SPEAKER** read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

*Visitors*

### VISITORS

**The SPEAKER:** I welcome to the public gallery communications students from the University of Technology.

[*Notices of motions given.*]

*Notices*

### PRESENTATION

[*During the giving of notices of motions*]

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I again warn members about the length of their motions.

*Private Members' Statements*

### SHELLHARBOUR ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (12:12):** I will update the House on the outstanding reforms of the Gonski funding agreement and what that agreement has achieved for the schools in my electorate of Shellharbour. The evidence is now clear: Gonski is working. It is levelling the playing field in schools right across Australia and is ensuring that the most disadvantaged students have the same opportunities as their peers. Most of all, however, it is allowing schools to provide the resources our students need. We all know that a child's postcode should not determine their educational opportunities, but this can only be achieved if years five and six of the Gonski agreement are delivered in full by the Federal Government.

Hayes Park Public School in my electorate of Shellharbour shows all of us why the full Gonski reforms must be delivered. Hayes Park is one of the most disadvantaged schools in my electorate—67 per cent of students at the school are recognised as coming from low socio-economic backgrounds, with 41 per cent of these students falling within the lowest socio-economic status quartile. As a result of the Gonski reforms, the school received \$388,897 in additional funding between 2014 and 2017, but much more is needed. The money already received has literally transformed the lives of local students and helped to deliver them the best possible start in life.

Thanks to the Gonski reforms, the school has been able to employ a learning support coordinator to focus on particular learning support needs; two school learning support officers focused on targeted intervention; a computer coordinator to drive digital literacy; and a fully qualified speech therapist to target speech, language and articulation issues. An assistant principal position has been created to drive literacy and numeracy teaching and learning, and iPads have been purchased to complement the bring your own device initiative. The school has also been able to develop, resource and staff a learning laboratory. For 45 minutes a day, this space allows students struggling to grasp key reading and spelling concepts to access individual specialised help. Students involved in this program have seen an average growth in reading levels to 7.5, with 24 per cent of students achieving 10 or more reading levels. Gonski is working. I place on record my thanks to Principal Phil Seymour and the hardworking and dedicated staff of Hayes Park Public School for their commitment to local students. They have done a fantastic job ensuring that this additional funding delivers real educational outcomes.

Unfortunately, the Gonski reforms that have delivered so much for local students are under threat from the Liberals. Make no mistake, the Federal Liberals are committed to gutting Gonski and ripping this much-needed additional support from our students. I welcome the statements of this Government in support of Gonski but the time for talk is over. We must act now to save Gonski. The Premier proclaimed she would be the "strongest advocate" for ensuring that the Federal Government meets its commitment to deliver years five and six of the Gonski reforms. Disappointingly, with every passing day those words are beginning to appear more and more hollow. The Premier has been in the top job now for two months; it is time to stand up for our most disadvantaged and ensure that the Federal Government delivers for our schools with years five and six of Gonski. I stand with the staff, students and families of this State's most disadvantaged schools in supporting the full implementation of

the Gonski reforms—no more, no less. I give a Gonski. I urge all members to do everything they can to ensure that the Federal Government delivers years five and six of the Gonski plan.

### COOTAMUNDRA ELECTORATE ANZAC COMMEMORATIONS

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Cootamundra) (12:16):** Many from my electorate of Cootamundra have made the ultimate sacrifice in serving this nation. With Anzac Day fast approaching, it is timely to reflect on the significance of this national day of remembrance and to display our honour and respect for those men and women who have served, fought and died for our great country. Indeed, we remember not only the first Anzacs but also all those who have fought in wars and conflicts before and since the Great War of 1914-18. Men and women from Junee have served in many wars and their war efforts have not gone unrecognised—for example, the Clock Tower Memorial in Broadway, which was dedicated on Empire Day, 21 May 1928, lists 521 names of men and women who served in the Second World War and 77 in the First World War. Other conflicts listed are Vietnam, Malaya, Korea and the British Commonwealth Occupation Force. One inscription on the tower reads:

These Died The Noblest Death A Man Die Fighting For God And Right And Liberty And Such A Death Is Immortality.  
AUSTRALIA—CARRY ON.

Harry Fox is one of the youngest to have fought in the First World War. He was born in Harden and spent his childhood years there before moving to Sydney. He was known as one of the "Boy Soldiers". Harry was only 15 years and five months when he enlisted in February 1916—he said he was 18 years and three months. He was killed fighting with the 2nd Battalion on 4 May 1917, during the second battle of Bullecourt. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial in France. Harry's father, Thomas, later wrote that his son was still a student at the Technical High School in Ultimo when he enlisted, and was aged 16 years and seven months at the time of his death. Harry's brother, George, aged 31, who lived in Harden, served with the Australian Railway Troops and returned to Australia in 1919.

Again this year Anzac Day ceremonies will be held in many towns and villages across my electorate in remembrance of those who have fought for our great nation. I take this opportunity to also pay tribute to those people who year after year organise these fantastic remembrance services in towns, including in Ardlethan, Aria Park, Glenn Weise; Barmedman, Shirley Clay; Barellan, Julie Kenny; Benedick Murrell, Errol Bourke, Bethungra, Robert Bak; Bimbi, John Drum; Bribbaree, John Walker; Caragabal, Helen Denovan; Coolamon, Bill Levy; and Cootamundra, Jacqui Vincent, who is also the Cootamundra Woman of the Year.

In Cowra, it is Bob Dooley; in Crowther, Errol Bourke; in Darbys Falls, Marj Horsfall; in Galong, John Killick; in Ganmain, Rod Cox; in Gooloogong, Cheryl O'Grady; in Greenethorpe, Liz Watt; in Grenfell, Keith Engelsman; in Gundagai, Keith Wood; in Harden, Tim O'Keeffe; in Illabo, the Junee Shire Council; in Jugiong, Paula Butt; in Junee and Junee Reefs, Shane Logan; in Koorawatha, Errol Bourke; in Monteagle and Murringo, John Walker; in Murrumburrah, the hardworking Lorraine Brown; in Narrandera, Neville Wortlehook; in Quandialla, John Drum; in Springdale, Colonel Pat Thorne; and in Stockinbingal, it is Jacqui Vincent once again, who will be unveiling a new war memorial this year. I am honoured to be able to assist her in performing that duty. In Temora, it is Alan Rands; in Tumblong, Keith Wood; in Wallendbeen, Elizabeth Bassingthwaite; in West Wyalong, Patrick Mason; in Wirrimah, Errol Bourke; in Wombat, Neil Barry; in Woodstock, Paul Bennett; in Wyalong, Patrick Mason; and in Young, John Walker.

Several towns and villages throughout the electorate of Cootamundra will go to great lengths this Anzac Day, 25 April, to ensure that there are memorable dawn services, respectful form-ups for Anzac marches and then the completion of those Anzac marches followed by commemorative services. Some of those services will be held in the morning and others will be held in the afternoon. All services are held with the deepest sincerity and greatest respect for the men and women from the 35,000 square kilometre electorate of Cootamundra who put their hands up to fight to save our nation and those who returned. I thank all the organisers of those wonderful and important services to be held in the Cootamundra electorate this Anzac Day.

### MULTICULTURALISM

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (12:21):** I address the attempt by the Federal Government to amend the Racial Discrimination Act and its likely impact on my community. Since the announcement made on Harmony Day—of all days—my office has been contacted by residents who are furious that the Federal Government is seeking to undermine the protections that were built in this country against racism. They are angry that the Federal Government has lost touch with the community and they are angry that the Prime Minister is controlled by the conservative dinosaurs in his party. The response is loud and clear: This proposal must be stopped if we are to continue as a progressive, harmonious and fair nation. The inner west is an embodiment of Australian multiculturalism. We share a common belief that our diversity makes us stronger. We speak many languages, we observe many customs, and we share many celebrations that bring our neighbourhoods to life—from Lunar New Year to Greek Easter processions. Above all else, we respect one another's right to live and let live without the

threat of intimidation, insult, offence or humiliation. We understand that racism and bigotry has no place in a modern Australia, and we reject it—totally.

We know Ashfield is not Ashfield without its vibrant Chinese and Polish communities; Haberfield is not Haberfield without the many Italian residents who have called it home for generations. We know that the Portuguese played a vital part in building Petersham, and we know that Marrickville is stronger and more vibrant because of the Greek and Vietnamese communities. We know that the inner west exists only because of Indigenous people, whose land we stand on each day. We know that multiculturalism works and we stand together when multiculturalism is threatened. The plans of the Federal Government to change the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 amount to a solution in search of a problem. The Government has failed to make a case to explain why the changes are needed. The Act was introduced by Prime Minister Gough Whitlam at a time when Australia abandoned the White Australia policy and opened itself to the world. More than 40 years later, it remains a bold symbol of our commitment to multiculturalism.

The announcement made by the Federal Government was met by an avalanche of stories from Australians who are fed up with racist abuse, using the hashtag "freedom of speech". We read Benjamin Law's story. He was picked on for being Asian and held under water at a pool when he was 10 years old. We read a mother's devastating story about her 8-year-old child begging for skin bleaching after being teased at school. We read about Indigenous Australians being racially abused on public transport or of Middle Eastern Australians being labelled "terrorists". These are everyday stories from everyday Australians subjected to racial abuse, and still this Government wants to apply an appalling solution to a non-existent problem. The Racial Discrimination Act is rarely used to prosecute cases but one of the few cases where the Act has been applied was an early case against Pauline Hanson's One Nation. That case was unsuccessful but 20 years later Pauline Hanson is back and one of the Government's strongest supporters of changing this law.

Ms Hanson has never understood the importance of multiculturalism. For more than 20 years she has played on people's insecurities and fears to further her own political career, often at the cost of some of Australasia's most vulnerable people. She has made outrageous claims about Indigenous Australians and warned that we are in danger of being "swamped", first by Asians and then by Muslims. Just last week in the wake of the London attack Ms Hanson referred to Islam as a disease that our society must be vaccinated against. Those comments are more than disgraceful. Not too long ago in our history words just like those led us to war. We must never, ever let that kind of racism stand.

The Leader of the Opposition and New South Wales Labor have categorically ruled out preferencing One Nation in New South Wales. Those opposite have so far refused to do the same. New South Wales Labor is taking a stand against the racism and rank opportunism of One Nation. When will the New South Wales Government do the same? The Racial Discrimination Act is a reminder that we all have a role to play in protecting against racism, whether it is online, as a passenger on a bus or tram, or in public life, like those of us here today. I join my local community in condemning the Prime Minister and his Government's attack on tolerance and civility and everything we stand for in this great Australian nation.

#### **PRE-WORLD WAR II VINTAGE CAR AND BIKE SHOW**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General) (12:26):** I bring the House's attention to the third annual Pre-World War II Vintage Car and Bike Show held in Cronulla on 19 March. This was the third annual show organised by Cronulla Rotary. In particular, I acknowledge Ken Warburton, the event organiser, who did a fantastic job. The event raises money for Sylvanvale.

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** A good guy.

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN:** The member for Canterbury says he is a good guy. Ken has a close connection with Sylvanvale, as his family were founding members. Among the highlights was the arrival of the "Red Rattler", the 1926 F1 vintage electric train, which operated four shuttle services between Cronulla and Sutherland stations. With Cronulla resident Howard Collins, OBE, the Chief Executive Officer of Sydney Trains, and Rob Mason, the chair of Transport Heritage NSW, I was pleased to greet one of the trains when it arrived. There was an incredible selection of vintage cars worth millions of dollars on display throughout Cronulla that day. As well as the "Red Rattler" there were vintage buses. After a week of rain, the weather was kind and thousands of spectators came out to participate in this major fundraising event for Sylvanvale. There were two vintage buses located at Peryman Square in Cronulla at the bottom of the Kingsway. It was fantastic to see people looking at the vintage buses, with the ocean and big surf in the background. I thank everyone who has been involved, particularly all the volunteers from Cronulla Rotary who worked many hours putting this fantastic event together.

The highlight of the vintage cars was the 14 Model A Fords lined up together at the front of our own heritage-significant Cronulla post office. Henry's Model A Fords have finally made the cover of the local paper, the *St George & Sutherland Shire Leader*, 87 years after their introduction. As Ken Warburton noted, if Henry Ford were still around today he would be very proud to see Ford Detroit-created treasures now 87 years old and still going strong. There was a lot of local coverage of this great event, which was a great fundraising effort on behalf of Cronulla Rotary for Sylvanvale. I congratulate all those involved and look forward very much to seeing the fourth annual show next year.

### LAND TAX

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) (12:28):** From time to time I raise issues of great concern to my electorate. I recall in 2011 after my inaugural speech I spoke about an issue that had been prevalent and relevant for a long time. When John Brogden was Leader of the Opposition many years ago, he came to the electorate of Drummoyne and we talked about land tax. Land tax was a huge issue back then, as it is now. A number of articles about this issue have been published across Australia—most recently in Victoria. The land tax issue is probably more relevant now, considering the Government's massive infrastructure spend that will occur over the next four years.

While I understand that land tax is a revenue stream for all governments, which can use that money to build infrastructure such as hospitals and schools, and to employ hospital staff, nurses, police and so forth, the cost of land tax is at a tipping point. So much so that every year when valuations are updated my office is inundated with concerned residents. Sixty per cent of land tax revenue is collected from commercial properties. This has a huge effect on cost of living pressures. Commercial landholders who run retail businesses have to pay land tax on top of rent. That cost is passed on in the form of higher goods and services charges, so it affects the cost of living.

The other 40 per cent of land tax revenue basically comes from residential properties. A constituent from Abbotsford lives in a quite modest two-bedroom unit. In 2008 he bought a house in a working-class suburb—a suburb like North Strathfield or Homebush—and at the time the land value was \$485,000. Seven years later, in 2015, the land value had increased to \$980,000. By 2017—two years later—the value had increased from \$980,000 to \$1,860,000. That house is rented. The owner pays \$250 a week in land tax, which is passed on in the form of higher rent.

Housing affordability is a priority for this Government. I believe the threshold for land tax has not kept pace with land valuations, particularly with respect to infrastructure and urban renewal. For instance, it is proposed that WestConnex will go through my electorate. It is a great project, which will connect the area I represent with all parts of Sydney. As a result of that connectivity, urban renewal and better transport links, there will be opportunities to house more people. But as a consequence of that increase there will be a double whammy with land valuations. In some parts of Sydney that are earmarked for rezoning—rezoning that will not take place for five years—residents are experiencing higher rates. Listeners might think because they do not own investment properties this issue is not relevant to them. But it is relevant for every landholder in New South Wales because the valuation of their land determines their rates.

In the example I gave the valuation has not been calculated correctly. In my electorate, when WestConnex was proposed a draft strategy foreshadowed higher densities and, as a result, many developers bought land—and probably paid more for it than it was potentially worth. During the consultation process the Government paid attention to the submissions it received—there were some 3,000—and, after listening to the concerns of community members, left the area's current zoning unchanged. However, I assume that those most recent sales—which were at inflated prices—were used to calculate land valuations in those precincts, which has resulted in inflated valuations.

No-one minds paying tax but people want to pay a fair amount of tax. High land taxes are slugging not just high income earners but also mum-and-dad investors—people who own their family home and have a modest investment property. These people have made sacrifices over a long period, taken a chance and backed themselves. Now they are paying the price as a result of this change in land valuations. I hope that we can pursue this issue and look at possible changes to alleviate the problem.

### KENDALL COMMUNITY OP SHOP

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (12:33):** It is a genuine honour to represent a community as generous as the Port Macquarie electorate, which has demonstrated its generosity time and time again. One very special part of the electorate is the wonderful village of Kendall. It may be small in size but it is huge of heart, particularly when it comes to raising funds to help others. The driving force of this generosity is the Kendall Community Op Shop. The op shop was originally established to raise money to build the Kendall Swimming Pool, which is now a most important and popular asset for the community. When the pool opened in 2004, the

community continued to support the op shop, which in turn provided support to many local organisations in need of funding.

In 2009 a generous grants and sponsorship scheme was established, and since that time \$858,500 has been distributed throughout the Camden Haven area and beyond, which I find just extraordinary. The money has been raised thanks to the more than 70 volunteers who help out at the Kendall Community Op Shop, providing assistance to customers as they purchase donated or handcrafted furniture, clothing and arts and craft, to name just a few. The op shop is a showcase of what can be achieved when a community comes together—even one as small as Kendall. Anything is possible.

Last week I once again gathered with the community at an annual event to distribute grants to a range of worthy recipients. This year grants totalling almost \$69,000 were awarded. The Camden Haven Show Society was awarded \$20,000 to build a multipurpose community machinery workshop. The Kendall Men's Shed received \$13,000 to expand its facility. Camden Haven District Pony Club was funded \$5,000 for the construction of removable stables in the Gordon Ramsay pavilion. Camden Haven Pilot Station was provided with \$3,745 to cover the cost of installing signage for a quick response code to enable visitors to receive tourism information. The Laurieton Men's Shed was awarded \$3,000 to replace outdated woodworking machines.

In addition, Bonny Hills Progress Association received \$3,000 to install outside shower facilities at its amenities block. Kendall Public School Parents and Citizens Association was granted \$2,134 to purchase six ukuleles and kitchen equipment. Kendall Heritage Society was presented with \$1,685 to help upgrade and maintain the historic Longworth Tramway. Kendall Riding for the Disabled Centre was awarded \$1,280 for the purchase of safety riding vests for the centre and the Laurieton Tennis Club received \$556 to cover the cost of two new tennis court nets.

The Kendall op shop also has a sponsorship and charity grants program, and this year donated \$15,500 to various groups. In the sponsorship category, the Kendall National Violin Competition—which is a highlight of the local calendar—received \$5,000 for three school concerts and workshops, while Kendall Riding for the Disabled Centre was awarded a \$2,500 sponsorship to provide feed and veterinary assistance for one of its horses for a year. In the charity category, Camden Haven Community at 3 and Beyond Blue Rural Health were granted \$1,000, and the Burma Education Fund received \$1,500. YP Space Mid North Coast also received \$1,500 and Make A Difference in Port Macquarie received \$3,000.

As with many local community organisations, raising money to support their work is a real challenge. The financial contributions of the Kendall op shop, under the leadership of president Diane Pope and her hardworking committee members, aided by the volunteers, have allowed those groups to continue their important work for the Camden Haven community and beyond. I thank all those involved with the Kendall op shop; they are amazing and it is thanks to their tireless efforts that we have so many local assets from which we all benefit.

## RENEWABLE ENERGY

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (12:37):** Almost 150 years after photovoltaic cells and wind turbines were invented, they still generate only 7 per cent of the world's electricity. Yet something remarkable is happening. From being peripheral to the energy system just over a decade ago, they are now growing faster than any other energy source, and their falling costs are making them competitive with fossil fuels. BP expects renewables to account for half the growth in global energy supply over the next 20 years. It is no longer far fetched to think the world is entering an era of clean, unlimited, democratised and cheap power—and it is about time.

However, there is a \$20 trillion hitch. To get from here to there requires huge amounts of investment over the next few decades to replace the old, smog-belching power plants and to upgrade the pylons and wires that bring electricity to consumers. Normally investors like putting their money into electricity because it offers reliable returns. Yet green energy is different: The more it is deployed, the more it lowers the price of power from any source. That makes it hard to manage the transition to a carbon-free future, during which many generating technologies, clean and dirty, need to remain profitable if the lights are to stay on. Unless the market is fixed, subsidies to the industry will only grow.

Policymakers are aware of this dilemma. But, instead of doing what all the economic giants of the globe are doing and shifting the paradigms around how electricity is priced, in this country we are seeing a push by the Right to use this issue as an excuse to put the brakes on renewable energy and to demonise it. There are a few possible reasons that political parties in this country might be doing this: first, ineptitude and simply not being up to the task; secondly, perceptions that to embrace carbon pricing and a new way of pricing electricity is political suicide; and/or, thirdly, they are making too much money from the fossil fuel industry.

I suspect all of these reasons come into play, but with the Federal Government, having squandered the Australian renewables boom of 2012-13, my father always taught me to follow the money. In February 2015

political donations data released by the Australian Electoral Commission [AEC] found that mining and energy companies declared donations to the Coalition of more than \$1.8 million in 2013-14. It was reported in 2017 that political donations for 2015-16 totalled \$1.3 million to the Liberal Party from mining tycoon Paul Marks, who is also a friend of former Prime Minister Tony Abbott, and just under \$1 million was donated by other resources companies, including \$400,000 from Chinese mining mogul and steel mill owner Sally Zou.

In the February 2017 AEC "Summary of Donations reported by Donors—By Party—2015-16", donations to The Nationals New South Wales branch revealed that Southern Oil Refining donated \$21,000 and Caltex Australia Limited donated \$8,480. During the same period we see that donations were made to the New South Wales Liberal Party by Santos Limited—

**Mr Kevin Conolly:** I think The Greens got a donation from somewhere.

**Ms TAMARA SMITH:** I am not talking about trade unions; I am talking about the fossil fuel industry. I note the member's interjection—I must be hitting a raw nerve. There were also donations from Chevron Australia Pty Limited, Caltex Australia Limited and Origin Energy—just to name a few donors to the New South Wales Liberals in the past year. The solution to transitioning us from reliance on fossil fuels to the clean, green economies of the future is to rethink how the world prices clean energy in order to make better use of it. Without a new approach the renewables revolution will continue to stall in this part of the world, and we know what the consequences of this would be for the planet.

I like to think that governments in this country are not inept, and it would be great if they could find the courage to move past fears of political suicide if they discuss this matter in a rational way. I note that members opposite in the Chamber today have colleagues who are trying to talk sensibly about this issue, and they are being demonised. The problem is not renewable energy but the out-of-date system of electricity pricing, perhaps along with the vested interests of a few. The Greens have the courage to fix it—who will join us?

#### HARMAN FOUNDATION

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (12:42):** On Sunday 26 March I joined the Harman Foundation for its Harmony Day celebrations at Glenwood. Gathered in Glenwood Lake Park on a lovely sunny Sunday afternoon were hundreds of local residents who had come together to celebrate the welcoming and supportive community that has grown in this part of the electorate of Riverstone, with people from a wide variety of national and cultural backgrounds calling the area home. The Harman Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation that aims to alleviate human suffering in the community. This includes support in situations of grief arising from uncontrollable events and factors such as death, trauma, separation, incarceration, sickness, disability, marital breakdown, suicide and poverty. The foundation also disseminates information and educational literature, conducts seminars and workshops, liaises with other support organisations, provides a 24-hour telephone and web support service, undertakes direct counselling and provides prison chaplaincy and, in some cases, direct financial assistance to those in need.

The foundation's current projects include raising funds towards the goal of establishing a domestic violence shelter and distributing food to the needy in the Blacktown region. The vision of Harman Foundation is to provide assistance to members of the community who are subject to emotional trauma, anxiety, stress and suffering caused through the loss of a family member or other circumstances. It offers family and parenting seminars to increase awareness of mental health and strengthen families. The foundation is named after Harman Preet Singh, a selfless and inspiring young man who died some years ago in an accident. Experiencing grief and distress as a result of his passing, his parents and friends sought to build something positive from that tragedy. In 2013 they formed the Harman Foundation Charitable Trust to provide help to others who find themselves going through difficult times.

I pay tribute to the directors of team Harman who manage the foundation on a voluntary basis: Maninder Singh and Harinder Kaur, the parents of Harman Preet Singh; Mukhtiar Singh; Sarabjit Singh; Gurpreet Kaur; Manjinder Singh; Devender Singh; and Nikki Harnoor Singh. Like many community organisations, the Harman Foundation relies on volunteers to be able to provide its services to the community. These are not paid people but simply good neighbours in the community who have decided to step out to improve the lives of those around them. I commend all those who generously give of their time and skills to support others in need.

The services provided by the Harman Foundation include a 24/7 telephone helpline; support group meetings; direct peer support; chaplaincy services; bereavement services; family support services; senior support services; and food for the needy. While many of the founding members of the Harman Foundation are of Punjabi Sikh ethnicity, as was Harman Singh, the foundation has welcomed volunteers of all backgrounds, such as Ms Ozgur Richardson, who has been a hardworking volunteer for some years and has reached out to assist people of all backgrounds to offer support when needed. I was heartened to hear of an example of this recently when a

domestic violence tragedy in Glenwood left two young boys without parents. Not only was the foundation there to offer much practical support to the boys, but also donations towards their future financial security were made to the foundation by local residents of a variety of nationalities—people whom neither the family nor the foundation had ever met. The generosity of these residents is inspiring.

The Harman Foundation is a great example of the manner in which harmony in our society is achieved—from the grassroots up by ordinary people who choose to make available their time and energy to ensure that we have a better world. They respect others in the community and reach out to community members who need their assistance. One cannot legislate for harmony, respect or goodwill but one can encourage it, foster it and support those organisations that have those goals. I commend the Harman Foundation for what it has done and for the good that it will continue to do.

### PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY ABUSE ALLEGATIONS

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (12:46):** A society should pride itself on how it treats its most vulnerable. Today this Government let down our most vulnerable. The New South Wales Opposition demands that the Berejiklian Government commission an inquiry into incidents of abuse, sexual assault, unexplained injuries, violence and neglect in disability accommodation services. This inquiry must have strong investigative powers to unearth the extent of this abuse. I commend the ABC *Four Corners* program which last night brought to light shocking revelations of abuse. The Minister for Disability Services, the Hon. Ray Williams, must reveal to the New South Wales Parliament what he knows about the reported abuse. The people of New South Wales have a right to know what the Minister knows, whether he has been briefed, and what action he has taken to address these disgraceful incidents against the most vulnerable people in our society.

As at 9 September 2016 the NSW Ombudsman had received 1,167 notifications to the Disability Reportable Incidents Scheme. The scheme was established in December 2014 with support from the New South Wales Labor Opposition. The notifications included allegations by people with disability of abuse, sexual assault and reports of unexplained serious injuries. These incidents included reports of neglect, ill-treatment, sexual offences and misconduct. Last year I asked the then Minister for Disability Services in the Baird Government whether he had called for an internal examination of these reportable incidents and what the Government was doing in relation to those incidents. He refused to provide specifics. This was at a time when there had been 18 prosecutions for more than 1,000 allegations of abuse.

More allegations have come to light. I commend the reporting that has occurred and ask the Government: What action is being taken to uncover unreported incidents? The NSW Ombudsman is investigating despite workload pressure, but what is the Berejiklian Government going to do today? The Government must state its intentions. As more allegations are made, families have every right to question the commitment of the Berejiklian Government to guarding and monitoring the safety of people with disability in New South Wales. Post June 2018, people with disability, their families and carers are fearful of the uncertainty that surrounds disability services in this State.

This Coalition Government is the only government in Australia that is completely withdrawing from the provision of disability services. There is concern in the community. I have spoken to people with disability, advocates and families. I recently held a roundtable discussion at Parliament House with parents of children with disability. Those parents are ageing. I call on the Government to listen to what they say. The date is approaching quickly and parents of children with complex needs requiring 24-hour care are concerned and fearful. I urge the Government to take this issue seriously.

I will supply the support required to manage this issue but the Government must first answer questions from parents such as why only 48 hours notice was given to them to attend a forum to discuss the transfer of group homes. The concern extends to the capacity of providers to service people with disability with high needs. Will those people be moved to the emergency department at their local hospital? These ageing parents in their seventies and eighties have been fighting for a national disability scheme. It is supported and they are proud of the scheme. This Government must provide answers concerning safeguards and quality controls for people with disability.

### JURAKI SURF CULTURE

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (12:51):** During this private member's statement I will take us on a journey regarding Juraki Surf Culture. The organisation was named in the early 1900s after a local Indigenous man, Churakai, who became one of the first unofficial lifesavers between Kirra and the Tweed River. Over the past few years this Indigenous not-for-profit community entity has developed and it is committed to creating, supporting and partnering community activities, programs and sporting events in order to provide Indigenous people with culturally sensitive opportunities to participate in mainstream activities. It aims to close the gap from an Indigenous perspective.

In 2015 and 2016 long-term Fingal residents Joel and Mary Slabb held Indigenous surfing title competitions—with the next to be held in August 2017. Around 60 Indigenous surfers ranging in age from 10 to the mid-forties will participate in the events that will be held over two or three days. People will travel from Broome, Darwin, Tasmania and other areas of Australia to attend. I have attended the last two events. It is great to see young Indigenous children competing with one another. In 2016 a South Pacific invitational event was included and people from Vanuatu, Samoa and New Zealand were present for a full cultural program. My local area has strong ties to the South Pacific. Many of the residents are descendants of people brought to Australia to harvest sugar cane during the unfortunate blackbirding days. They have become an integral part of the community. Juraki consults with local elders and other community members and is well respected by local Indigenous community businesses. Juraki is professionally and responsibly managed as a not-for profit organisation.

On 13 March the Quiksilver Pro, commonly known as the "Quiky Pro", and the Roxy Pro were hosted just over the border, which 50,000 to 70,000 people attended daily. The Tweed has been the home of many Australians legends such as Mick Fanning, Joel Parkinson and Stephanie Gilmore. In the trials for the Quiksilver Pro up to 40 young Indigenous surfers competed with some of those surfing legends. Young new surfers are known as grommets, as Madam Temporary Speaker Watson and the member for Newcastle know. I attended the welcome to country for the great Bundjalung nation and I saw the excitement in the faces of these young Indigenous boys and girls when they were surfing with their role models and legends. I pay tribute not only to Mick, Joel and Stephanie but also to Courtney Conlogue and Coco, who are young girls from Hawaii, for spending their time encouraging young Indigenous children on their tremendous journeys of being great surfers. It was spectacular to see 50,000 or 60,000 people per day not only embrace the culture of surfing but also support members of our Indigenous community.

The Tweed is the Australian surfing headquarters for all surfers and has a high performance area at which a lot of our up-and-coming surfers and leading surfers regularly train. Recently announcements have been made about a new indoor high performance area. Members may not know but half the points in a surfing competition are now attributed to aerials. The only way surfers can practise aerials is at the indoor skateboard rink where a lot of work is being done. Surfing is done by the young and old in my electorate. The oldest surfer I met at the Quiky Pro was 90 and the youngest six or seven, so there is hope for us all at every level of ability. I commend Juraki and the great electorate of the Tweed.

#### CAMDEN ELECTORATE STUDENT LEADERS

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) (12:56):** Last week I was proud to host a parliamentary visit by some primary school leaders from my electorate. Giving those outstanding student leaders the opportunity to visit Parliament House enables them to see how our government works. They come to understand at a young age that the rules they are asked to obey—such as wearing a helmet while riding their bike, crossing the road safely or wearing a seatbelt in a car, to name but a few—in most cases come from this very House. The students were brought into the Chamber and shown how the daily program works so they could get an understanding of Parliament and the decisions made by members. I thank our parliamentary staff who assisted with the visit.

Camden has a very proud history of members of Parliament. John Macarthur, one of the pioneers of this nation and the wool industry, became a member of the Legislative Council in 1825 and remained as such until 1832 when he was pronounced a lunatic and removed by Governor Bourke. Some would argue it is a pity that rule does not apply today. Of course, Liz Kernohan left her own mark on this House. Liz was the epitome of a member for the people. As recognition of her contribution to the Camden community two major infrastructure projects have been named after her within my electorate. The University of Sydney named its lecture hall the Liz Kernohan Conference Centre and a major road in my community at Elderslie was named Liz Kernohan Drive. It is very rare that a local member is recognised in that manner. All this is part of the wonderful history of this place. I am sure if these walls could talk we would be very interested to know everything they would say about what went on in the past 193 years.

I thank the students and teachers who were able to attend. I acknowledge the schools and their students and teachers. We are blessed in Camden to have remarkable primary schools, both public and private. I acknowledge from Narellan Vale Public School, Ms Belinda Hooper and Ms Michelle Sarjana, and students Zac Gibson, Hannah Green, Eden Gleza, Callum Granger, Jay Tram, Willie Masunu, Connor Tram, Tanaya Vandenbroek, Abbey Finlay, and Jessica McAleer. From Mount Annan Christian College I acknowledge Mrs Georgia Downes and students Alexandra Ezzheva, Victoria Llorett, Amy Goodall, Isaiah Chinye, Jake Hogan, and Zack Ewin. From Mawarra Public School I acknowledge Mr Paul Mallia and students Ella Clarke, Harry Elson, Leticia Toribio, and Max Gveric. From Cobbitty Public School I acknowledge Mrs Dawn Dallas and students Lorraine Pernia, Callum Cox, Harrison Putt, and Ava Currao.

From Narellan Public School I acknowledge Mr Dale Sessions and students Adam Lee, Tahlia Gartrell, Bailey Koens, Kiara Woodhouse, Taj Carter-Smith, Jaimee Dillon, Georgia Anagnostopoulos, Cooper Atkinson,

Riley Bampton, Jacinta Lannone, Kaidyn McCormick, and Ashleigh Pitt. From Camden South Public School I acknowledge Ms Karen Graham and students Jim Beckinsale, Jessica Gillies, Macs Rubain, Oliver Stewart, Cooper Paterson, Erin Creber, Mackenzie-Lee Ramsey, Angelina Kolevris, Caleb Clarke, Holly Bryant, Sam Lawrence, and Ben Napier. From Camden Public School I acknowledge Mr Jason Hawker and students Toby Drinnan, Lauryn Hill, Bailey Ferns, Jack Whitehall, Daniel Brennan, Emma Drinnan, Sienna Carruthers, and James Held. From Mount Annan Public School I acknowledge Ms Cathie Ratcliffe and students Rachel Davies, Abby Dallas, Dylan Trynchy, Matthew Trynchy, Alanna Ayrey, Olivia Darby, Nicolas Davies, Joshua Grant, Elmir Korajac, Claire Stanley, Ashley Vasquez, Lily Watson, Abbey West, and Amy Younie.

From Currans Hill Public School I acknowledge Ms Fiona Garney and students Nicholas Gollan, Ashley Carroll, Zainab Atis, Alyssa Arlegui, Charlotte Fleming, Patrick Fosse, Brock Godfrey, and Seth Rees. I thank the House for its indulgence. I mentioned every child by name because they are our young school leaders and they will be our community leaders. They did themselves proud, they did their schools proud, they did their families proud, and they did their communities proud. I am extremely proud of the principals and teachers, and the young men and women we have attending our local schools.

### NEWCASTLE GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT BRANCH CLOSURES

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (13:01):** A few weeks ago, my office received a call that is becoming all too common. A member of the Rail Tram and Bus Union contacted me to ask whether I knew about the proposed closure of yet another Newcastle government department branch. I was told that NSW Trains was looking to close the NSW Trainlink Contact Centre by the end of the year, causing the loss of 71 jobs. Apparently the work will be merged into Service NSW, where 55 positions will be created at pay rates up to \$15,000 less per annum than the call centre employees are now being paid. It is disappointing that the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure could not communicate these proposed changes. Yet again, the news had to come from an external source.

As I said, this is not the first time that government jobs have been slashed from Newcastle or moved to another city. In fact, this is the sixth office to disappear since I was elected as the member for Newcastle. I have witnessed this Government closing the Multicultural NSW office, the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing, the Office of State Revenue, the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, and the Broadmeadow CountryLink Office. It is now proposed that the NSW Trainlink Contact Centre in Newcastle be closed. Unfortunately, for the most part proposals like this quickly become reality. I received a copy of the letter sent to employees by the chief executive officer, Rob Mason, who stated:

NSW Trainlink has entered into consultation with contact centre employees and union on a proposal to integrate our contact centre into Service NSW. As members may have noted, the chief executive officer referred to a "proposal". It would appear that this closure is not yet set in stone. I ask the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure not to go ahead with this proposal. If it is still a proposal and he is consulting with those affected, I implore him to listen to their requests. I have been listening. My constituents have contacted me to outline how those affected are dealing with this issue, stating, "We are the employees affected by the closure of the NSW TrainLink contact centre based at Newcastle foreshore", "We just bought a house", "We just had a child", "We're expecting a child", "We just re-mortgaged our house", "We have a child battling cancer", and "Average full-time employees will lose approximately \$200 a week if they reapply for the same job with Service NSW".

This is a disgrace—and these are the voices the Government does not want to hear as it smashes and burns its way through government jobs in Newcastle. The Government's priority should be creating jobs, not cutting jobs. Is that not the current game plan of this Government? Why is the opposite true in Newcastle? The Government has a habit of closing, moving or downsizing offices in Newcastle—and then asking the staff to reapply for their jobs in another city or at a reduced wage. It looks like this will be yet another government office focused on providing high-quality customer service turned over to, or merged with, Service NSW—as the chief executive calls it, "a specialised service focused organisation that allows customers to enjoy high levels of service". Service NSW has contact centres in Newcastle and Parramatta but, ever since it opened its doors in Newcastle, my office has heard concerns, not celebrations, from constituents about its supposed "efficient one-stop shop".

At the end of last year my office was inundated with calls from people experiencing issues with the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. One very elderly constituent was told that she would have to go to the contact centre in Parramatta to get the issue resolved. This day trip was not something she could do on her own. The Service NSW experiment of jamming as many departments as possible into one simply will not work. While this apparently is "just a proposal that is undergoing consultation", I ask the Minister to think about the experienced, dedicated staff that he is threatening with life-altering changes. I ask him to think about the Newcastle residents who like to have locals dealing with their requests—and who do not like being sent to Parramatta instead. Unemployment is higher in Newcastle under this Government than it was under the Labor Government. The Government's priority in Newcastle should be creating jobs, not cutting them. Keep the Newcastle NSW TrainLink contact call centre open.

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research) (13:06):** I listened intently to the commentary of the member for Newcastle. He is correct insofar as Service NSW has sought to establish far better services in and around Newcastle. As the Government does that, there may be some implications for some of the people who work in the departments currently providing those services, but they are not losing their jobs. They have been offered alternative jobs. More broadly, the member for Newcastle must be living in a different Newcastle from the one that those of us who visit Newcastle regularly know. As a result of decisions of this Government—particularly the railway line between Wickham and Central—hundreds of new workers are coming into the area. Thousands of new jobs are being created across this State, many in Newcastle. Newcastle is booming. The member for Newcastle should have a wander down the main street to see how many new jobs there are.

#### **FAIRFIELD LOCAL AREA COMMAND**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (13:07):** The Fairfield electorate is made up of an incredibly diverse range of communities, each of which has its own complex set of needs. Despite the ever-increasing demand for additional support and resources in our community, the Government has yet to answer the call for additional resources for Fairfield. In the midst of the growing issues and struggles in Fairfield, the Fairfield Local Area Command [LAC] has been doing a terrific job of engaging with our vibrant communities and breaking down a number of the social and cultural barriers that previously would have prevented the police from making any real, lasting connections in these communities.

I have mentioned previously in this House that the Fairfield LAC continues to fall short of its authorised strength, which has resulted in its dedicated officers suffering from lasting fatigue. As of 28 February, the Fairfield LAC had an authorised strength of 170; however the actual strength was only 159. This means that, as of the last headcount, the Fairfield LAC is 11 police officers short. We are all aware that the number of police officers in the LAC will fluctuate over time. However, for many years now it has been the trend for this kind of shortfall to exist in the Fairfield LAC. If one looks back over the figures one sees that the strength of the Fairfield Local Area Command is no better today than it was this time last year; in fact, it is getting worse. When a local area command is understaffed, other police officers are required to fill the gaps in the roster. That may not seem to have much of an impact, but over time the wear and tear on our police officers is catastrophic and results in increased sick leave and physical and mental fatigue.

While understaffing remains a problem, vacant positions at local area commands throughout the south-west metropolitan region are not advertised. This makes it harder for police officers from other regions to transfer to local area commands where officers are needed the most. This culture needs to change. The Fairfield region truly is unique and now more than ever we need extra police on the ground. It is abhorrent that it is becoming the norm for our friends and families to learn of another shooting or stabbing in our local area and to accept it as just another day in Fairfield. For example, two days ago, in the middle of the day, there was a shooting at Canley Vale. Despite these events occurring all too often, our local area command has yet to be given the appropriate staffing and resources required to put the community's mind at ease.

The Fairfield branch of the Police Association of NSW has been working hard with local police officers to raise awareness up the chain while fighting to secure additional police officers to fill the gaps in the Fairfield Local Area Command. As the State member, I too have been representing our local police officers and I have called on the Minister for Police to address this ongoing problem. I understand that a motion was moved at a recent Police Association meeting that I, as the State member for Fairfield, be present at future meetings and discussions on this matter in order to ensure bipartisan support. This would mirror the approach that was taken in Camden where two Liberal members of Parliament—the member for Camden and the member for Wollondilly—were involved in discussions. I point that out because, I am disappointed to report, the Government has since made this very important matter in Fairfield a political issue.

When staffing deficiencies were highlighted and the Police Association began its discussions on this matter, the South West Metropolitan Region Commander and the Fairfield Local Area Commander suddenly went on leave and out-of-area commanders were brought in to manage the situation. I was barred from the then upcoming meeting—a matter to which local police officers did not take too kindly. To deny a State member to represent his or her constituency and local police officers is a deplorable act; it is nothing short of a partisan push to make this matter political. Perhaps the Government does not take too kindly to members of Parliament who advocate strongly for the police in their community. To deny the residents of Fairfield their voice is a weak position to take and inflicts a grave injustice not only on our police officers but also on the community. Our community is sick and tired of hearing about another drive-by shooting or stabbing. Local police are tired and overworked. Despite heinous crimes occurring all too frequently in our region, we are continually being denied more police officers. The Minister is not dealing with the issue at hand; he has opted to play politics. We only want what is best for the people of Fairfield and for the Fairfield Local Area Command.

**Ms TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Women, and Minister for Ageing) (13:12):** The member for Fairfield has spoken about police numbers in the Fairfield Local Area Command. I take this opportunity to place on record the achievements of the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Coalition Government in policing since we came to office six years ago. Under our Government, the NSW Police Force strength is now at record levels. Our police officers have some of the most advanced equipment to enable them to carry out their duties—

**Mr Guy Zangari:** Just be careful. Your electorate is covered by that local area command.

**Ms TANYA DAVIES:** I listened to the member for Fairfield in silence; he should afford me the same courtesy. Our police officers have equipment of the highest quality with which to perform their duties. I look forward to receiving an invitation from the superintendent to attend the Fairfield Local Area Command, as the superintendent has just been replaced.

**Mr Guy Zangari:** Replaced?

**Ms TANYA DAVIES:** I am happy to partake in conversations with the Fairfield Local Area Command in beginning to raise its profile.

**Mr Guy Zangari:** Thank you; it is going on Twitter that he has just been replaced.

**Ms TANYA DAVIES:** The member for Fairfield should not misinterpret me.

### MANLY AND MONA VALE HOSPITALS

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research) (13:13):** I acknowledge the incredible work done by the medical and clinical staff at Manly and Mona Vale hospitals on the northern beaches. Residents of the northern beaches are excited to be receiving a new hospital, which should be completed late next year. While we are doing the building work, we have amazing staff looking after local patients and visitors. I highlight one letter I received from the former principal of Cromer Public School and current principal of the Mona Vale Public School, Greg Jones. He wrote:

Dear Brad,

... as discussed, our daughter Nicci Williams gave birth at Mona Vale Hospital on Wednesday evening to a healthy boy, Emerson Fredrick Williams. Nicci and Emerson are at home today thanks to the quality of care she received that evening.

Nicci had a very difficult birth and from approximately 6 p.m. to 10.30 p.m. was in theatre and in the hands of the most amazing surgical team, who saved her life. While we don't know all the details we understand Nicci lost 4 litres of blood and at one point had to be resuscitated, additional staff were called in but they never gave up on her, we are so grateful.

During this stressful time the team kept us informed of Nicci's progress and kept saying they were not going to give up. When she finally left theatre the team came again to see us and we could see the relief and joy they were feeling, they were so humble each praising the other for the positive outcome. The ICU staff were also wonderful and kept us informed and reassured us she was in the best of hands. The Head of Emergency Medicine came to us and said Nicci would be okay and how lucky we were to have had such outstanding Doctors and Nursing staff working on her. Jenny and I—

Jenny being Greg's wife—

would like to acknowledge the members of this amazing interdisciplinary team who fought to save her: Dr Talat Uppal, Staff specialist; Dr David Jollow, O&G, VMO; Dr Poonam Baskaan, O&G, JMO; Dr Yvette Lukac, O&G, Registrar; Dr Sarah Greenwood, O&G, Registrar; Dr Micah Friend, VMO, Anaesthesia; Dr Geoffrey Chang, Anaesthetist; Dr Ayoma Raynappuli, ICU; Dr Nolan, ICU; Alison Stilwell, midwife; Gesina Menks, midwife; Lucy Hales, midwife; Kim Javie, midwife; Dr Rob Slade, Paediatrician; and the Physiotherapists.

As parents we will be forever grateful to the surgical team that evening and to the staff when she got to the Maternity Ward, her care has been wonderful.

He further said:

Brad, if you get the opportunity to acknowledge these staff and the wonderful care Nicci received that would be great. You should be proud, as Minister, to have such great staff working at Mona Vale.

I say to Greg and his family that members on both sides of Parliament are proud of the medical staff who work in our public and private hospitals throughout the State. I was pleased to visit the new Northern Beaches Hospital again last Saturday with the Premier. I put on record that the clinical services to be provided at this new hospital are incredible. It will have 488 hospital beds, a 50-bed emergency department, 14 operating theatres, six surgical suites, a cath lab, and two procedure rooms. Between Manly and Mona Vale hospitals, we have only five operating theatres on the northern beaches, so the increase will be an amazing change. The new hospitals will also have intensive care and critical care units, an inpatient medical health facility, a 1,400-space car park, and five public birthing suites.

As the Minister for Health and the local member of Parliament, I know that Manly and Mona Vale hospitals provide excellent maternity and midwifery services. The midwives have expressed concern that there would not be birthing pools at the new hospital. My inquiries revealed that there is one birthing pool at Manly and one at Mona Vale and that it was planned to have only two at the new Northern Beaches Hospital. I can inform the midwives and the community of the northern beaches that I asked Healthscope and Health Infrastructure NSW whether the number of birthing pools could be increased. The good news is that there will be three birthing pools in those five suites as well as the normal baths used by ladies when giving birth. So the number of birthing pools in the area will be increased when the new hospital is operational. It is looking really good for not only the women of the northern beaches but also all the residents of the northern beaches. It is a very exciting time as we see our new hospital rising. It is obviously a public-private partnership but we believe it will be the very best for public patients and will provide first-class services for them.

### **RYDE STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE**

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Finance, Services and Property) (13:19):** I read on the news just now that there are 263 kilometre per hour winds in North Queensland around Mackay and Airlie Beach as Cyclone Debbie descends. My thoughts and prayers are with our Queensland brothers and sisters, particularly those that are under the storm, so to speak, and hope that they get through the very difficult times ahead. When we hear warnings of severe thunderstorms, damaging winds, heavy rainfall and large hailstones, most of us bunker down in the safety of our homes but for 74 members of the Ryde unit of the State Emergency Service [SES] the warnings are a call to action. Whilst we avoid floodwaters, move our cars under cover and away from trees, secure loose items around our house and unplug electronic devices, these Ryde area volunteers are responding to the needs of our community. These people belong to the New South Wales State Emergency Service Ryde unit.

I was honoured to join in celebrating the unit's fortieth anniversary recently to recognise the enormous contribution the volunteers have made over the past 12 months, with some estimating it to be in excess of 9,500 hours. This includes responding to 400 requests for assistance during the storms and floods, which makes up only a fraction of the time they volunteer. Apart from this the dedicated members of the Ryde SES unit meet every week on a Monday evening to train and complete operational and planning functions as well as perform necessary administrative duties. The SES unit is also seen regularly at community events such as the Granny Smith and Lunar New Year festivals raising awareness about safety and measures to prevent damage during storms. The team is one of 11 that comprise the Sydney Northern Region, working alongside units in other local government areas and performing out-of-area operations when required. Volunteers also assist the NSW Ambulance Service, Fire and Rescue NSW, NSW Police Force and NSW Rural Fire Service.

The anniversary dinner also recognised the efforts of members who have served over a number of years and I acknowledge them. Awarded the NSW State Emergency Service Five Year Long Service Certificate were Rex Honey, Mark Lim, Anthony Montgomery, Robert Morten, David Mitchell, Edmond Yuen, Ben Lopez and Gregory Purcell. Michael Huxley, Councillor Sarkis Yedelian and Rhonda McDonald were acknowledged for 10 years of service, and Barry McDonald was recognised for outstanding 30 years of service. Bernard Carran was awarded the National Medal 35 Year Clasp for an incredible length of service to the New South Wales SES. The New South Wales SES Director of Strategy, Planning and Innovation, Scott Bridgement, presented certificates of appreciation on behalf of the New South Wales SES Commissioner to Ben Lopez, Rex Honey, Gregory Purcell, Josephine Bezzina, Julie Murray, Michael Huxley and John Ha.

Mr Bridgement also presented Commendations of Service to Keiran Gibson, Dianne Gibson, Simon McNamara and Warren Smith. The K. R. Dedden Award honouring the first Ryde controller was presented by Deputy Controllers Di Gibson and Rex Honey to Gregory Purcell for going above and beyond his duties. Mrs Gibson and Mr Honey also presented Tina Raffi with the Carey Bell Shield, named after a long-serving and former controller of the Ryde unit, who passed away after a battle with brain cancer. The shield acknowledges the most outstanding probationary member.

Additionally, I acknowledge the tireless efforts of SES volunteer Warren Smith, who was awarded Ryde Citizen of the Year for 2017. Warren has volunteered at least 30 hours a week to the SES facilitating multilingual communication to ensure that important safety tips are provided to as many people as possible, as well as assisting at local community events. He also volunteers with Riding for the Disabled, the Salvation Army, Red Cross and Neighbourhood Watch. Warren is also a sought after keynote speaker, presenter and internal SES trainer for his engaging and interactive speaking style. Led by local Controller Keiran Gibson and Deputy Controllers Rex Honey and Dianne Gibson, Ryde's men and women in orange are selfless during times of emergency and generous with their time, often leaving the safety of their families and homes to provide assistance to those in need. I commend and applaud members of the New South Wales SES and in particular our Ryde unit and thank them for their service to the community of Ryde and New South Wales.

## PRINCES HIGHWAY UPGRADES

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (13:22):** One of the reasons I stood for Parliament was to fix the Princes Highway. I will update the House on some of the work that is occurring in my electorate, which is making a real difference in people's lives. As members of the House would be aware, I was delighted to secure a commitment for the Albion Park Rail bypass, a project which will relieve traffic congestion through the Illawarra and five sets of traffic lights—the only sets of traffic lights between Bomaderry and Heathcote. The removal of that enormous pinch point will make a huge difference—not just for the people of Albion Park but for people in the whole of the southern Illawarra. Last week I was delighted to announce that the Government is calling for expressions of interest from people who wish to design and construct that project. This is an important step forward as it gives the community confidence that we are moving ahead to ensure that this piece of important infrastructure is delivered in time to fulfil the election commitment to start it before the next election. That is something to which I am absolutely committed.

Further south we have delivered the Gerringong upgrade—a \$340 million upgrade, which will make a real difference to members of that community. Too many lives, particularly young lives, have been lost on local roads, and this upgrade will make a real difference to the people of Gerringong and everyone who uses the Princes Highway. Through Foxground and Berry there has been a \$580 million upgrade—the largest upgrade of the Princes Highway at any single point. I am delighted to advise members of the House that this upgrade is well ahead of schedule. Indeed, the Foxground section of the Berry bypass upgrade will be open for Easter. I know that members love to holiday in the best part of New South Wales—my electorate—and I am sure they will appreciate the benefits that are flowing as a result of the enormous investment in roads in that area. I look forward to 90 per cent of the project being completed by Christmas. I thank the people of Berry for their patience during these roadworks. I know that it has not always been easy for them, but the results will be long-lasting.

Last week I was delighted to be able to reveal that stage three of the Berry to Bomaderry upgrade—along with the Gerringong upgrade—has moved forward. We have been able to announce the upgrade of the roundabout on the Princes Highway at the intersection of Cambewarra Road and Moss Vale Road. From April, a slip lane will be installed, which will take northbound traffic out of Moss Vale Road. A lane will also be installed on the northern side of the roundabout to alleviate traffic congestion for those cars heading south as well as east along Cambewarra Road. This is to ensure that we relieve traffic congestion as more cars come down the Princes Highway into the Shoalhaven and the Bomaderry area so that traffic can move more easily.

The Berry to Bomaderry section of the Princes Highway has not been funded. Indeed, none of the work that I have mentioned has received a cent from the Commonwealth Government. I reiterate my calls for the Commonwealth to invest in this major infrastructure which saves lives, generates jobs and is making a real difference to tourism-related businesses on the South Coast. The Commonwealth Government has invested in projects such as the Newell Highway, the Pacific Highway, the Bruce Highway and the Princes Highway south of the Victorian border, but I entered Parliament to fight for every cent of funding I could achieve for my electorate. I do not care which side of politics funds these things and, quite frankly, I do not care which level of government does it. I want to see investments in my electorate's roads delivered because it will make a real difference in people's lives.

There is no doubt that Shelley Hancock, the member for South Coast, has been a tremendous advocate for the Princes Highway. Indeed, I could not have delivered these upgrades alone. Together, we have seen these investments delivered. In her electorate, the member for South Coast has been an absolute champion of the Princes Highway. At the moment, the \$60 million Burrill Lake Bridge is under construction, and \$17 million is being spent on the Termeil Creek Bridge. At Log Cabin and at Falls Creek, \$1 million is being spent on upgrading the Princes Highway.

It would be remiss of me not to commend and thank the Hon. Don Harwin who, in the other place, has been a long-term advocate for the Princes Highway, as has been my friend the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport and member for Bega, Andrew Constance. The member for Bega knows all too well about the tragedies that occur on the Princes Highway, having been involved in a car accident himself. I do not want to see any more accidents on local roads. I do not want to go to any more funerals. I want to continue to see investments that make a real difference. These upgrades are important for jobs. They are important for families. They are important for our communities. They are making real differences in the lives of the people in my electorate.

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

*Visitors***VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I extend a very warm welcome to Jan and Chris, the parents of the member for Newtown, who are guests of the member for Newtown.

*Commemorations***LONDON TERRORIST ATTACK**

**The SPEAKER (14:18):** On 22 March a scene that has become all too prevalent in today's society generated shock waves across not only the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth but also throughout the world. In what has been identified as a terrorist attack, Kurt Cochran, Aysha Frade, Leslie Rhodes and first responder Police Constable Keith Palmer, who was killed in the line of duty defending the Parliament, tragically lost their lives. This was an attack on our shared values of democracy, freedom and the rule of law, which our two Parliaments have modelled for centuries. In her statement to the House of Commons the day after the attack, Prime Minister Theresa May referred to the resolve of the British people and its elected representatives to stand firm in the face of such an act of terrorism that was obviously aimed at silencing democracy. We share this resolve. The British Prime Minister said:

We meet here in the oldest of all parliaments because we know that democracy and the values it entails will always prevail. Those values—free speech, liberty, human rights and the rule of law—are embodied here in this place but they are shared by free people around the world.

As members and officers of this House, we share those values and dedicate and commit ourselves to supporting Parliament as the institution of representative democracy. As chance would have it, the next day a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association delegation of members from the United Kingdom Parliament was visiting the New South Wales Parliament. In hosting the members of the delegation, the President conveyed our deepest sympathy and condolences to the members present, who were so far away from their colleagues. The delegation, led by Ian Liddell-Grainger, MP, was stoic and dignified in the face of such sad news, noting, "We have been here before." We remain vigilant and I urge everyone in this Chamber and throughout this building to familiarise themselves with the security procedures, including the lockdown procedures. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and friends of the victims killed as a result of the attack, and we wish the injured a speedy recovery. I ask all members to stand and observe a moment's silence as a mark of respect.

*Members and officers of the House stood in their places as a mark of respect.*

**CENTENARY OF FIRST WORLD WAR**

**The SPEAKER (14:21):** In March 1917 the German forces on the Western Front retreated to the Hindenburg Line, a defensive position prepared over the previous winter months. The German forces were under considerable strain following the Allied attacks at the Somme and on the Eastern Front, the declaration of war by Romania, and the failure of their Verdun offensive in 1916. A deliberate withdrawal to a shorter and more defensible front line meant positions could be held with fewer troops and with reduced casualty rates. Breaking through the Hindenburg Line would be the focus of successive Allied campaigns for the remainder of the war, beginning with the Battle of Arras in early April.

As the British engaged at Arras, the Australian 4th Division was involved in an attack on the French village of Bullecourt. Poorly planned, carried out in bad weather and beset by mechanical failures which deprived troops of anticipated tank and artillery support, the offensive was ultimately a disaster. While Australian troops briefly occupied sections of the German trenches, they were forced to retreat with heavy losses. More than 3,000 men were killed or wounded. During the German counteroffensive at Bullecourt, 1,170 Australian soldiers were taken prisoner—the largest number captured in a single engagement during the entire war. They were not released until the war was over.

*Bills***BIOSECURITY AMENDMENT BILL 2017****FINES AMENDMENT BILL 2017****SPORTING VENUES AUTHORITIES AMENDMENT BILL 2017****Assent**

**The SPEAKER:** I report receipt of messages from the Governor notifying His Excellency's assent to the abovementioned bills.

*Members***ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF GOSFORD****Issue and Return of Writ**

**The SPEAKER:** I inform the House that, in accordance with section 70 of the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912, I issued a writ on 17 March 2017 for the election of a member to serve in the place of Kathleen Smith, resigned. Particulars of the writ are:

Nomination date	Thursday 23 March 2017
Polling day	Saturday 8 April 2017
Return of Writs	Tuesday 16 May 2017

**ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF MANLY****Issue and Return of Writ**

**The SPEAKER:** I inform the House that, in accordance with section 70 of the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912, I issued a writ on 17 March 2017 for the election of a member to serve in the place of Michael Bruce Baird, resigned. Particulars of the writ are:

Nomination date	Thursday 23 March 2017
Polling day	Saturday 8 April 2017
Return of Writs	Tuesday 16 May 2017

**ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF NORTH SHORE****Issue and Return of Writ**

**The SPEAKER:** I inform the House that, in accordance with section 70 of the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912, I issued a writ on 17 March 2017 for the election of a member to serve in the place of Jillian Gell Skinner, resigned. Particulars of the writ are:

Nomination date	Thursday 23 March 2017
Polling day	Saturday 8 April 2017
Return of Writs	Tuesday 16 May 2017

*Question Time***RACIAL DISCRIMINATION ACT**

**Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (14:27):** My question is directed to the Premier. As Premier of Australia's most multicultural State, will the Premier oppose the Federal Government's manoeuvre to weaken the law that protects people against racist hate speech?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Kiama to order for the first time. I call the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure to order for the first time.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:28):** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. In a month when we are celebrating harmony and multiculturalism, I say to the people of New South Wales how proud I am of our diverse communities and how proud I was that about 1,500 people attended the Premier's Harmony Dinner, which this Government established, a week ago. I am proud of this Government's record on multiculturalism and diversity issues.

I am interested in the question of the Leader of the Opposition, following the xenophobic campaign run by the Opposition during the last election. I say to those opposite that they are fake and phony when it comes to issues such as this. The specific matter raised by the Leader of the Opposition is one for the Federal Government. I say to those opposite and to the people of New South Wales that when it comes to representing the rights of individuals in our community and supporting people to exercise their freedoms there is no stronger advocate than the Coalition Government. This Government does not mouth platitudes; it takes action. Communities in this State well know the support given to them by this Government.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Canterbury will cease interjecting.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I say to those opposite: Stop being xenophobic hypocrites. When it suits the Opposition it runs a xenophobic campaign but then poses politically expedient questions. The community will judge the Government by its actions. I am proud of every Government member of this House who strongly advocates on behalf of their communities. I know that half of our communities have at least one parent born overseas, and I am in that category. There is no stronger advocate for those who emigrate to Australia or are part of successive generations in this country than this Liberal-Nationals Government.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** This Government will stick by the people through thick and thin, unlike the Labor Party. When it is politically convenient the Labor Party will abandon the community. This Government will continue to advocate on their behalf.

#### GOVERNMENT ELECTION COMMITMENTS

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (14:32):** I address my question to the Premier. Will the Premier inform the House how the New South Wales Government is delivering on its election commitments?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:32):** For those who may not be aware, today is exactly mid term for this Government. It is a great day. I thank the member for Holsworthy for the question. The member understands the importance of infrastructure and services to her community—as do all Government members. Since the last election, exactly two years ago, this Government has delivered on more than 200 election commitments. There are many more to come. The Government knows that the community expects a strong economy.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. The Premier will be heard in silence.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** It expects more jobs, infrastructure and frontline services, and this Government is delivering. I am proud to say that there is more to come. Whilst this Government has delivered, those opposite continue to stand for nothing. They have no policies and no ideas. The Opposition's stance on a number of issues is beginning to unravel. This Government came into this place to make New South Wales number one again and it has done so.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will cease interjecting.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** This Government took a bold and courageous plan to the community and now the community is benefiting from that. When it comes to jobs this is the party of the workers. Since it has been elected, this Government has created 300,000 jobs in New South Wales. This State has the lowest unemployment in the nation. During Labor's final decade in office New South Wales had the slowest jobs growth. Again I say: This is the party of the workers. Since gaining office this Government has employed more than 7,000 additional frontline workers, including doctors, nurses, midwives, nearly 1,200 police officers and 3,800 teachers.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Opposition members will come to order.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** On the front line it has employed 10,000 additional teachers, nurses and police.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** This is a remarkable achievement for the people of this State. The budget is the strongest in the nation. New South Wales is the economic powerhouse of the nation. This Government inherited a deficit but we are now in surplus. Since the Coalition has been in government the economic growth rate has doubled. How many governments in the world can say they have zero general government sector net debt?

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** This State has a triple-A credit rating, virtually no debt, a healthy surplus and billions spent on infrastructure. In areas such as health and education much has been achieved. In just two years three hospitals have been opened: Byron Central Hospital on the North Coast, Parkes Hospital in the Central West, and South East Regional Hospital in Bega. That is in addition to the 11 upgrades delivered to areas such as Campbelltown, Blacktown, Mount Drutt, Lismore and Forbes and to the Royal North Shore.

**Mr Mark Coure:** St George.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I will get to St George. Other hospitals currently under construction include Gosford.

**Mr Brad Hazzard:** There was \$348 million allocated to Gosford Hospital.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I acknowledge that interjection from the health Minister. They include: the Northern Beaches, Bowral, Westmead, St George—member for Oatley—and Sutherland hospitals. Similarly in education, this Government has provided 1,100 new classrooms that have been delivered or funded. There are 15 new or relocated schools under construction or in the design phase. [*Extension of time*]

Twenty-four upgrades are occurring. This Government introduced a popular and supported—by the shadow Minister—back-to-basics school curriculum and improved the learning environment. I have not yet touched on roads and transport infrastructure. There are 16 major infrastructure projects in the construction phase. There has been significant opposition by the Labor Party to WestConnex, NorthConnex and the CBD South East Light Rail. Tunnelling on the Sydney Metro Northwest has been completed. That was promised by—and is now opposed by—the Opposition. Construction is halfway to completion on the \$4 billion program to upgrade the Pacific Highway to dual carriageway, which is important for the community. I will not steal all of the Deputy Premier's thunder, but there are also upgrades to the Newell, Cobb, Mitchell, Snowy Mountains and Great Western highways.

The Minister for Transport and Infrastructure and I announced 85 additional weekly ferry services, which brings the total number of introduced transport services to 16,000 each week. I encourage all members to visit the convention centre if they have not already done so—an example of a project that was delivered on time and on budget. New South Wales is not only the economic powerhouse of the nation but also the infrastructure capital of Australia. While those opposite flounder we will continue to deliver for the great people of New South Wales.

### RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

**Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (14:39):** My question is directed to the Premier. Given that former Premier O'Farrell publicly opposed the weakening of section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act and said in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 27 March 2014, "We must not lower our defences against the evil of racial and religious intolerance", why will the Premier not also speak up in opposition to the weakening of the law against racist hate speech?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:40):** Why will the Leader of the Opposition not apologise for the xenophobic campaign that he ran at the last election? Why will the Leader of the Opposition not apologise to the community? When it suits the Leader of the Opposition he chooses to politicise an issue. Instead of trying to bring the community together the Leader of the Opposition tries to divide it.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. The Premier will be heard in the silence or I will stop the clock.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I am glad that the Leader of the Opposition quoted what former Premier O'Farrell had to say. Former Premier O'Farrell, Mike Baird and I are committed to supporting multicultural communities across New South Wales. We live by every word said by former Premier O'Farrell and by every action that is taken in this regard. It is extremely disappointing that the Leader of the Opposition chooses to politicise and divide the community on such an important issue.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Fairfield will come to order. The member for Lakemba will come to order. The member for Port Stephens will come to order. The members will cease interjecting.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** All our communities in New South Wales will not have a stronger advocate than me on issues regarding our multicultural community. The difference between the Liberal-Nationals Government and Opposition members is that we will not be politically opportunistic in relation to these matters.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** We stand united. I thank all those community members who attended the Premier's Harmony Day dinner. It was amazing that so many attended. I am proud of my Government which supports all these community festivals. Recently I was at a wonderful Parramasala event in Parramatta. On the weekend I was happy to celebrate Greek Independence Day. I do not know how many people in this House have had an opportunity, as I have had, to attend Saturday community schools. I appreciate from that experience what we need to do to support our communities.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Those political phoneyes on the Opposition benches can play politics any day of the week. We will support our communities, deliver the services they need and protect their rights at every opportunity. This Government delivers.

### REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI (Murray) (14:43):** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. Will he inform the House of the Government's achievements in regional New South Wales at this midpoint in the Government's second term in office?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Strathfield to order for the first time. I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the first time. I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the first time.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional New South Wales, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business) (14:44):** The member for Murray has championed regional New South Wales for a long time. The achievements and commitment of the member for Murray as a former Minister and a member of this Government from 2011 set regional New South Wales on a path of prosperity. Those opposite never ask questions about regional New South Wales because they do not get it.

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

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** Members will recall that during the 2015 election I referred to a trip taken by the Leader of the Opposition to regional New South Wales—to Monaro and to Queanbeyan.

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 73. I am offended that the Minister said members of the Opposition do not understand regional New South Wales when he does not know that the Hunter forms a part of it.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. The member will resume her seat. I call the member for Maitland to order for the first time.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** Members of the Opposition never ask the Government questions about its achievements in regional New South Wales because they do not understand it. In 2015 the Leader of the Opposition visited the Monaro region, stopped at Oaks Estate and made an announcement. However, later he realised that Oaks Estate is located in Canberra and not in the Monaro region. A couple of weeks ago he again visited the Monaro region and was asked by local radio station 2CC—which is located in Canberra but which broadcasts to the Monaro region—"What is the pressing issue for Monaro?" The Leader of the Opposition said, "The Barton Highway." The Barton Highway runs through Canberra and through the electorate of the member for Goulburn electorate; it does not run through the Monaro region. All that Opposition members do in regional areas is play politics.

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

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** Those opposite are not genuine when it comes to delivering for the people of regional New South Wales. When we compare this Government's track record with the track record of the Labor Government we realise why Opposition members do not ask this Government questions about regional New South Wales. Let me give members a snapshot of regional New South Wales.

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

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** On the North Coast \$82 million has been allocated for the redevelopment of Kempsey Hospital; \$88 million has been allocated for the new Byron Central Hospital; and \$260 million has been allocated to continue the redevelopment of Lismore Hospital. Planning is in place for a new state-of-the-art correctional centre in Grafton that was announced only last week and work is about to begin on the new \$40 million high school in the Ballina electorate. In western New South Wales this Government has committed \$500 million in funding to provide water security for the community of Broken Hill—a 270-kilometre pipeline from the Murray.

**Mr Chris Minns:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Kogarah will address his point of order to me.

**Mr Chris Minns:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 18 (c). If things are going so well why did you stab him in the back?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. The member for Kogarah will resume his seat.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** This Government spent hundreds of millions of dollars over six years in the Dubbo electorate on hospital funding and another \$25 million was spent on a new emergency department at Dubbo Hospital. This Government spent \$20 million to continue the upgrade of the Great Western Highway at Kelso. In southern New South Wales \$270 million was spent on the redevelopment of the Wagga Wagga Hospital, \$20 million on the redevelopment of Bowral Hospital and \$2 million for the Jindabyne HealthOne facility which was promised, cancelled, promised and cancelled by Steve Whan and those opposite in their time in office.

On the South Coast \$110 million was spent on the important Foxground and Berry bypass and \$30 million was allocated for the redevelopment of the Port of Eden which will enable the birthing of world-class cruise liners. With the announcement that Canberra Airport will become an international airport we now have a

new international gateway to the south and an international gateway at the Port of Eden. We have set up the south-east of this State for success.

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

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** This was made possible by the tough decisions taken by this Government over the past six years which put this State in a sound financial and economic position and enabled this Government to build the necessary infrastructure. At the midway point, it is important to take note that we are delivering—200 projects out of 400 commitments. [*Extension of time*]

We are on our way to being judged in 2009 on what we have said and what we have done. That is what we will be judged on. Those opposite sometimes get caught up in the big stuff but forget about what we are trying to achieve. This is about regional communities.

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

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** This is about delivering for regional communities, whether Liberal or Labor—right across the board. Sometimes it is about the small stuff, like the \$32,000 we gave to Ballina Meals on Wheels. Those opposite laugh and scoff at \$32,000 for Ballina Meals on Wheels, but we know how important Meals on Wheels is—not only delivering home cooked meals for those who need them but also dealing with isolation, supporting people in regional New South Wales. Meg Pickup, the president of Ballina Meals on Wheels, and Meleta Wood, the service coordinator, were delighted with the Parliamentary Secretary for Northern New South Wales, the Hon. Ben Franklin, when he presented that cheque for \$32,000.

This is about people, about communities, about families. When we upgrade a road or upgrade a bridge, it is about safety for the school bus that takes our kids to school and back home again. It is about the delivery of health infrastructure. I refer again to the Government's investment in the multipurpose service [MPS] in Braidwood in my electorate. The local community, led by Mary Mathias, raised \$250,000. That is a local community, a community of about 1,000 people, raising \$250,000 through the community bank, the Braidwood Quilters and the generosity of the community. The New South Wales Government then matched that funding and in turn invested about \$1 million in that MPS. I have made a further commitment of another \$5 million—because we believe that regional communities have a right to their fair share of service delivery. At the midway point, we can say we are on track to deliver all of our election commitments. I can promise regional New South Wales and those opposite that, over the next two years, they will see this side of the House deliver for regional New South Wales.

### RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

**Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (14:51):** My question is directed to the Premier. Given that former Premier Baird opposed the weakening of section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act, telling the Federal Government, "If it's not broken, don't fix it", why can the Government not join former Premier Baird and former Premier O'Farrell in supporting the current law that protects people against racist hate speech?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! This is a serious question. Opposition members will come to order.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:52):** Unless I am missing something, the first two questions, which I have answered, were on the same topic. But I want to reiterate one point: those on that side of the House have to learn to stand for something. They cannot stand for something and then let it fall by the wayside if it does not suit their politics. We saw Opposition members do this. We saw them abandon communities at the last election when they ran a deliberately xenophobic campaign. This is what we need to campaign against every day in New South Wales. We need to be vigilant against racism, we need to be vigilant against a lack of tolerance, and we need to be vigilant against the politics of fear—which is exactly what the Opposition tried to play at the last election. Opposition members should not dare to come into this House and act like—

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129. It is unfortunate that the Premier is calling Scott Morrison a xenophobe.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** What the Leader of the Opposition displayed at the last election, and is displaying again today, is that he will say and do anything to score a political point—and it is not just on this issue. There are other examples. I will raise an example that I came across yesterday. The Leader of the Opposition was up on the Central Coast announcing his big new fund for Gosford. First he says he opposes council mergers, when we know the proposed council merger is very popular in the Gosford community—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Wyong has been warned several times.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Forget about that point if members opposite do not agree with it. But this is the point I am making. He says he does not support council mergers, but yesterday, as part of his new plan, he said he would provide \$10 million to be matched dollar for dollar by Central Coast Council—which he does not support. Not only that—

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Point of order: Under Standing Order 129—

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** First they do not support the merger, but then they say they are going to provide a \$10 million grant to be matched by the council dollar for dollar. I asked a few people this morning to ring the council to see whether the Labor Party had even approached them—and the answer is no. They have a policy that says they will put in \$10 million to be matched by the council, but they have not even checked to see whether the council people agree with it.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** This is the kind of fake policy racket they run on that side of the House. It was interesting to see something else in the same plan that exposes their lack of consistency on policy. First they are trying to give \$10 million to a council they do not even support, with that council—which they have not even contacted—expected to match it dollar for dollar.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I place member for Strathfield on three calls to order.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Then in the same document they claim that in the next 19 years 75,000 new jobs will be created on the Central Coast. What they do not appreciate is that in the past six years we have already created 32,000 jobs—while in the last several years of their Government they created only 2,000 jobs for the Central Coast. Here we see them again failing communities when it comes to policy. They do not do their homework, they play to the political wind and they do not believe in anything—no principles, no policies, no ideas.

#### STATE ECONOMY

**Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) (14:57):** My question is addressed to the Treasurer and Minister for Industrial Relations. How has the Government improved the New South Wales economy since its re-election? Is the Treasurer aware of any alternative distractions?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Hawkesbury—Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations) (14:57):** I thank the member for his question and I wish a happy anniversary to everyone on this side of the House—it has been two years since that great election result.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Government members will stop being silly.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Importantly, it has been six years since we came to power in 2011. I thought that on this glorious two-year anniversary, I would indulge the House with a story, a tale, if you will, of two States.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Once upon a time, in a place not so far away, there lived a poor, broke, destitute little State called New South Wales. New South Wales was in a very bad way. It was mired in debt and stuck in congestion with no road or rail. People were fleeing as there were no jobs to be had. New South Wales was being bullied by all the other States. It was picked on and laughed at. Even its ugly little cousin, Tasmania, was having a go.

**Mr Greg Warren:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order so that I can hear the member for Campbelltown. The Treasurer will resume his seat.

**Mr Greg Warren:** My point of order relates to Standing Order No. 73, personal reflections. The Treasurer's answer is not relevant to the question.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** In March 2011 something miraculous happened. Along came a knight in shining armour to rescue poor little New South Wales from despair—that knight was the Liberal-Nationals Coalition Government—and to cast NSW Labor into exile forever. The shackles were broken, the trumpets blared

and the people rejoiced. New South Wales once again ascended to the rightful throne of the most glorious State in all of the land.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** We have the biggest budget surplus in the country, if not the world. Indeed, there are more cranes in the skies across New South Wales than anywhere else.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** We have roads and railways as far as the eye can see. We have plenty of jobs and opportunities for the good folk of this State. That is what this State looks like when it is run by the Liberal-Nationals—one may say, the best of times. This story has a happy ending but it was not an easy victory. At every turn our knight in shining armour faced dreadful opposition from those opposite. Labor opposed the poles and wires, and asset recycling and building infrastructure; it has opposed everything. Labor opposed the Sydney Metro Northwest, NorthConnex, WestConnex, Service NSW, reforming workers compensation, reforming Land and Property Information, cutting taxes and budget repair. Those opposite are sitting in the cheap seats taking cheap shots.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I place the member for Rockdale on three calls to order. All members who are on a call to order are now deemed to be on three calls to order.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** They have protested against every decision that this Government has made. Last week they were out there protesting against tolls on roads that would never have been built under a Labor government.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Labor opposes all our initiatives, all our reforms and all our projects—nothing ever changes. This has given us a glimpse of what New South Wales would have looked like if that knight in shining armour—the New South Wales Coalition Government—had never arrived. Under Labor this State would be a dark, desolate and depressing place. The skies would be grey, the sun would not shine, we would have a series of brutalist architectural buildings, paper tickets would litter stations where trains no longer run, and burnt out cars, long abandoned having sat in congestion on the M4, would be left on the roads. Our people would be poor; preyed upon by roving convoys of union bikie gangs which, as we read today, would now be above the law. [*Extension of time*]

In the midst of all this there would be Luke Foley sitting out the front of Sussex Street, tugging at the coats—

**Mr Greg Warren:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The Treasurer continues to be tedious and not relevant to the question.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Treasurer is being relevant to the question he was asked. There is no point of order.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Under Labor New South Wales would be a failed State with no hope, no prospects and no future. We know this because Labor has blocked and opposed every reform that this Government has implemented. Those opposite have never done the hard work to get this State moving. They have no dignity, no integrity and no ability. There is nothing good about the modern Australian Labor Party, and these guys represent the dregs. This is the sad essence of what Labor now represents: Labor has always failed New South Wales, and it always will. In 2011 we rode into town to fix this State. That is what we did, and that is what we will continue to do. Labor will always be seen as the party of protest; we are the party of progress and New South Wales is looking brighter every day.

#### ONE NATION PREFERENCE ARRANGEMENTS

**Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (15:04):** My question is directed to the Premier. Given that since the day this House last met Pauline Hanson has made numerous offensive and bigoted statements, will the Premier now rule out a Liberal Party preference deal with One Nation at the next New South Wales election?

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (15:05):** I know the Leader of the Opposition is obsessed with preferences and the politics of this and that—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind Opposition members that several of them are on three calls to order. If they continue to interject they will be removed from the Chamber for the rest of the day.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Those on the other side of the House are always obsessed with preferences and the politics of who is doing what deals. We are now at the midpoint in our term in office and we are delivering for the people of this great State. Those opposite can deal with politics on any day of the week but we always say, "Vote one for the Liberals and The Nationals."

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the member for Port Stephens that she is on three calls to order. I remind the member for Prospect that he is on three calls to order.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** We have seen the Labor Party's form in preferences—in one electorate Labor preferences The Greens and in another electorate it preferences the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party. Labor does not stand for anything; it has no principles.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Swansea will come to order. The member for Rockdale is on his final warning. The member for The Entrance will come to order.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I talk often to the great people of this State because at the end of the day what matters to them on a day-to-day basis matters to me. Without exception, when the Labor Party is mentioned—apart from them saying that it is hopeless in government—many say they do not know what Labor stands for. Indeed, many of those opposite do not know what their leader stands for because all he does—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Cessnock will come to order. I call the member for The Entrance to order for the first time. The member for member for The Entrance will cease shouting.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** All the Leader of the Opposition thinks about is what is going to get him the next headline, what is going to maximise his media coverage the next day. He stands for nothing. I say to those opposite, "Where do you stand on infrastructure funding? How will you raise the billions of dollars required to build the infrastructure that the people of this great State need? How will you raise the funds to service our hospitals? How will you raise the funds to keep our schools going?"

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** The people of New South Wales want answers to those questions. I find it interesting when I hear those opposite in the corridors of this place saying that they did not know what the strategy was about during question time

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** They are, of course, referring to the Leader of the Opposition. I then say to them, "What do you think about this policy or that policy?" They just shrug their shoulders because nobody knows what they stand for. Those on this side of House stand for things that matter to the great people of this State.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Those opposite do not want to hear about this. We on this side of the House are willing to put our necks on the line to help this great State move forward.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the member for Port Stephens that she is on three calls to order. This is her final warning.

**Mr Guy Zangari:** Point of order: It is under Standing Order 129. Please explain?

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I encourage members opposite to continue exactly what they are doing, because what the people of New South Wales want is more jobs, more infrastructure, more services, more roads and a better quality of life. They do not want the games of members opposite.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Point of order—

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I have finished my answer.

#### REGIONAL ROADS INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES (Barwon) (15:09):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight. How has the Government improved regional roads, particularly the very well-known Gundablou Road, over the past two years?

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley—Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight) (15:10):** I acknowledge and thank the member for Barwon for his question.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the member for Maroubra that he is on three calls to order.

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY:** The Gundabloui Road is an important local road between Collarenebri and Mungindi. As a good Government we are able to invest not only in fixing motorways and getting rid of congestion in Sydney but also in helping councils make local roads navigable for our farmers during rainy periods. This road was very close to the heart of another member for Barwon and former Minister for Roads, Wal Murray. He measured every bit of success in delivering roads on how many kilometres had been sealed. He understood that it is on very low floodplain. Hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of wheat and cotton growing there cannot get to market if there is even five millimetres of rain on those beautiful black soil plains. We have helped the council to get this road upgraded. We have sealed an extra six kilometres of the road to make the lives of those farmers that bit easier and to enable them also to tap into the beautiful new intermodal freight centre being constructed at Moree.

That is what a good government does. It is what we have been doing for the past two years on top of our great work in the previous four years. We have committed good funding and good support to country people and regional roads. As the former deputy secretary I am sure the member for Keira would be very interested in the funding statistics that show our absolute commitment. Unless money is put on the table it is all just talk and brochures, which is what the Opposition was about. The Leader of the Opposition does not even understand the difference between recurrent and capital expenditure. That is a very big problem for the future of this State. We will prosecute the case that he has no idea, no plans, no vision and no capability to do any of the work that this State needs.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind members that several of them are on three calls to order. I place the member for Fairfield on three calls to order.

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY:** For the benefit of the member for Keira, it is important to highlight that New South Wales regional road funding in the past year totalled \$3.4 billion. On average during their tenure Labor members spent only \$2.4 billion on regional roads. That means we are spending 50 per cent more than they did. The total roads budget is another wonderful story altogether because of our collaboration and relationship with the Federal Government which has meant that the actual total spend on the roads budget has increased 105 per cent on Labor's last year in office. Sixty-five per cent of that is going to regional roads so that we can do the little jobs like sealing the six kilometres of road between Mungindi and Collarenebri to make a difference to the lives of farmers and communities.

We are also able to upgrade the Pacific Highway, which was the nation's worst death trap. That is almost finished. We have other plans for work on the Princes Highway, the Great Western Highway and the Bells Line of Road. What we are doing on the Newell Highway is extraordinary. Labor did not spend a cent on the Newell Highway. We have allocated \$500 million to improving that road. We are absolutely committed. As the Deputy Premier pointed out, Labor members are so out of their depth on this issue. The golden rule of politics is for members to understand the electorate they are visiting and to respect the candidate who has put up his or her hand. They should certainly try to understand some of the issues they might be raising. For a member to throw out the name of a road that is not even in the electorate being visited shows a lack of respect for the candidate and the community. [*Extension of time*]

Funds for the Fixing Country Roads Program, Fixing Country Truck Washes Program and the Grain Harvest Management Program are yet to be fully spent, providing a lot of opportunities for councils to access those funds in the next couple of years. That is what is important to our communities. It is the right work.

**Dr Geoff Lee:** It's the right thing to do.

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY:** It is the right thing to do. We are busting congestion in Sydney but we are not just planning and constructing for the future; we have had to spend a lot of money playing catch up for 16 years of absolute neglect and mismanagement. There is plenty of very good news coming for the people of country New South Wales but we have much work to do. It is about catch up but it is also about delivering for the future. Spending \$1.2 million on a six-kilometre stretch of road has been important to those farmers and communities. There is more to come. We look forward to working with all communities across country New South Wales to deliver the infrastructure they deserve.

#### LIFESTYLE SOLUTIONS

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (15:16):** My question is directed to the Minister for Family and Community Services. When the Minister met with Lifestyle Solutions on 19 May 2015 and 1 April 2016 did she raise concerns about the death of four residents in its care in Newcastle and the Hunter Valley in 2014, and another death in Goulburn in March 2016?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister has the call.

**Ms PRU GOWARD (Goulburn—Minister for Family and Community Services, Minister for Social Housing, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (15:17):** I thank the member Bankstown for her question. From recollection, I met with Lifestyle Solutions as the local member and we were discussing an issue that as far as I recall had nothing to do with deaths in Newcastle. I was certainly very saddened to hear of recent reports of abuse in group homes. Minister Williams has instructed the department to investigate the serious matters that were raised last night on *Four Corners* regarding disability services in New South Wales. We do not tolerate abuse of people with disabilities. I reassure the community that New South Wales has some of the strongest safeguards in the country for people with disabilities. We need to remember that when it comes to caring for our vulnerable families they deserve nothing less.

#### STATE INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) (15:18):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. Will the Minister update the House on the New South Wales Government's incredible infrastructure achievements in the two years since its re-election in 2015?

**Mr Paul Lynch:** Point of order: My point of order is related to ironical expression under Standing Order 128 (2) (f).

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

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Infrastructure) (15:19):** It is great to see the member for Kogarah back in the House. He decided to duck out for about 15 minutes and do a press interview out the back. I wonder what is going on? I note that the member for Auburn and the member for Maroubra are in the House working hard while the member for Kogarah is out the back doing a press interview. I know that during the last question time Robbo outlined who is voting for who in the upcoming deputy leader ballot. There is something going on over on the other side of the House but we do not know what it is.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. We want to hear about transport.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I afforded the Minister a little latitude in his preliminary remarks. The Minister will now return to the leave of question.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** The question from my dear mate the member for Camden was in relation to infrastructure. A lot is happening. We have a \$73 billion program of works around the State, underpinned of course by the poles and wires transaction which we prosecuted at the last election and which was passed through the Parliament by former Treasurer Berejiklian.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Cessnock and the Minister for Corrections will cease arguing across the Chamber.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** A couple of questions asked in question time today caused me to look at a particular article published at the time of the poles and wires transaction. The Leader of the Opposition said that the unions had a right to run a campaign despite the Federal Race Discrimination Commissioner warning against it inflaming racism.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. The question is about transport. The Premier had every opportunity to talk about section 18C and Pauline Hanson.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Strathfield will resume her seat. The Minister will return to the leave of the question.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** Our infrastructure program was underpinned by the poles and wires transaction, which all members opposite opposed. The behaviour and actions of the Labor Party, in conjunction with the unions, were noted at the last election when the Federal Race Discrimination Commissioner said that their behaviour was inflaming xenophobia. Members opposite should be ashamed of themselves.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order: The Minister should sit down. He is not speaking about transport and the question related to transport.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Strathfield and the Minister will resume their seats. Members will come to order. The member for Strathfield will not shout across the Chamber. What is the member's point of order?

**Ms Jodi McKay:** It is under Standing Order 129. The question was about transport.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I uphold the point of order. The Minister will return to the leave of the question, which was about transport, and not deviate any further.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** I have to take issue. The question was, "Will the Minister update the House on the New South Wales Government's incredible infrastructure achievements in the two years since its re-election in 2015?" Transport is not even mentioned in the question. Someone on the other side of the House is a bit sensitive in relation to infrastructure financing. I am proud to be part of the Berejiklian-Barilaro Government. It is outrageous that today we have had to put up with rubbish questions from members opposite. We are getting on with the job.

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

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** They accuse us of breaching section 18C when they have got the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Maroubra. To return to the question: in relation to infrastructure we are getting on with the \$73 billion program. Halfway through this term of government, with two years to go, we are building everything everywhere—five brand-new transport networks for Sydney. [*Extension of time*]

Three metro projects and three light rail projects are being built in Parramatta, the central business district and, of course, Newcastle—opposed by Crackers and supported by Nuatali. Work is happening absolutely everywhere—even in regional New South Wales where some 220 projects are being built as we speak. This \$73 billion program has been opposed every step of the way by the policy-free zone opposite. It was good to see the shadow education Minister being upset after being told he does not have policies, because that is the theme right across the Opposition front bench. Halfway through this term of government the Opposition has no policies and no ideas—it is just a party of protest everywhere it goes.

I note that last weekend Labor said it would have no tolls on the M4. Guess what? We cannot build WestConnex without tolls. The reality is that Labor does not want it built. Labor has killed stage three of WestConnex. It has killed the project and it has killed the connection between the M4 and the M5 which makes it work. Labor just opposes, opposes, opposes. At the last State election what did the member for Maroubra say about the Sydney Metro Northwest? He said it is uneconomic. Guess what? The business case came back and its benefit cost ratio is well and truly greater than one plus. This Opposition opposes everything we are building. It has no policies and its leader is quite prepared to tell lies to the people of New South Wales about what is being built and the policies we are delivering. Quite frankly, members opposite should be ashamed of what they are doing in trying to make people's lives miserable when this Government is getting on with making this State great.

#### *Committees*

### **COMMITTEE ON THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION**

#### **Inquiry**

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST:** On behalf of the Chair: In accordance with Standing Order 299 (1), I inform the House that the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption has resolved to conduct an inquiry into the protections for people who make voluntary disclosures to the Independent Commission Against Corruption. The full details are available on the committee's home page.

#### **LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

#### **Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 33/56**

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN:** As Chair: I table the report of the Legislation Review Committee entitled "Legislation Review Digest No. 33/56", dated 28 March 2017.

I move:

That the report be printed.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN:** I also table the minutes of the committee meeting regarding Legislation Review Digest No. 32/56, dated 7 March 2017.

*Documents***OFFICE OF TRANSPORT SAFETY INVESTIGATIONS****Reports**

**The CLERK:** In accordance with section 46D of the Passenger Transport Act 1990, I announce receipt of the Office of Transport Safety Investigations report entitled "Bus Safety Investigation Report, Bus Fire, Sydney Harbour Bridge, Milsons Point, 15 September 2016", received 10 March 2017 and authorised to be printed.

**AUDITOR-GENERAL****Reports**

**The CLERK:** In accordance with section 63C the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, I announce receipt of the Auditor-General's Financial Audit Report entitled "Members' Additional Entitlements 2016", dated March 2017, received 21 March 2017 and authorised to be printed.

*Committees***STAYSAFE (JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY)****Government Response: Driverless Vehicles and Road Safety in NSW**

**The CLERK:** I announce receipt of the Government's response to report No. 2/56 of the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety, entitled "Driverless vehicles and road safety in NSW", dated March 2017, received 21 March 2017 and authorised to be printed.

**JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE OFFICE OF THE VALUER GENERAL****Government Response: Report on the Tenth General Meeting with the Valuer General**

**The CLERK:** I announce receipt of the Government's response to report No. 1/56 of the Joint Standing Committee on the Office of the Valuer General, entitled "Report on the Tenth General Meeting with the Valuer General", received 22 March 2017 and authorised to be printed.

*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**.

**Bus Service 389**

Petition requesting a more reliable 389 bus service, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

**Social Housing**

Petition requesting that the Sirius building be retained and its social housing function be continued, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

**Inner-city Social Housing**

Petition opposing the sale of public housing in Millers Point, Dawes Point and The Rocks, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

**RESPONSES TO PETITIONS**

**The CLERK:** I announce that the following Ministers have lodged responses to petitions signed by more than 500 persons:

The Hon. Anthony Roberts—Stockton Coastline Management Study—lodged 14 February 2017 (Mr Tim Crakanthorp)

The Hon. Rob Stokes—Pottsville Secondary School—lodged 14 February 2017 (Mr Geoff Provest)

The Hon. Pru Goward—Domestic Violence—lodged 14 February 2017 (Ms Jenny Aitchison)

The Hon. Brad Hazzard—Water Fluoridation—lodged 16 February 2017 (Mr Adrian Piccoli)

*Business of the House*

**BUSINESS LAPSED**

**The SPEAKER:** I advise the House that, in accordance with Standing Order 105 (3), General Business Order of the Day (for Bills) No. 1 [Steel Industry Protection Bill 2106] and General Business Order of the Day (for Bills) No. 5 [City of Sydney Amendment (Restoring Equal Voting Rights) Bill 2016] and General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) Nos 1328 to 1361, 1363 to 1414, and 1416 to 1432 have lapsed. I order that a message be sent informing the Legislative Council of the lapsing of the Steel Industry Protection Bill 2016.

*Motions Accorded Priority*

**STATE GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE**

**Consideration**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (15:30):** If you are not part of the solution, you are probably the Leader of the Opposition. When we came to government we inherited a State with debt on the balance sheet. We inherited a State in deficit.

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

**Mr GARETH WARD:** We inherited a State that was on its knees, but today New South Wales is number one again. It did not happen by accident, although those opposite would have people believe that. As members on the Opposition frontbench drag their knuckles around the State from electorate to electorate, they are confronted by infrastructure project after infrastructure project. They then drag their miserable political carcasses back into the Chamber ashen faced and terrified.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the member for Maroubra that he is on three calls to order.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** When we go into their electorates and tell people that they will be better off under our Government they have to confront hospital investments, schools rising out of the ground and record numbers of nurses in our hospitals and teachers in our schools. Members opposite have to try to explain that the people of this State would all be better off under a Labor government. If members opposite were in government, they would be opening the projects they voted against. They would be grabbing the biggest red ribbon and the biggest pair of novelty scissors. They would be getting repetitive strain injury from cutting ribbons around the State and opening the projects that they voted against and did not want.

My concern about the Opposition is that it is dangerously left wing and it is getting worse. The Treasurer talks about the socialist objective which still remains littered through the basic principles of Labor. But it is getting worse because the once great bastion of economic rationalism, the right faction of the Labor Party, is being entranced by Green policies on protectionism—something that Keating and Hawke rejected. They are being dragged more and more to the left. The right wing of the left wing has been dragged so far to the left that if they were birds they would travel around in circles. That is how far to the left they have been dragged and it is getting worse.

This Leader of the Opposition once voted against the leasing of the port but what did he do in the run-up to the election? He changed his position. This is flip-flop Foley and his funny money faux pas. The farrago of falsehoods from Foley continues. It is time for the Opposition to ex-Foley-ate. It is time for the Opposition to find another leader because the Leader of the Opposition has no principles. He would continue to drive this State into the ground. We have seen it all before from those opposite and we will see it again. It is members on my side of the House that have built New South Wales and we will continue to drive this State forward.

**NORTHERN BEACHES TUNNEL**

**Consideration**

**Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (15:33):** I thank the member for Kiama for his energetic performance. He can sit down for a while now while the red drains from his face. I want to talk about the northern beaches tunnel. Members opposite have been talking about the northern beaches tunnel for the past 25 years, so we think

it is only fair that we discuss and debate it in the Parliament today. It has taken by-elections in Manly and North Shore to put the northern beaches tunnel on the infrastructure agenda. We had the infrastructure Premier with her hard hat and fluoro vest, which she often wears, out there announcing it. Of course, her announcement was somewhat spoiled by the member for North Shore, who delayed her resignation until she had released her glossy, expensive newsletter so that she could tell her constituency she was the one responsible for the northern beaches tunnel.

Some key questions need to be asked and answered in regard to the northern beaches tunnel. The Government has the chance to tell us the answer to some questions—and this is why it needs to be debated. The first question is: how much will this tunnel cost? Nobody knows. The second question is: how will it be funded? Nobody knows that either. The third question is: when will it be constructed? The member for Wakehurst does not know. When will it be opened? That is right—nobody knows. When will the geotechnical work be completed? When will the business case be released? When will the environmental impact statement be released? Will there be a toll concession agreement for 40 to 60 years? Nobody knows.

These are critically important questions to be answered when building infrastructure. Right now we have no answers. We know the northern beaches tunnel has caused significant angst within the party room because the member for Cronulla does not want the tunnel to be funded. He has been writing to say, "Please don't fund the tunnel". Has anyone noticed that the member for Davidson has suddenly come alive? He has woken up. Why? Because he missed out on Cabinet. The member for Davidson is suddenly awake, banging on doors and advocating for his community. He did something about a drone, he has written op-eds—all because he missed out on a Cabinet position. He wants this tunnel but the member for Cronulla does not. It is important that this issue is debated in the House today because there are critical questions that the Government needs to answer. [*Time expired.*]

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

#### The House divided.

Ayes .....48  
Noes .....37  
Majority.....11

#### AYES

Anderson, Mr K	Aplin, Mr G	Ayres, Mr S
Barilaro, Mr J	Berejiklian, Ms G	Bromhead, Mr S (teller)
Brookes, Mr G	Conolly, Mr K	Constance, Mr A
Coure, Mr M	Crouch, Mr A	Davies, Ms T
Dominello, Mr V	Elliott, Mr D	Evans, Mr L
Fraser, Mr A	Gibbons, Ms M	Goward, Ms P
Grant, Mr T	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	Notley-Smith, Mr B
O'Dea, Mr J	Patterson, Mr C (teller)	Pavey, Mrs M
Perrottet, Mr D	Petinos, Ms E	Piccoli, Mr A
Provest, Mr G	Roberts, Mr A	Rowell, Mr J
Sidoti, Mr J	Speakman, Mr M	Stokes, Mr R
Taylor, Mr M	Toole, Mr P	Upton, Ms G
Ward, Mr G	Williams, Mr R	Williams, Mrs L

#### NOES

Aitchison, Ms J	Atalla, Mr E	Barr, Mr C
Car, Ms P	Catley, Ms Y	Chanthivong, Mr A
Cotsis, Ms S	Crakanthorp, Mr T	Daley, Mr M
Dib, Mr J	Donato, Mr P	Doyle, Ms T
Finn, Ms J	Foley, Mr L	Greenwich, Mr A
Harris, Mr D	Harrison, Ms J	Haylen, Ms J
Hoening, Mr R	Kamper, Mr S	Lalich, Mr N (teller)
Leong, Ms J	Lynch, Mr P	McDermott, Dr H
McKay, Ms J	Mehan, Mr D	Mihailuk, Ms T

## NOES

Minns, Mr C  
Robertson, Mr J  
Warren, Mr G  
Zangari, Mr G

Park, Mr R  
Scully, Mr P  
Washington, Ms K

Piper, Mr G  
Smith, Ms T F  
Watson, Ms A (teller)

## PAIRS

Tudehope, Mr D

Hornery, Ms S

**Motion agreed to.****STATE GOVERNMENT PEERFORMANCE****Priority**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (15:44):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges that today marks the second anniversary of the Government's re-election.
- (2) Notes since being elected we have seen some 300,000 jobs created in New South Wales.
- (3) Recognises the Government has delivered on more than 200 of its 2015 election commitments, with even more underway.
- (4) Condemns the Opposition for still having no plan for New South Wales after six years.

This is a government that continues to renew with fresh talent so that we continue to take the State forward. I am proud to see the candidates in the three by-elections engaging with their electorates to ensure that the good news of this State is known to all. This Government will not be suckered by the political pilot fish that sit opposite. The Opposition will use this Government's achievements to bolster its flagging political fortunes. This Government will not be bought. The candidate for the North Shore, Felicity Wilson, will not be bought.

**Mr Mark Coure:** An outstanding candidate.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** An outstanding candidate. Ms Wilson is vivacious, energetic and perfectly placed to continue the legacy of Jillian Skinner on the North Shore. James Griffin is a person with the tenacity and capacity to represent Manly. He is Manly through and through. Mr Griffin has a bright future and will make a great contribution. Jilly Pillon is emblematic of Gosford and the Central Coast. Ms Pillon embodies what the community wants in a member. I am proud to stand alongside these candidates. They are speaking to their communities of the achievements of this Government over the past six years. In 2011 economic growth was 1.8 per cent and today it is 3.5 per cent. The unemployment rate was 5.2 per cent, running above the national average for 63 of the 66 quarters. In 2017 it is below the national average at 4.9 per cent. In 2011 housing approvals were 36,013 and today they are a record 74,600. In 2011 the budget position was \$4.4 billion in deficit. The facts do not change, despite the member for Wyong mumbling.

**Mr David Harris:** That is only half the story.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I acknowledge the interjection by the member for Wyong. Which half of the story would the member like to tell? The fake half?

**Mr David Harris:** Only 500 full-time jobs.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** You know you are in trouble when you are deluded into believing your own talking points. The member for Wyong is mired in his own talking points. The member knows that he was part of a government that left a \$4.4 billion deficit. There is now a \$7.4 billion surplus. In 2011 net debt was forecast to be \$200 billion and today it is at zero. The State has moved forward in so many ways. When the Opposition was last in government there was a \$6.1 billion spend on infrastructure in that year. In 2017 it is \$12.9 billion. In 2011 there were 40,300 nurses and today there are 45,796. In 2011 there were 15,556 police officers and today there are 16,630. In 2011 there were 61,144 teachers and today there are 64,919.

In 2011, when the Coalition was elected, 40 per cent of hospital buildings were more than 50 years old. In August 2015 the \$106.8 million upgrade to the elective surgical unit in Wollongong Hospital was completed. In June 2016 the \$88 million upgrade to Byron Central Hospital was completed. In January 2016 the \$91.3 million

stages one and two of the Dubbo Base Hospital were completed. The \$150 million tender for stages three and four of the Dubbo Base Hospital has been awarded.

I could not talk about hospitals without acknowledging the work done by the Parliamentary Secretary, the member for Oatley, to rebuild St George Hospital. In November 2016 the \$81.9 million Kempsey Hospital redevelopment was completed. In December 2014 the \$104 million Port Macquarie Hospital upgrade was completed. The projects in progress include the \$348 million Gosford Hospital upgrade, which is ahead of time and under budget. I am sure the member for Wyong will be pleased.

**Mr Mark Coure:** He supports it.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I am sure the member for Wyong does support it, as he knows good government. Stages one and two of the Wagga Wagga Base Hospital will receive funding of \$282 million, while stage three will receive \$170 million. This Government is getting on with the job of delivering. Under Labor, projects after projects were cancelled. Labor made promise after promise but did not deliver. This Government has made New South Wales number one again.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong) (15:49):** The offshoots of Cyclone Debbie are heading down the coast to Kiama, and the blowhole is going off today. The member for Kiama has inspired the Government benches, which is more than the leadership did during the hour of question time. My hat goes off to the member for Kiama because, on the two-year anniversary of this Government, he has been given the job of defending the indefensible. The Premier is testing the member's ministerial credentials to see whether he can handle the pace should he get the nod in the next round, as he deserves. As the member for Kiama knows, I have always backed him for a ministerial spot. We look forward to the restoration of the Minister for the Illawarra—a policy, I might add, of Labor.

Two years in and millions of people have been affected by overcrowded schools, a school maintenance backlog worth multiple millions of dollars—in the electorate of Wollongong alone more than \$10 million—the gutting of TAFE, a fall in TAFE enrolments, and soaring hospital waiting lists. Housing affordability, which was the number one priority, is now lost in the morass and there are spiralling cost-of-living blowouts. The Government has made a reckless assault on the urban and natural environment, reintroduced unfair tolls, and shown contempt for transparency, with repeated cost blowouts in Sydney projects which are impacting the Illawarra.

**Mr Mark Coure:** Have you forgotten about the Cross City Tunnel?

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** I cannot forget the lack of investment in the Illawarra. The motion refers to 200 of the 2015 election commitments being delivered. A thoracic surgeon in Wollongong public hospital has not been delivered. This Government has failed to deliver on steel. Last Monday I was generously invited by the member for Kiama to another talkfest on steel. It was held 18 months after the first one, with almost the same people assembled around the room. However, at least this time a commitment was given by the Government that in 28 days something will be released in relation to steel. The Government has only to adopt the Opposition's steel bill, which has a real plan for steel and for jobs in the Illawarra.

In Labor's Illawarra Jobs Action Plan, which was released during the Wollongong by-election, Labor sets out a comprehensive plan for jobs in the Illawarra: investment in the Maldon to Dombarton rail link; the upgrade of Appin Road to make it safer and to build connections with south-west Sydney and the Illawarra; the upgrade of the Unanderra station lifts; and finally delivering on the upgrade of the WIN Entertainment Centre, a project that the Premier when she was the Minister for Transport took money away from. These projects will create jobs in the Illawarra, and by embracing innovation we will create even more jobs. The Opposition has a steel plan that will deliver jobs and our investment in TAFE will deliver the skills of the future in the Illawarra. Labor has a comprehensive jobs plan that will mean more jobs locally. Currently, more than 20,000 people in the Illawarra travel on overcrowded trains each day to work in Sydney. Earlier this week, Labor announced the Gosford Jobs Action Plan, which will mean people who live on the Central Coast can work on the Central Coast.

The biggest plan the Government has on its agenda in the Illawarra is the privatisation of our public hospitals. Shellharbour Hospital will mean the gutting of Port Kembla Hospital and its inevitable closure. The Government has been very quiet about the closure of the hospital but it is inevitable as a result of its policies. The member for Kiama said a lot today. I acknowledge that he has a tough job defending this Government's efforts, on its second anniversary. I do not often agree with the Premier but I did agree with her when she said earlier today that New South Wales is pleased about this Government's two-year anniversary. Everyone is pleased because in less than two years we will have the opportunity to get rid of this mob and Malcolm Turnbull from Canberra and New South Wales will be happy again.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (15:54):** While we talk in the Parliament today about building infrastructure, very soon there will be a rebuilding exercise in north Queensland. I refer to communities around Bowen, Ayr and Mackay as Cyclone Debbie, a category 4 cyclone, crosses the coast with its destructive winds affecting thousands of people. We hope and pray that the people stay safe and that the damage is kept to a minimum. I know that my friend in the Queensland Parliament, the member for the Whitsundays, Jason Costigan, is doing all he can to assist. The emergency services in Queensland, who have been on standby, will now be activated to do their work and to build infrastructure, as we are talking about in New South Wales today.

I note the Minister for Emergency Services is in the Chamber; no doubt he sends his best wishes to his counterparts and colleagues in Queensland. Our thoughts and prayers are with those families as they battle that monstrous storm. The rebuilding exercise will take place in north Queensland just as the rebuilding exercise has been ongoing in New South Wales over the past six years, due to a lack of attention by the Labor Government for 16 years. Under the Labor Government, in the Tamworth electorate roadworks were promised and not delivered, health infrastructure was promised and not delivered, and upgrades to the police station and schools were promised and not delivered. In the past six years we have seen a turnaround; it is like turning around the *Queen Mary*.

Under this Government, Manilla Road has been upgraded with work continuing, and the Oxley Highway will have overtaking lanes between Tamworth and Gunnedah. A number of projects are taking place in Gunnedah, including a \$5 million upgrade to create a brand new police station, a \$2 million upgrade of Gunnedah Hospital and a \$58 million new overpass so that emergency services can more efficiently traverse from one side of Gunnedah to the other. We are keeping our people safe and looking after our transport networks so that we continue to have efficient movement across our great network. I note in the public gallery a member of the Gunnedah community, Mr Geoff Rose, who is from the Greyhound Breeders, Owners and Trainers Association and is here no doubt to hear the good news about what the Government is delivering for the greyhound racing industry.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I remind members that a number of them are on three calls to order, one of whom continues to interject. This is her final warning.

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (15:59):** As previous speakers have said, there are two blowholes in Kiama: one in Terralong Street and the other at the beach. The member for Kiama is Kiama's own blowhole in the flesh. The member for Kiama says one thing in Terralong Street and the opposite in this House. It is really hard to keep up with his statements. Today the member for Kiama patted himself on the back as he talked about the second anniversary of this Government's re-election. If I were him, I would run for the hills.

Let us talk about their track record. The member for Wollongong has already highlighted the overcrowding in our schools. I mentioned only today, in a private member's statement, what is going on in Hayes Park. There is also a huge maintenance backlog at Oak Flats Public School—more than \$4 million worth—which is outrageous. Further than that, it will take 18 years to clear that backlog at the rate that this Government is fixing things. The gutting of Dapto TAFE was also outrageous. We had the perfect TAFE in the perfect location, right in the middle of the Dapto CBD—and the member for Kiama came out not once, not twice, but three times to make sure that TAFE was closed down.

On top of that, we have seen the privatisation, the Americanisation, of the Shellharbour public hospital. This move is hugely unpopular throughout the region—not just in the electorate of Shellharbour but also in the electorate of Kiama. If the member for Kiama thinks he will get away with closing down and privatising our hospitals I can tell him that we will go after his electorate in 2019 and win it. People in the electorate of the member for Kiama are not happy about it. Over the past six years we have seen three Premiers, and they are giving themselves a pat on the back about that—three Premiers in six years.

To add insult to injury, I refer to two projects in my electorate worth \$800 million each: the Albion Park rail bypass and the Shellharbour public hospital. If this Government was truly interested and if it meant what it said about its commitment to planning and infrastructure, it would start the Albion Park bypass. We have been waiting for it to be built since 2011. This Government will have been in office for nearly a decade before it has even put a shovel in the ground. It is disgusting and people know it. People know that the Government is a dismal failure on the Albion Park rail bypass. That project needs to start now. We have seen councils sacked and the forced amalgamation of councils. The member for Kiama is standing in the Chamber saying, "Not on my watch".  
[Time expired.]

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (16:01):** In reply: Have I not been admonished today! They are seeking to back the member for Wollongong. He has been here for only five minutes. The bloke is so new he is still getting around the House with a visitor's pass. But they have sent him in to try to take me on. He did a good job, but he did not do so well in relation to steel. What he forgot to mention was the \$60 million in payroll tax concessions

that I helped secure in relation to that steelworks, which helped save those workers and save those jobs. Where were Opposition members on that? They were absolutely nowhere.

Coming in to bat second, we had the low-altitude flyer herself, the member for Shellharbour—the tallest midget at that circus we call the Opposition. That is the best they can do. She got up and talked about Dapto TAFE. She wanted us to spend \$100,000 to look after six students. That is what the member for Shellharbour wanted. There were six students there and she was happy for that amount of taxpayers' money to be spent. She also mentioned the Albion Park rail bypass. The member for Shellharbour would love to be there with her big set of scissors, cutting the red ribbon and opening that bypass—after not promising it at the election and then coming into the House, putting her backside on the Opposition benches and voting against the means of funding it.

They cannot take credit for something when they go to an election not promising it and then come into the Chamber and vote against the means of funding it. She is a canting hypocrite. How can she possibly hold her head up high and say she has delivered for infrastructure when she never promised a cent for that project? She did not promise one red cent for that project at the election. We now hear more and more about protectionism. This has long been espoused by The Greens, but it is now enveloping Labor's policy—as the Right of the Labor Party dissipates under the premiership of Lee Kuan Foley. I noticed on Labor's website—under "events" because I could not find any policy—a Labor alumni reunion, a reunion for Labor staffers. It is on Monday 27 March at 6.00 p.m. I am sure a number of former staffers on that side of the House will be going. The guest speaker is Seamus Dawes, chairman of the Pepper Group and a former adviser to Paul Keating.

How can they sit around and talk about the days of Keating? That was a time when Labor believed in economic rationalism, when the Opposition stood for something, when Labor believed in reform—rather than the cant and populist policy that has been put out by a party whose shadow Treasurer, when he was deputy director general at the Department of Transport, signed up to train carriages from China. They may talk about steel, but their last two projects, the WIN Stadium western grandstand and the Shoalhaven Correctional Centre, used not one ounce of Australian steel. Those miserable hypocrites say one thing in opposition but another in government. This Government has worked hard to make New South Wales number one again. Our best days are yet to come. At the next election, the seats of every member of the Opposition will be in strife.

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....48  
Noes .....36  
Majority..... 12

AYES

Anderson, Mr K	Aplin, Mr G	Ayres, Mr S
Barilaro, Mr J	Berejiklian, Ms G	Bromhead, Mr S (teller)
Brookes, Mr G	Conolly, Mr K	Constance, Mr A
Coure, Mr M	Crouch, Mr A	Davies, Ms T
Dominello, Mr V	Elliott, Mr D	Evans, Mr L
Fraser, Mr A	Gibbons, Ms M	Goward, Ms P
Grant, Mr T	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	Notley-Smith, Mr B
O'Dea, Mr J	Patterson, Mr C (teller)	Pavey, Mrs M
Perrottet, Mr D	Petinos, Ms E	Piccoli, Mr A
Provest, Mr G	Roberts, Mr A	Rowell, Mr J
Sidoti, Mr J	Speakman, Mr M	Stokes, Mr R
Taylor, Mr M	Toole, Mr P	Upton, Ms G
Ward, Mr G	Williams, Mr R	Williams, Mrs L

NOES

Aitchison, Ms J	Atalla, Mr E	Barr, Mr C
Car, Ms P	Catley, Ms Y	Chanthivong, Mr A
Cotsis, Ms S	Crakanthorp, Mr T	Daley, Mr M

## NOES

Dib, Mr J	Donato, Mr P	Doyle, Ms T
Finn, Ms J	Greenwich, Mr A	Harris, Mr D
Harrison, Ms J	Haylen, Ms J	Hoenig, Mr R
Kamper, Mr S	Lalich, Mr N (teller)	Leong, Ms J
Lynch, Mr P	McDermott, Dr H	McKay, Ms J
Mehan, Mr D	Mihailuk, Ms T	Minns, Mr C
Park, Mr R	Piper, Mr G	Robertson, Mr J
Scully, Mr P	Smith, Ms T F	Warren, Mr G
Washington, Ms K	Watson, Ms A (teller)	Zangari, Mr G

## PAIRS

Hancock, Mrs S	Foley, Mr L
Tudehope, Mr D	Hornery, Ms S

**Motion agreed to.***Visitors***VISITORS**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I welcome to the Parliament students from the University of Technology, Sydney, who are undertaking a communications course. I extend a warm welcome to them and trust they will enjoy their time at Parliament House over the coming week. I also welcome students from Macquarie University.

*Bills***FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES LEVY BILL 2017****Second Reading****Debate resumed from 7 March 2017.**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (16:12):** It is with much pleasure that I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Fire and Emergency Services Levy Bill 2017. I take this opportunity to thank a number of my colleagues, including the shadow Minister for Emergency Services, and member for Fairfield; the shadow Minister for Finance, Services and Property, and member for Cessnock; and the Hon. Peter Primrose—

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** The member for Heffron?

**Mr RYAN PARK:** I thank the member for Heffron. I also thank the Hon. John Graham in the other place. In particular, I thank staff members Amanda McCormack and Stephen Fenn for their assistance in this matter. I foreshadow that the Opposition will be moving a number of detailed amendments, which have been sent to the Government. I state at the outset that Opposition members support the bill in theory but in practice we are concerned about it. Indeed, our support is dependent upon a raft of changes being made to the bill.

In recent times we have introduced a variety of bills that underline Labor's approach to fairness, social justice and the quintessential Australian sense of a fair go for all. That is why the Leader of the Opposition introduced his private member's bill on medical cannabis—a response to those suffering needlessly. That is why we introduced a bill for transparency in tolling—so that those who paid did so fairly and with sufficient independent oversight. And that is why I recently sought to convince Parliament to back my steel industry bill—to boost jobs and economic growth in New South Wales.

The Fire and Emergency Services Levy Bill 2017 contains principles that the Opposition both accepts and supports but, as always with this Government, the devil is in the detail. It proposes a new way to fund the essential work of our fire and emergency service providers: Fire and Rescue NSW, NSW the Rural Fire Service and the NSW State Emergency Service. Today people in northern Queensland are experiencing one of the worst cyclonic weather events in recent history, and during the summer period the brave men and women in our fire and emergency services did some wonderful work. I am sure I speak on behalf of all members in recognising the enormous contribution of those men and women, both paid and unpaid workers, who keep our families, properties and places of work safe.

Currently, the billion dollar budgets for these frontline services are largely collected from insurance companies through a variety of insurance policies such as home contents, building and comprehensive motor vehicle insurance premiums. Indeed, insurance levies currently make up almost 74 per cent of the contribution to the emergency service budget, the State provides almost 15 per cent and councils make up the rest with 11.7 per cent. This scheme has worked, and it has underpinned a massive injection of funding for our emergency services. I note that much of this was achieved in the 16 years of the Labor Government. Those opposite refer to those 16 years as days; we do not. Labor stands by its record of achievements in keeping our community safe through the funding it delivered to emergency services.

Today, as a consequence of that investment by Labor, we have modern, well-equipped fire and emergency services. Indeed, that is something of which we can all be proud and from which we can all take comfort. Whether it is fire, flood, storms or accidents, New South Wales has an emergency service capacity that is the envy of the world. Tinkering with the funding that underpins this response should not be taken lightly. That is why the Opposition has extensively examined the bill. I again thank my shadow ministerial colleagues and their staff for their hard work in carefully analysing the bill. Our approach has been pragmatic. We have always maintained that we need well-funded emergency services and that people should have the ability to access insurance in the future. As I have said, in principle the bill has merit and it also reflects a range of reviews that have been undertaken, including the Henry tax review, the review by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, and the 2013 parliament inquiry into the current levy. The Opposition notes the findings of those reviews but this levy, seen through the lens of taxation efficiency, is not necessarily the be-all and end-all.

It is the aim of all governments to ensure as efficient a tax system as possible, but progressive, sensible governments must also consider issues around fairness and sustainability. Governments should seek to balance these considerations and to apply a number of tests, not just one, to any proposal for tax reform. We will never agree on where government funding should be directed, but I challenge the Government to look at more effective, efficient and fair ways of raising revenue in the first place. As I said, the Opposition supports the principle of moving from an insurance levy to a land levy—in theory it should be fairer because everyone will benefit from these essential services—and funding for these services should not be borne only by those who purchase insurance.

Public benefit land, residential land, farmland, industrial land and commercial land will all be subject to the levy. To calculate the levy, different base rates and ad valorem rates will be applied depending on the classification of the land. Government land or land owned by a State-owned corporation are exempt from the levy unless, with a few exceptions, the land is leased. Councils will be responsible for recovering the levy, along with the rates and charges under the Local Government Act 1993, and will then pay the levy to the Chief Commissioner of State Revenue. Essentially councils are the collectors of this levy on behalf of State governments. The levy can be paid by landholders as a single or quarterly instalment, as with consumers' rates, and the new scheme is set to begin on 1 July 2017.

A separate but related piece of legislation is the Emergency Services Levy Insurance Monitor Act 2016, an Act that was debated last year in this place. This Act created the Emergency Services Insurance Monitor role, which is to provide advice and guidance to consumers in the insurance industry, to make certain that insurers generally phase out the insurance-based levy during the transition to this property levy. Former Australian Competition and Consumer Commission Chairman Allan Fels was appointed to the role, which is due to expire within two years of the bill's enactment, which we seek to change by way of amendment in the course of this debate.

When looking at the bill Opposition members found that they had been focused on the result: the funding of our essential fire and emergency services. One would think those opposite, given their user-pays focus, would introduce a bill that reflects the usage of fire and emergency services. That is not the case. According to the Government's own reports of fire and emergency services usage, families use these essential services 35 per cent, businesses 55 per cent and the rural sector 7 per cent. However, the Fire and Emergency Services Levy Bill 2017, or FESL bill, proportions will not reflect the risk faced by each sector, or the cost of the emergency services used, and in fact increases the residential land component—mums, dads and kids—to 58 per cent. Instead, to pay for this new State government tax, the Liberal-Nationals Government is seeking to increase the cost of living for families.

As my colleague the shadow Minister for Emergency Services will no doubt elaborate later in this debate, some within our emergency services are concerned that their own fundraising will be affected by the new scheme. Concerns have been expressed that community fundraising will be negatively impacted by the perception of many ratepayers that they have already done their bit and made their contribution. This has been raised with my colleague, and he and I are very concerned about it. There are always dangers in moving to a new scheme. The Opposition will carefully maintain a watching brief on how this new scheme impacts the important and self-driven fundraising efforts of many emergency services volunteers in our community. The Opposition supports any effort

to reduce the cost of living. Our party was founded on the principles of defending the living conditions of the working classes and reducing cost-of-living pressures on the most vulnerable and those who can least afford it. That is one of the guiding lights of our party. We can only hope the Government sales pitch is true but we have our doubts.

One is always concerned when one hears a Liberal Treasurer talk about "average savings". The new property tax will offset expected savings in insurance. Those not paying insurance will automatically be worse off. We need to be concerned about the Government's assumption that \$100 or so will see these people instantly take up insurance—but more of that later. When the Treasurer and his predecessor talk about average savings this can hide great unfairness in regard to the financial impacts. Let us assume the average saving for residents is roughly \$50 per annum, as outlined by the Treasurer. As an aside I note this average saving keeps going down from press release to press release, but we will stick to that as the example. We take for example three properties, all roughly the same from an unimproved land value perspective but vastly different from an improved value perspective. They will pay the same property levy but what are their savings?

Block one is owned by a wealthy resident. It is new with five bedrooms, a pool, extensive gardens and carports—common surrounds for those opposite. The resident will generally pay a higher insurance premium and thus a higher insurance levy. Let us say this resident will save \$250 from the Government reforms. Block two is more average—a dwelling with three bedrooms and fewer contents. All things considered, finances will stay the same, as the property levy increase is the same as the reduction in the insurance levy. Then there is the shabbiest of the three blocks, an old fibro house without flashy contents or many improvements—just a battler's home. This resident will pay less under the insurance levy but more under the property tax. For the sake of this argument, let us say that he or she ends up out of pocket by \$100. In this case of three properties with similar unimproved land value, there is an average saving of \$50—a huge windfall for those who do not need it—but nothing for the average block and an additional cost for the poorest of the three. This is where the use of the mean can be very mean.

If this legislation is passed, the Opposition will keep a watching brief to ensure it does not aggressively impact those who can least afford it. Given that we have not seen any of the Government's modelling, we have been working with the Fire Brigade Employees Union, which has put together some modelling based on the formulas in this bill. I now provide two real examples of how this proposed new State government tax will impact our next-door neighbours and loved ones. The first example is a three-bedroom fibro house in Arncliffe with a market value of approximately \$950,000 and a July 2016 unimproved land value of \$635,000. It is estimated that the 2017-18 FESL on this property will be around \$264. The amount of the Emergency Services Levy [ESL] paid on this home owner's home in the 2016 home and contents insurance policy was \$235, leaving him or her \$29 worse off. Given that the Government keeps bandying about an average figure, I go back to the point that with that average figure of \$186, this family will be \$78 worse off than what the Government says.

The second example is a three-bedroom fibro house in Oyster Bay with a market value of approximately \$900,000 and a July 2016 unimproved land value of \$635,000. Based on this we estimate the 2017-18 FESL on this property to be about \$248, less the \$50 pensioner discount, so \$198. The amount of ESL paid on this home owner's 2016-17 home and contents insurance policy was \$137, leaving this pensioner home owner approximately \$61 worse off. Once again, applying that average \$187 figure that the Government keeps repeating in the media shows that this pensioner's family is still \$12 worse off. But let us look randomly at the local government area of Gosford, which is topical at the moment. Using average unimproved land values for Gosford the FESL comes to approximately \$200—\$14 more than this average of \$186 that the Government keeps using.

As we can see from those examples, using the average or the mean can hide a multitude of sins. Those opposite may say it is only a small amount, but to these families that amount means one less school excursion, one less tank of fuel, no new school shoes for growing feet and no new medications for a month. As I alluded to earlier, the people of New South Wales are getting sick of the judgement and stance of the privileged when it comes to lifters and leaners, and this State Government in my view is a leaner. It mandates in the bill the proportion that householders and families are to pay, it even mandates the proportion that local councils are required to pay, but what this bill does not do is mandate the proportion that the State Government is to pay.

Unfortunately it has crept into the collective psyche of the once Liberal Party—which is becoming more conservative and more reactionary day by day—that public servants are bludgers, the poor are there because of their sinful ways and people who do not pay insurance are "free-riding shirkers". Those are not my words but instead the description used by a Minister of the Crown when referring to people who did not take up insurance. One is not a shirker if one lives in a suburb in my electorate of Keira—I randomly pick Figtree. Over the past decade or two Figtree has experienced huge amounts of flooding. As a result, changes in the flood plans for that area mean that insurance in just that one suburb has escalated in some cases to \$6,000, \$7,000, \$8,000 or \$9,000 a premium.

People who do not take up insurance in such cases are not shirkers. They have made a decision—a risky decision, but a decision that keeps food on the table—that they will look to spend their disposable income on something else and not be able to afford insurance. Everyone in this place should want everyone to be insured—of course, we do—but the reality is that these people are not shirkers; they are unable to afford these premiums because of changes brought about as a result of climate change and major weather events that are not their fault. That leads me to several amendments that the Opposition will move to improve this bill. They are relatively simple amendments, and if they are not accepted we will oppose the bill.

As I said, in principle the bill has merit and, in accordance with economic theory, it should create a more efficient system where all beneficiaries of a service contribute. But there are significant concerns that Opposition members and I have and which members of the community—local community members, community groups and trade unionists—have raised with me. The chorus of approval from the big insurers should always be treated with suspicion. While the *raison d'être* of that lot on the other side is to make life easier for the big end of town, Labor's mission is to look after all citizens and to get the balance right in relation to the economy, our society and the broader environment.

Our first proposed amendment is to extend the Insurance Monitor's period of responsibility. Currently, the Insurance Monitor's monitoring period is from 1 July 2014 to 31 December 2018. During this period the monitor can provide advice to policyholders and monitor the effect of the emergency services reform on insurance contract prices and whether there has been any price exploitation or false or misleading conduct. The success of the reform is dependent on competition between insurers, ensuring that the savings on the abolition of the insurance levy are passed on to consumers. The role of the monitor is to be critical in ensuring that transparency is promoted and that competitive pressure on the insurance companies is successful.

One insurer, NRMA-IAG, has already announced that it overcharged the Emergency Services Levy for 2012-13 by \$6.8 million. Under the current bill, the monitor does not have the power to investigate over-collection for the financial years 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15, and would not have the power to review the over-collection already voluntarily identified by NRMA-IAG. The end date of 31 December 2018 is only 18 months after the new scheme begins. We believe that this provides insufficient protection for policyholders as it is possible for insurers to significantly increase premiums from 1 January 2019—coincidentally fewer than 100 days before the next State election. This is pure politics, and a trick by the Government to ensure short-term oversight in the lead-up to the next election. There is no oversight of the insurers after 2018 and Labor will be moving amendments to extend the term of the monitor.

Transitional issues will present difficulties in the reform process. For example, no doubt members in this place will have constituents who speak to them about bills just paid and bills about to be paid for a similar service. People purchasing or renewing insurance up to 30 June 2017 will be paying the Emergency Services Levy for the 2016-17 financial year. Having just paid the old levy they will then, in the new financial year, receive a rates notice that will require payment of the new Fire and Emergency Services Levy for the 2017-18 financial year. These are two annual payments that will be separated not by 12 months but by a much shorter time. This has already caused concern in the community. We acknowledge that the bill includes provisions for the waiver or reduction of the levy because of hardship.

Treasury's advice is that the insurance industry is aware of the issue and is seeking to address it by progressively absorbing much of this year's levy payment for policies taken out in the latter months of this financial year. But we are concerned from bills that we have seen that the reality is very different. If not addressed, this aspect of the new scheme will impact many of those who have taken out insurance in the lead-up to the new scheme. I request the Treasurer to explain how his Government intends to address this transitional issue and ensure that the people who they claim to be helping will not be worse off during this transition. I note that the member for Blacktown specifically raised this issue during the Minister's second reading speech. The Minister said that he would address it, but we are still waiting for him to do so.

While it comes as no surprise to this side of the House, it is still shocking to see that this bill provides several inappropriate exemptions to the payment of the property tax. Are pensioners exempt? No. Are charitable organisations exempt? No. Under this bill, three of the entities singled out for favourable treatment are WestConnex, TransGrid and Sydney Airport. We can see the priorities of the Government in these clauses. This is a government obsessed with shirkers, but it will enshrine in legislation exemptions to the \$16 billion WestConnex, the profit-gouging Sydney Airport Corporation and the recently privatised TransGrid. This last point is telling, as both Ausgrid and Endeavour Energy—partially privatised—are still liable to pay the levy.

In this bill, charities pay the levy, pensioners pay the levy—even nature pays the levy. Yet this Government will go to extraordinary lengths to exempt struggling toll road operators and monopolistic beneficiaries of other government privatisations. Labor's amendments will address this. Under schedule 3, part 2, division 2, clause 6 (6) (a) of the bill, land owned by WCX M4 Pty Limited is deemed government land and is

therefore exempt from paying the levy. The WCX M4 is not a sports car; in fact, it is the name of the secretive, private entity that is responsible for the oversight of WestConnex. The Opposition would love to have heard the discussion that occurred between the Treasurer and WestConnex but, of course, the WCX M4 Pty Limited is a new form of privatised government outside the Government Information (Public Access) Act [GIPAA]. WCX M4 Pty Limited is a commercial entity and it is not clear why it should be exempt from the levy when other private companies will be required to pay it.

I am sure WestConnex will require the services of our emergency response teams and it is fitting that it should pay. Labor reckons that instead of sponsoring AFL teams, WestConnex should first be made to pay its way when it comes to this levy. As such, the Opposition will move an amendment to remove the exemption that is proposed for WestConnex. While land owned by State-owned corporations is exempt from paying the levy, the State-owned corporations Essential Energy, Ausgrid—which has been partially privatised—and Endeavour Energy are specifically made liable for the levy. However, TransGrid was not included in this provision—we assume because, unlike Ausgrid, which was majority leased, it was 100 per cent privatised. It reflects the outlook of this Government: obsessed with privatisation and then going out of its way to give a new privatised entity as much assistance as possible. Where is the public good in this? Why should a struggling family be forced to pay when a newly privatised energy giant is exempt? We have sought clarification as to why TransGrid is not listed as being liable to pay the levy along with the three distributors. If no satisfactory explanation is provided by the Treasurer, we intend to move amendments during this debate to ensure that TransGrid pays the levy.

Finally, the lessees of Sydney Airport, Bankstown and Camden airports are not subject to the levy as they occupy Commonwealth land and are therefore exempt. This exemption has its basis in section 114 of the Australian Constitution, which prevents the States and the Commonwealth from taxing each other. It is assumed that under the old scheme the airports would have contributed significant amounts to emergency services funding via insurance premiums, and appropriately so: The potential call on our emergency services from the operation of airports is obviously immense. The airports may therefore be about to receive a substantial windfall.

Labor believes that in the interest of fairness, and to ensure we do not have another subset of free-riders of our emergency services, the Government must extract the agreement of airports to pay the levy. We already have precedents where airports and Commonwealth land, technically not rateable by local councils, agree to make payments in lieu of council rates. Labor will again move an amendment to require the Minister to report to the Parliament by 30 November 2017 on the outcome of negotiations with the airport lessee companies to secure payments in lieu of a levy. If this Treasurer and this Premier are so concerned about the free-rider problem of the current system I am sure the Government will support this sensible amendment.

The bill proposes that on rates notices the levy be referred to as either the New South Wales Government Fire and Emergency Services Levy, or the New South Wales Government FESL. To enhance transparency, the Opposition proposes an amendment so that the levy will be described as the "New South Wales Government Fire and Emergency Services Levy—this is a New South Wales Government charge" or the "New South Wales Government FESL—this is a New South Wales Government charge".

I am sure that when our transparent Treasurer was a humble backbencher denying climate change and rallying against the Gillard Government's efforts to price carbon, he would have been most supportive of the inclusion of the carbon price in all utility bills in New South Wales. I am sure he will again be supportive of a clear explanation of why people's rates have significantly increased. This bill does not go as far as those opposite would have liked—it does not specify font colour, font size or even the background colour. We are simply asking for transparency. In fact, we are proposing to help out the Government. I am sure many councils will take it upon themselves to use a stamp that states in big red letters "State government tax". This bill will provide a consistent explanation of the levy to however many councils are left in New South Wales when the new system comes into effect.

We understand that families in Sydney and right across regional and rural New South Wales are struggling. We understand that more needs to be done to help those people. We also understand that economically this bill has some merit but we want to see reforms that improve it and make it fairer and that ensure government and emergency services are properly funded. We want to ensure that as many people as possible are insured whilst recognising that those who cannot afford insurance are struggling to put food on the table, to pay school bills and to put fuel in the motor vehicles that they are fortunate enough to drive. The Opposition will always look at ways of improving, amending and changing legislation that makes it difficult for people to afford the insurance that they should have.

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (16:41):** I speak in debate on the Fire and Emergency Services Levy Bill 2017 and thank the shadow Treasurer for being somewhat more informed in his contribution than he was when he contributed to debate on the Emergency Services Levy Insurance Monitor Bill 2016. Clearly he has done his homework on this occasion although some of his comments were slightly misguided. He read some of

the reports of which he was not aware earlier and he attempted to bring a degree of principle-centred debate into context. I take up that approach of principles in applying principles to this legislation which, on any objective measure, is an excellent reform of the current system.

There is no doubt that we share an appreciation for our emergency services, volunteers and those employed through our emergency services organisations. This Government recognises the importance of those staff members but also the volunteers in the operations of the Rural Fire Service [RFS] and the State Emergency Service. The NSW Rural Fire Service is the world's largest volunteer fire service with around 72,000 volunteers supported by about 900 staff. The NSW State Emergency Service [SES] is the lead agency for flood, storm and tsunami and is supported by 9,000 volunteers. These volunteers provide a lifeline for people across the State when emergencies strike. The Fire and Emergency Services Levy Bill provides a secure funding basis to support the operations of the RFS and the SES. The legislation preserves the Rural Fire Fighting Fund and the SES fund and ensures there will be no reduction in funding provided for these services.

By abolishing the insurance-based Emergency Services Levy, the Fire and Emergency Services Levy [FESL] will help to complement the work of New South Wales volunteers. So often after emergencies we hear stories of people whose lives have been saved by our volunteers but who are financially ruined because they did not have insurance. Indeed, around 36 per cent of New South Wales households do not have contents insurance. Abolishing this insurance levy will help to lower the cost of insurance and thereby reduce the number of people who are exposed to financial ruin after an emergency. Indeed, in other States where insurance levies that fund fire services have been abolished, around 25 per cent of households do not have contents insurance. So abolishing the insurance levy in New South Wales should reasonably increase the contents coverage by about 5 to 10 percentage points, reducing non insurance from about 36 per cent to around 25 per cent. With 2.98 million residential properties in New South Wales that could mean up to 280,000 more households will have financial protection through contents insurance. Surely that is a good thing.

The current emergency Services Levy does help fund lifesaving equipment, firefighters, staff, volunteers, training, infrastructure and community education activities for fire and emergency services. New South Wales has the highest level of uninsured home owners. Currently the levy is paid by everyone with property insurance. However, fire and emergency services are available to everyone and, to make it fairer, the responsibility for funding these services will now fall on every landowner, not just those with property insurance. Indeed, every other mainland State in Australia has already undertaken this very reform. The new FESL will be collected alongside council rates and councils will need to clearly show the levy as a separate item on rate notices. The FESL has been shaped in consultation with the local government sector, which will play an important role. The levy will be based on land classifications and land values. However pensioners, war veterans and other concession cardholders will be eligible for a concession—further demonstrating this Government's compassion.

Any insurance policy with a start or renewal date after 1 July 2017 will not apply the levy under the old regime. That will mean that households with insured properties will save, on average, \$47 a year. With an average saving of \$47 a year, one does not have to be Einstein to know that is a reduction in the cost of living, not an increase. There will be more money available to families to spend on those worthwhile activities the shadow Treasurer spoke about. The FESL is not being charged to make money for the Government; it is to make it fairer for everyone. Home and contents insurance should fall by about \$233 a year. The Government is introducing measures to ensure that insurance companies pass on the cost savings to customers once the levy is removed from insurance premiums. The Government has appointed the former Australian Competition and Consumer Commission Chairman, Allan Fells, AO, and Professor David Cousins as Insurance Monitors, to act as watchdogs over insurance costs for the next two years. Insurance companies that fail to pass on the drop in premiums will face fines of up to \$10 million.

Let us assess this on a principle basis. This new regime has fundamental attributes which make it fairer, more affordable, more consistent, more sustainable and comprehensive in its scope. It is fairer because everyone who uses these services will be asked to contribute, whereas currently not everyone pays towards the provision of the services that they enjoy. The bill ensures that all landowners pay for the service, not just property owners who are insured. The reform will be budget neutral and the Fire and Emergency Services Levy Bill 2017 will generate revenue equal to 81 per cent of the estimated cost of fire and emergency services. That will continue in the future. This legislation will ensure that insurance is more affordable for members of our community. Home and contents insurance should fall by \$233 a year—a saving of \$47 a year in total. There are protections in place under the insurance monitors. Discounts can apply for pensioners and others, but also where a hardship is demonstrated. In this situation the Office of State Revenue can provide hardship relief by waiving the Fire and Emergency Services Levy. Where somebody is being unduly affected and is facing hardship there is scope to flexibly adapt the system to accommodate such situations.

No system is perfect but the Government has attempted to produce the best system possible. There is potential for vacant residential, industrial and commercial land to receive a levy reduction. The legislation will apply a principle of consistency. All other mainland States have adopted this method for funding fire and emergency services. In 2013 Victoria abolished its insurance-based fire services levy and that reduced the level of underinsurance exposed by the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires. Other States have already implemented similar changes. Tasmania is the only State that has not comprehensively made these changes but there is no fire services levy on residential premiums in that State. In 1999 South Australia implemented change. In 2003 Western Australia implemented change. Those States found that insurers passed on the benefits to consumers. It will be a sustainable system. All landowners pay rates, so there is a constant, reliable and efficient system. [*Extension of time*]

Under the old system, when property owners stopped paying property insurance they also stopped paying for fire and emergency services. That will now not happen. In April 2017 the rates will be published and revised each year in line with the budget for emergency services and land values. There is an ongoing review to ensure it is fair and appropriate in the future. Finally, this legislation will be comprehensive in cover and effect. The average residential property insurance premium should fall by almost 20 per cent following implementation of the Fire and Emergency Services Levy. Lower insurance premiums for properties should lead to more people insuring their homes. In the past, when premiums rose, people chose not to buy property insurance.

New South Wales has the highest rate of underinsurance across Australia, with 36 per cent of people lacking contents insurance, which is not good. People must be encouraged to look after their own financial health and manage their risks. When other States moved to this system underinsurance dropped by 10 per cent. In summary, this is good legislation. It is principle based legislation. I welcome acknowledgment of the merit of the legislation from the Opposition. The Fire and Emergency Services Levy reforms will ensure that necessary funds are available to support fire and emergency services, including volunteers. The reforms will help to prepare the community's financial resilience when fires and other disasters occur. The reform is fair, affordable, consistent, sustainable and comprehensive and it should be supported.

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (16:53):** I acknowledge and welcome the shadow Treasurer's sound contribution to debate and his foreshadowed amendments to the Fire and Emergency Services Levy Bill 2017. I acknowledge the staff who have worked on this bill, including Steve and Amanda and the team. I begin by expressing gratitude for emergency service workers and volunteers in my part of the world and across the State. These men and women make sacrifices to serve the community in times of great need such as the recent record scorching heatwaves followed by flooding rains. Today our thoughts are with our friends north of the border and with those volunteers who are experiencing the harshness of nature. They do not seek praise but respond to the call of the community when it is confronted with nature's unforgiving adversity. I speak for everyone in this place when I say that our thoughts are with them. I draw attention to three points to which the Government has not given adequate consideration when drafting this legislation.

First, the bill does not appropriately acknowledge or adequately address the increased burden placed on local councils as a result of these changes. This Government is ultimately forcing them to administer the Fire and Emergency Services Levy for delivery to Treasury to fund emergency services. Secondly, the Government has not fully considered or accounted for the financial impact on mortgage stressed households, low-income families and those facing challenges in our community. Low-income families are less likely to have home and contents insurance and, therefore, will be left out of pocket as a result of these changes. Thirdly, consumer protection and subsequent measures outlined in the bill do not meet the pub test or probity tests—a basic consumer expectation. I acknowledge the Government's intentions and flag community expectations that insurance companies will pass on the full reduction to consumers. Current instruments in this bill may be viewed as inadequate and open to exploitation. My biggest concern is that this bill will impact on local councils who ultimately will be forced to be tax collectors on the Government's behalf.

I commend the shadow Minister for Local Government, the Hon. Peter Primrose, for his advocacy on behalf of local councils. I acknowledge the contributions of Clayton Barr, Guy Zangari, Ryan Park and other colleagues to the debate. Transferring responsibility for the collection of the Fire and Emergency Services Levy from big insurance companies to local councils will result in financial pressure for councils. Ironically, these measures will be implemented by the same Government that previously deemed many local councils to be financially unfit for the future. It is inconsistent for this Government to impose on local councils the additional administrative burden of collecting the levy. It will come at a cost to all councils and hardworking residents, some of whom will be unable to afford it.

Clause 93 will ensure that councils are reimbursed for any reasonable costs that are incurred. It appears to me that the Government has not fully considered the scale of the burden to be placed on local councils. I urge the Treasurer to further consider this issue. In 2015 the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated the population

of Campbelltown to be approximately 159,000 people living in more than 56,000 residential dwellings. With rapid urban growth occurring in the Macarthur region this figure is forecast to be significantly higher.

Based on this data Campbelltown City Council will be required to collect the Fire and Emergency Services Levy from more than 1,000 families every week before factoring in commercial and industrial properties. Not only local councils will be financially affected by the bill; homeowners who do not currently have home and contents insurance will have to find an additional \$186 per annum, according to the Government's estimates. I acknowledge the importance of an equitable and fair system for the collection of wealth as a revenue stream for public services. However, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge that these changes will implement an incredibly regressive taxation measure, given that people who can afford home and contents insurance would seldom choose to go without it. The only reason that some families do not have home and contents insurance is that they simply cannot afford it.

Housing stress is at record high levels, home affordability is one of our greatest economic challenges, and wage growth has been well below the rate of inflation for many years. As we know, this has increased cost of living pressures for families, in particular, those on low incomes. The last thing those families need is to be out of pocket by a couple of hundred dollars every year as a result of having to pay a levy that previously they did not have to pay. I have considerable reservations about the Government's claims that this bill will make home owners more likely to take out home and contents insurance. If some families cannot afford home and contents insurance under the current system they are unlikely to be able to afford it when they have to pay an extra couple of hundred dollars on council rates.

It is easy for the Government to claim that this new system is fairer because it makes everyone pay. However, it is not fair to impose an extra financial burden on the most vulnerable, marginalised and disadvantaged families in this State without giving it due consideration. I do not believe that the Government has put adequate provisions in place to ensure that insurance companies pass on to consumers this reduction in the Fire and Emergency Services Levy. I welcome the introduction of the Emergency Services Levy Insurance Monitor but I do not believe it goes far enough in protecting consumers. The monitor will be in force only during the transition period, with section 79 of the Emergency Services Levy Insurance Act 2016 giving as a deadline the end of 2018, after which the monitor will cease to exist. I welcome the amendments foreshadowed by the shadow Treasurer.

The monitor will be reasonably well equipped and positioned to ensure a fair reduction in premiums for the first 18 months. However, after that period no statutory mechanism will be in place to ensure a reduction in insurance premiums. The Opposition calls on the Government to consider and support the amendments foreshadowed by the member for Keira. The monitor will ensure that the expected saving of a couple of hundred dollars for each family is passed on but that will not be of much use if nothing is in place to stop premiums from increasing. In summary, a number of issues relating to the financial burden on low-income families and local councils are a cause for significant concern. I do not believe that those issues have been adequately addressed by the Government.

The amendments foreshadowed by the shadow Treasurer, which are well worth consideration, were formulated after sincere, serious and legitimate consideration of this legislation. We need a framework in place that supports and better protects councils and that ensures all consumers have certainty. We cannot escape from significant change. As I said earlier, in Campbelltown a significant amount of money is involved. We can talk about the savings that have been highlighted by the Government but they will not be passed on to local councils. In this case they will be passed on to hardworking ratepayers.

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (17:03):** I contribute briefly to debate on the Fire and Emergency Services Levy Bill 2017 and state upfront that I support the bill which I believe will create a fairer system and make home insurance costs more affordable for more people. Removing the existing Emergency Services Levy [ESL] from home insurance premiums and adding a Fire and Emergency Services Levy [FESL] to the council rates on privately owned properties will spread the cost of funding our emergency services more equitably. I had several initial concerns about this bill, mainly because I wanted to see safeguards in place that ensure insurance companies pass on the savings to their policyholders, that no significant costs are passed on to local councils that will now collect the levy, and that a proper strategy is in place to educate people about the changes. I believe that this bill will deliver those safeguards.

An officer of Lake Macquarie City Council reported that the legislation is generally sound and there has been good communication and engagement from the Government regarding impending changes. Some will see the rise in their council rates as a new cost burden or price gouge from local government, but the levy will be listed on the rates notices of property owners as a separate line item, while the Government will be sending letters to all property owners to explain the change. The council was quite complimentary of the level of engagement from the State Government, which is unusual. The council also told me that any added costs to council created by the new scheme have so far been satisfactorily met by Treasury.

I also note that the bill requires insurance companies to wholly remove the existing ESL from home insurance policies. One of my constituents who received his new home insurance policy this week said it already included details of the impending change and the amount by which his premium will reduce, should this bill pass through the Parliament and take effect from 1 July as planned. The Insurance Council of Australia has also indicated to me that the new scheme will make insurance more affordable and, more importantly, reduce the number of people who underinsure their homes, or do not insure them at all. On the Insurance Council's estimates, the average household will be \$47 a year better off and I understand that has been the case when similar schemes have been implemented in other States.

I commend the Government for appointing Professor Allan Fels and Professor David Cousins as insurance monitors who will oversee the transition. Their experience in similar roles during the changeover in Victoria in 2013 will ensure the full benefits of abolishing the ESL from insurance policies are realised. I also note, however, that Insurance Council of Australia Chief Executive Officer Rob Whelan said that his own organisation will ensure that households gain the full financial benefit of shifting to the new system. While that is welcomed, with due respect to the Insurance Council of Australia I take that with a grain of salt. I hope it lives up to its words. I firmly believe this system is a fairer system and that it will spread the cost of providing emergency services to the people of this State. No longer will the cost of providing emergency services be a burden for only those with home and contents insurance. Rather, that cost will be spread across all property owners.

As a consequence, more people will be able to afford to insure their properties. It is concerning that about 5 per cent of all homes in New South Wales are not insured at all. I am told that in my electorate that figure is higher. Further, about two in five households do not have home contents insurance, meaning an unexpected event such as a bushfire could destroy more than a family's home, destroying livelihoods and leaving families with nothing. This bill will make insurance premiums more affordable and that can only be a good thing.

I note a number of the concerns raised by members of the Opposition about inequity in the burden that might be shared by people at the lower end of the income scale in particular. While I appreciate that this is a concern, if there is an overall reduction in the burden of insurances I think that will give more people an opportunity to afford to buy into insurance and that has to be a good thing. With due respect to members of the Opposition, Labor was in government for 16 years and it dealt with a number of issues that were difficult to manage. When we start to apply a cost to ratepayers or to people across the board there will be winners and there will be losers but we should try to reduce costs.

I do not know whether we can have a situation in which there will not be some burden on some party. However, this bill seems to have built into it a number of safeguards that should try to reduce that cost. I will listen intently to debate on the shadow Treasurer's foreshadowed amendments. It may well be that they could be adopted by the Government. Of course we know that is not going to happen, and we will deal with the bill as it stands. While there may be some good amendments which I might support on their merits, I would still then continue to support this bill. Overall, I applaud the Government on this reform, although I note that New South Wales has lagged behind other States, which began similar schemes several decades ago. Modernising the funding model for our emergency services is long overdue. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (17:09):** In my contribution to debate on the Fire and Emergency Services Levy Bill 2017 I acknowledge the tremendous work of the shadow Treasurer and member for Keira, Ryan Park. I also acknowledge my Labor colleagues and staff for their input into this bill. At the outset, on behalf of everyone in this House and in my capacity as the shadow Minister for Emergency Services, I extend our sincerest thanks and prayers to the emergency service workers and volunteers who continue to give their all to protect our communities in times of need. As we speak, emergency service workers are in the process of packing and preparing to head to Far North Queensland to assist in the Cyclone Debbie recovery efforts. Our thoughts are with them as they leave our State. I also pass on our thanks to the emergency services agencies who provided us with invaluable comments and feedback on this important bill.

The object of this bill is essentially to change, through the introduction of a new tax to be included in council rate notices, the way the State's emergency service providers are funded. Under the existing system, an Emergency Services Levy is collected from insurance companies through the premiums on a range of insurance policies—home and contents insurance, building insurance and comprehensive motor vehicle insurance. Presently those insurance levies make up approximately three-quarters of the emergency services budget, which is then distributed amongst Fire and Rescue NSW, the Rural Fire Service [RFS] and the State Emergency Service [SES]. The remaining emergency services funding is made up by State and local government. In New South Wales we are incredibly lucky to have a fantastic group of emergency response personnel. They deserve our utmost support. The Opposition is aligned with the intent of this legislation, which is to achieve a fairer deal for households in New South Wales and to support our emergency services. However, we also need to ensure that this legislation has the appropriate safeguards in place and that people will indeed be better off following the passage of this bill.

Many members may not be aware that our emergency services rely quite heavily on fundraising and community engagement. They can often be seen around the community doing their utmost to sell tickets in their big raffles or at local SES or RFS barbecues outside one of the major hardware chains. It is through the mixture of private and public funding that our emergency services are able to deliver world-class services to all of our communities. What does the Government believe the community response will be when it sees a new tax on its rates labelled "Emergency Services Levy"? That is the question I pose today. My electorate office had already received a number of complaints about the "new emergency services tax", as some constituents call it, prior to the introduction of this bill. Changing the way the levy is collected will adversely impact on emergency services by curtailing their ability to fundraise in and throughout the community.

I—and I am sure many members in this Chamber—have given to emergency service volunteers when they have asked for donations, when they have been selling raffle tickets or at a Saturday morning sausage sizzle outside the hardware store. I am sure we will all continue to donate to them in the future, because that is what we do and we support them. However, a number of disgruntled residents believe that they are double dipping. This bill may impact on the generosity towards the SES and RFS of even well-meaning donors. I emphasise that because it has been clearly voiced to my office staff and to me.

Labor members firmly believe that this levy needs to be labelled on rates notices as "New South Wales Government Fire and Emergency Services Levy—this is a New South Wales Government charge" or something to that effect. Contrary to what the former Minister for Emergency Services believes—and I stress that I refer to the former Minister, David Elliott—people who are not fully insured are not all shirkers. Residents in my electorate are a prime example. I have met with individuals whose homes have been purposely built to withstand floods, as their homes are in a flood zone area. However, due to changes in flood mapping within local government areas, the residents of Carramar on Prospect Creek discovered that their insurance premiums had risen from \$1,500 to more than \$8,000.

The "Dropping off the Edge" report shows that Carramar is an area of social disadvantage and many of its residents are struggling financially. Those well-meaning, good people cannot afford to pay those insurance premiums, but they are not shirkers. As the member for Keira said, they put that money towards other important things that their families need in order to get ahead in life. I would love to have former Minister for Emergency Services David Elliott explain to me how such an enormous increase in insurance premiums justifies his labelling of my elderly constituents—many of whom have spoken to me about this issue—as "shirkers". Many families in our communities are doing it tough. We all know that. It has been mentioned here and it has been mentioned time and again. Some families are in worse situations than others, hence their inability to afford insurance premiums, especially when the premiums are \$8,000 or more.

As my colleague the shadow Treasurer has pointed out, this legislation will make a large number of households worse off, and that is to say nothing of the hit our emergency services will take in fundraising. Although we can agree that the existing system is not perfect and that there is more to be done, we firmly believe that this bill in its current form is in desperate need of some amendments. The Opposition intends to move those required amendments today, with the member for Keira taking carriage of the bill in this House. I once again commend our outstanding emergency services personnel—the workers and the volunteers—for their unwavering dedication to protecting our communities and keeping them safe.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (17:18):** I speak on behalf of The Greens in debate on the Fire and Emergency Services Levy Bill 2017 and express our opposition to this bill and the changes the Government is proposing. I think the shadow Treasurer, the member for Keira, has clearly outlined the problems with this bill. Any reform that seeks to impose a cost on home owners in order to cross-subsidise businesses for the provision of emergency services is of serious concern. As we have heard from a number of speakers opposing this bill, the idea that people who do not have or do not pay for this insurance are "shirkers" is pretty outrageous.

The real shirkers in this situation are the private corporations set up by this Government—the likes of WestConnex and others—that are going to be avoiding paying this levy that others will be required to pay. It is very poor reform that sees home owners cross-subsidising businesses for the provision of emergency services. The Greens opposed these changes in their initial form in 2012, and we oppose them now. This reform will slug all residential landowners an additional \$160 a year. The current scheme ensures that those who are more able to pay are likely to do so.

The Government's 2012 discussion paper made it clear that its initial plan would cost home owners \$200 million a year while delivering businesses more than \$250 million in tax cuts. That proposed model would have seen residential property owners pay 75 per cent of the new tax, while businesses and rural landowners would pay less than 15 per cent each. Although the Government has amended its proposal so that the overall share of the levy paid by residential, commercial and rural landowners remains the same, residential owners will still be cross-subsidising commercial property owners. It is rational to have an Emergency Services Levy paid as

a component of insurance premiums because well-run emergency services protect life and property and keep premiums low. The Government's stated intention of having the scheme address non-insurance in New South Wales fails to take into account the 36 per cent of householders who do not have contents insurance because they cannot afford it.

As members of the Opposition have stated, the reality is that many people do not have insurance not because they are shirkers or because they are avoiding their responsibility to pay but because they simply cannot afford it. When they make decisions about what they can and cannot afford, they find they cannot afford insurance. The Government argues that this scheme will somehow reduce the cost of insurance. That is despite the fact that that is not mandated under the scheme and that there are no enforcement mechanisms. This scheme is certainly not fairer than the current scheme, and its greatest impact will be suffered by poor people. That is why The Greens do not support the bill.

I will briefly address some of the comments made by the Fire Brigade Employees Union. It is important to understand the history of this proposal. The union does not support the Government's amendments, and it does not believe there is a case for making them. It believes that the current model is stable and that it ensures that fire service beneficiaries who can afford to pay do so. The union, which represents the people responsible for protecting our community, sees no reason to make these changes. It has raised concerns about the fact that it could result in funding shortfalls and that we could be dealing with problems that have arisen in other States. The union's key point is that the current system is not a levy on individual insurance policies; rather, it is a levy on insurance companies.

Not all insurance companies pass on the cost of this levy to policyholders; they simply see it as another cost of doing business. The Fire Brigade Employees Union has serious concerns about this legislation, as do The Greens. Any bill introduced in this place that seeks to exempt corporations like WestConnex, the Sydney Airport Corporation and others from a levy while imposing further costs on individuals that are deemed to be shirkers because they do not take out insurance when they cannot afford it is completely unacceptable. The Greens oppose this bill and this neo-liberal Government's agenda.

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (17:23):** From July 2017, the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government wants every council to collect a new land tax on its behalf—the Fire and Emergency Services Levy. It is a new State government tax that will be included in all council rate notices. The Government promised to introduce this legislation during the 2011 election campaign. Now, at the last minute, it has introduced it to avoid a community campaign against this new tax.

The Government has not revealed data on what the cost increase or decrease will be for ratepayers. Instead, it has said that it will average \$186 across New South Wales. That does not take into account specific or individual circumstances in all council areas. In fact, it has understated the cost for local government authorities with high unimproved land values. As a councillor on Newcastle City Council for eight years, I witnessed the many ways in which this Government has engaged in cost shifting to local government. This legislation is yet another example of that. Rather than requiring private sector insurance companies to collect the levy as they have traditionally, the Government is now requiring the public sector—that is, councils, which are the grassroots of our system—to take on the cost burden of collecting its new tax. Like many councillors across the State, I have serious concerns about that proposition.

I also have concerns about the fact that the Government proposes to move from an ad valorem system based on the value of property. The shadow Treasurer provided three examples demonstrating that the higher the insurance premium for a house and contents policy the higher the levy paid. The Government's proposed system will use the average unimproved land value of a property to calculate the levy. This will result in houses of vastly different improved values attracting the same levy. As the shadow Treasurer said, there could be a poor family in a rundown house next to a family with a nicer house who live next to a family with a fancy house but the land value is the same so they will all be paying the same levy. Again, poorer families will get the least benefit from this change while wealthier property owners will get the greatest benefit. As usual, the rich will get richer and the poorer will get poorer.

Even those not taking out insurance policies because they cannot afford them will be automatically worse off. This Government calls those who do not take out insurance policies "shirkers". That accords with this Government's agenda of labelling the poor because it does not believe they are paying their fair share. The impact of this legislation is already being experienced in my electorate. A constituent emailed me in January about his concerns. The email, which I forwarded to the Minister, states:

My Fire Service Levy on my home and contents insurance with ... for the year 2016/2017 was \$107.07 plus GST.

My renewal policy pricing for 2017/2018 is \$111.41 plus GST. I contacted the insurance company about the pricing as I will be paying the levy again with my council rates. I was told that the \$111.41 was only calculated till July 1st 2017.

The calculation of \$111.41 for 5 months is well over 100%.

That is classic gouging by an insurance company. The email continues:

I contacted . . . Council to find out what my levy for the year would be but they were unable to help me.

I would appreciate if you could help me find out if the above insurance levy is correct and what price levy will be on my council rates. I contacted the Minister in January. It has been more than two long months since I did so and I have not received a response. That email is a clear example of a constituent's concerns about price gouging by insurance companies. When this bill was introduced last week the shadow Treasurer said that it represented a big fat payday for insurance companies. He said that the bill, together with the Motor Accidents Injury Bill 2017, would deliver on the long-held aims of big insurers in New South Wales. He also said that it is in the Premier, the Government and the Treasurer's DNA to back the big end of town and those doing much better than ordinary citizens. It appears that my constituent in downtown Mayfield is already being gouged by the big end of town, even before the legislation has been passed.

The current system, which has been underpinned by a massive injection of funding, has worked. Indeed, a lot of that funding was granted under the former Labor Government. Today we have modern, well-equipped fire and emergency services of which we can all be proud and can take comfort from. For example, the people in the Hunter and Central Coast regions were most appreciative of the response of our emergency services to the 2007 storms that forced the *Pasha Bulker* to run aground on Nobbys Beach in Newcastle and the response to the April 2015 super storm. When reviewing taxation, governments must be sensible, and the issues of fairness and sustainability must be considered. That is my concern.

One would have thought those opposite, given their user-pays focus, would introduce a bill that reflects the usage of fire and emergency services. That does not appear to be the case. According to the Government's own reports on fire and emergency services usage, families use 35 per cent, businesses use 55 per cent, and the rural sector uses 7 per cent. The bill does not reflect the risks faced by each sector or the cost of the emergency services used. In fact, it has increased the residential land component—that is, mums, dads and kids—to 58 per cent. Those opposite are seeking to increase the cost of living for families to pay for this new State Government tax.

As I said, the Opposition is concerned about aspects of the reform proposal. I foreshadow that we will move a number of amendments, as outlined by the shadow Treasurer, including extending the insurance monitor's period of responsibility, that major government entities should contribute, that WestConnex and TransGrid should pay the levy, and that airports should pay in lieu. We are concerned that consumer protections be sufficient. In conclusion, we urge those opposite to support our amendments.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (17:31):** The Fire and Emergency Services Levy Bill 2017 will change the way that the State collects fees to fund fire and emergency services—namely, a new Fire and Emergency Services Levy will be added to council rates instead of being charged through insurance premiums. It is my understanding that New South Wales is the only mainland State to still fund emergency services through insurance and that the proposed system was recommended in the 2009 review by Ken Henry of Australia's future tax system and in the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission final report.

I state at the outset that I will not oppose the bill but I am concerned that it represents another form of cost shifting to councils. Councils need to establish new software to capture the required data and change their notices. Councils are likely to get an influx of queries and complaints when rate notices are sent out at the start of the next financial year. My office has already received calls from ratepayers who know about the changes and who thought the recent inclusion of the levy on their insurance bill represented a double dip. But most people do not know about the changes and they will receive a shock when their rate notices with the levy arrive. I invite the Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations in his reply to give an assurance that there will be a strong communications process so that people know exactly what is going on.

Landholders, like pensioners and benevolent societies who are currently exempt from paying rates, will receive their first rate notice and many will be confused. Business ratepayers may be confused about charges that will be based on a different set of land classifications than existing business rate categories. So far little information has been provided to landowners and many councils expect that they will have to deal with widespread misunderstandings. The Government has promised a flyer and a hotline to help, but this must be in addition to other measures to inform the community well in advance. The Government must come good on its promise to reimburse councils for all costs associated with this change, and I understand that it has been working with Local Government NSW on this.

I am concerned that there is no guarantee that new costs for the Fire and Emergency Services Levy will be offset by insurance savings as calculations will be different. The levy will no longer be based on a percentage of insurance premiums; it will be based instead on a compromise of a combination of a fixed component and an ad valorem component based on the unimproved capital value of the land. This could mean that ratepayers with higher unimproved land values will contribute a much greater proportion of the fund, which will not be compensated for through savings on insurance premiums. This is especially a problem for people who are asset

rich and income poor, which is common in the inner city where land values have rocketed over the past two decades. I welcome the Government's pensioner concession and hardship schemes, which I hope will go far enough to prevent disadvantage. The Government will need to monitor closely this new way of collecting the Fire and Emergency Services Levy and to make changes should problems arise.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong) (17:34):** I doubt that anyone could argue with the central proposition in the Fire and Emergency Services Levy Bill 2017: that the cost of ensuring fire and emergency services for the community should be shared by all as equally as possible. The bill proposes that contributions should be spread across every property—whether it is residential land, farm land, commercial land or public benefit land. Currently, insurance companies collect levies through a range of insurance products, including home and contents, building and motor vehicle insurance. The money collected by the insurance companies from those levies provides the raw foundation of funding for emergency services in the community. It is without question that our emergency services personnel do a fantastic job in keeping all of us and our communities as safe as possible from the catastrophe of natural disasters, property fires and any other misadventure. Some property owners in New South Wales have played a bit fast and loose with their own insurance obligations and engaged in some free riding.

We on this side of the House have a healthy dose of scepticism—to pick the mildest form of criticism—for the opportunistic free rider in the workplace. However, in a general sense, we expect that the costs of providing essential community services should be financed as fairly as possible and spread across the widest possible base. The Opposition supports the central proposition in the bill. However, as the shadow Treasurer indicated earlier this afternoon, we intend to move a series of amendments to improve the framework of the bill. It is hoped that the Government will consider accepting Labor's amendments to ensure it is improved. The Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations said in his second reading speech that the same property-based levy has been implemented in other jurisdictions across Australia. He said that in Victoria "legislation passed through both Houses with absolute majorities". This Government could have the same outcome in New South Wales if it is willing to adopt Labor's amendments.

To calculate the new levy proposed by this bill, different base rates and ad valorem rates will be applied to land depending on its classification. As the Minister explained, the ad valorem rate will change each year to achieve the required revenue target for funding emergency services. For residential and public benefit land, the fixed fee per property will be levied at \$100, and farmland, commercial and industrial land will have a \$200 fixed fee per property. The new levy will be paid by the landholder in a single instalment or by quarterly instalments as takes place now with the payment of local government rates. It will be collected by local government authorities and will appear as a separate line item on rate notices.

Some of my parliamentary colleagues will provide more detail on Labor's proposed amendments relating to imposing this new levy on WestConnex, TransGrid and airports. I will focus my remarks on extending the insurance monitor's term and responsibilities, on a range of transitional issues and on the description of the levy on council rate notices. Before doing so, I emphasise that we on this side of the House are sceptical about the cost savings claimed by the Government for the "average" resident. The shadow Treasurer noted that the "average" savings claimed by the Government continued to change with each press release issued. Indeed, it is worth observing that the saving amount always goes down, never up.

The Government appears to be hiding a lot of very important detail behind using the "average" statistical trick. It is hiding a range of individual specifics across all local government areas and understating actual costs for areas with high unimproved land values. If those opposite want to ensure that there is as little free riding as possible so property owners take up insurance, they should stop misleading them on just how much they will be forced to pay. If one promises a reform or change in laws that will deliver an outcome, then one must make sure it does. While taking out insurance should be a precaution against the unforeseen and uncontrollable in terms of misadventure and natural disasters, sometimes it can be viewed as an "optional extra" for the struggling household budget. We will carefully monitor the implementation of the bill and the assurances that the Government has given. One of the amendments I consider to be very important for the Government to adopt is extending the term of the insurance monitor.

The role of the insurance monitor is crucial in ensuring transparency and competitive pressures within the insurance sector. The bill, however, restricts the period in which the insurance monitor can investigate over-collection by insurance companies from policyholders paying the Emergency Services Levy. The question remains: Why does the Government wish to restrict the scope of the insurance monitor's investigative powers? Labor's amendment will ensure there is a cop on the beat to oversee the charging and collection practices of companies in the insurance sector going back to 1 July 2012 and ahead to 1 July 2022. There is also a serious transition issue that needs to be addressed. The shadow Treasurer highlighted that people purchasing or renewing insurance up to 30 June 2017 will pay the Emergency Services Levy for the 2016-17 financial year. Having just

paid the old levy, they will then, in the new financial year, receive a rates notice that will require payment of the new Fire and Emergency Services Levy for the 2017-18 financial year.

In fact, recently a case was raised with me where an insurance policy on a house was due in late March—three months before the end of the financial year—and there was a drop of only \$25 in the Emergency Services Levy charged on the insurance renewal. However, that person will also pay the new levy come 1 July. This is not, strictly speaking, a double payment, but two annual payments that will be separated by a period of less than 12 months. I understand that Treasury understands this is a significant problem and must be addressed to avoid dramatic price changes when renewing insurance policies. Finally, it is important that policyholders and ratepayers are informed that the new levy will appear on their rates notice, and this measure should be clearly identified as a State Government tax. Labor has an amendment on the table that will ensure that the new levy is clearly identifiable as a New South Wales Government charge.

As I mentioned at the outset, nobody disagrees with the overall objective of this bill but we should all share the costs of providing emergency services to ensure the safety and preservation of life and property. Too many lives have been ruined by misadventure or the onset of natural disasters because insurance was lacking or was not purchased. The people of the Illawarra have had such experiences when storms ravaged the Wollongong local government area in 1998. The people of the Illawarra also have a healthy scepticism about the nature of insurance companies and the industry sector. They well understand the need for vigilance and transparency and for a "tough cop on the beat" to monitor the industry. Labor has tabled a number of amendments for the Government to consider. I hope that the Government will accept those amendments as they will vastly improve the bill.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (17:39):** I contribute to debate on the Fire and Emergency Services Levy Bill 2017 and about the need for changes to make the bill fairer for families in New South Wales, and particularly in my electorate of Canterbury. When will the Government stop slugging the people of New South Wales with levies and taxes that only increase so many household bills?

**Mr David Elliott:** That is rich!

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** You have.

**Mr David Elliott:** You were the highest-taxing Government.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** No, we were not; you are. The proposed changes to the levy will work in the interest of big business and insurance companies. The system currently in place has ensured that our emergency service is one of the most efficient and effective not only within Australia but also across the world. I recognise the great work of the fire and emergency services personnel. I also acknowledge our shadow Treasurer, Ryan Park, for his work and that of a number of colleagues who have unpicked the legislation, and done a fantastic job. I foreshadow that Labor will present amendments to this place.

The current changes will lead to higher household bills for many families across New South Wales. Anyone who has an unimproved land value of more than \$500,000 will inevitably be charged more under the Fire and Emergency Services Levy than under the current insurance-based scheme. Given that in the former Canterbury local government area unimproved land value is \$944,000 on average, this means that residents—members of my community—will pay an average of \$346 for this new State Government tax. Are you happy with that?

**Mr David Elliott:** That is not true.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** Have a look at your figures.

**Mr David Elliott:** You quoted them in the speech.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** You wanted the figures; I have given you the figures.

**Mr David Elliott:** Source them.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** The Government says that residents pay on average \$233 for emergency services through their insurance, and are likely to save \$47. But this is plainly not the case for the families in the Canterbury electorate. The difference is a massive \$178—and \$178 a year means a lot to families in my electorate. The rhetoric and fanciful modelling being peddled by the Minister for Finance is misleading the people of New South Wales and, as I said, residents in my electorate—many of whom are low-income workers—cannot afford it. Once again, the Government has demonstrated that it does not understand the implications of growing house prices, or simply the median house price, in Sydney. Time and time again, it lacks foresight and modelling when introducing these sorts of measures.

The Government has also failed to take into account the vast increase in charges for those who are currently not insured—those who cannot afford insurance because they struggle to put food on the table, those who cannot afford insurance because they are trying to put their kids through school and, if the Federal Government gets its way, those who cannot afford insurance because they will no longer receive penalty rates. When will this Berejiklian Government look out for the families of New South Wales instead of acting in the interests of big business and insurance companies? Despite businesses on average utilising these services far more than residents, the Government is retrieving the overwhelming majority of the levy from residential land. While the families of New South Wales, and those in my electorate of Canterbury, are crying out for a policy that reduces rising household costs, the Government seems hell-bent on increasing their financial burden.

The bill does not even mandate the proportion that the State Government must pay. How can this Government have the gall to ask the people of New South Wales to stump up and pay for an increased levy when it refuses even to acknowledge how much it is willing to contribute? Those opposite need to reassess what they are doing if they are not standing up for the people who elected them. New South Wales Labor will always serve the people whom we are here to represent, and we will fight these unfair charges that will inevitably increase household bills for families across New South Wales. I recommend that those opposite support the amendments of the member for Keira. I commend them to the House.

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (17:46):** The Fire and Emergency Services Levy Bill 2017 will shift the onus of funding our emergency services from insurance companies to households and families. The bill reforms the way we fund the essential work that fire and emergency services providers do in our community—including the State Emergency Service [SES], Fire and Rescue NSW and the Rural Fire Service. Currently, these services are funded largely by contributions collected through insurance policies. This bill introduces a levy for landowners that is collected by local councils. While it is clear that we must fortify our emergency services and support emergency services workers, I share my Labor colleagues' concerns that the bill is weakened by the Government's preference for the big end of town. I am concerned that it will put working families on the hook for services that have been, until now, funded by insurance companies.

I am also concerned that there are not enough checks and balances to ensure residents who have already forked out through their insurance will not be hit again with this new levy. I am concerned that WestConnex M4 Pty Limited has been excluded from paying the new levy, along with Transgrid and also New South Wales airports. It is clear that the Government will always do its bit to help the big end of town, even if it comes at the cost of those who are doing it tough. Labor will put forward sensible amendments to restore some balance. That is not to say the bill will impinge in any way on the fantastic work of our emergency services personnel, and I take this opportunity to acknowledge the local emergency services in my electorate. The Ashfield-Leichhardt and Marrickville SES units are among the best in the State. Locals rely on them time after time to protect their property during storms—to sandbag against floodwaters from the rising Cooks River that floods whenever there is a fair bit of rain, to tie down and tarp damaged roofs or to clear trees that have fallen across roads, particularly major local roads in the inner west.

These teams are made up of committed, passionate and hardworking locals who are prepared to slog it out in the pouring rain and howling wind while most of us are curled up in front of the television or with a good book. The Marrickville SES was recently awarded first place in the Sydney Southern Region Rescue Competition. This followed five months of extra training and hard work, all so they could be there for us when we need them most. Beyond the inner west, emergency services personnel in the New South Wales SES, Fire and Rescue NSW and NSW Rural Fire Service work tirelessly to protect property and save lives in the event of storms, bushfires and floods. The battering in Queensland today is a stark reminder of how dangerous nature can be, and of course I send my best wishes to emergency services personnel and residents dealing with the very worst of Cyclone Debbie as we speak.

Members in this place are on a unity ticket in wanting to ensure that emergency services personnel in New South Wales are properly supported and funded. We must ensure that those fighting fires or floods, or whatever else nature throws at us, have the equipment and resources they need. They need to have access to the best technology on offer so they can do the job as effectively and as safely as possible. They need funding for training and support services so that their work for the community does not come at the cost of their personal health or wellbeing. As the shadow Treasurer noted earlier, insurance levies make up roughly 74 per cent of the contribution to the emergency services budget, the State provides almost 15 per cent and councils contribute 11.7 per cent.

Under the Government's plan, insurers will no longer be asked to make this contribution and councils will instead collect the funding in the form of an emergency funding levy. Under this plan, the contribution made by those in the residential land component, in other words, households and families, will be 58 per cent. This is despite the Government's own research showing that they account for only 35 per cent of emergency services

usage. In comparison, business uses up to 55 per cent. There are too few protections in this legislation against what is effectively double dipping, with residents who previously contributed through premiums now being asked to fork out again for the levy less than a year after the first payment is made. Labor will move an amendment to extend the insurance monitor's term to guard against residents being overcharged.

Residents have already raised concerns with my office about this issue. The amendment from this side of the House will provide balance and fairness and make sure that residents are not ripped off. I am concerned that home owners who have underinsured due to the high cost of premiums will now be levied at the same level as home owners who are otherwise fully insured. They will lose out under this plan. It is clear that an increased burden for services is being imposed on poorer, working families while the Government yet again is helping out the insurers.

For this reason, it is more important than ever that we act to ensure that there are adequate protections for households. But rather than do that, the Government has chosen to prioritise exempting WestConnex—a company it created to deliver its favourite project—from having to pay this levy. While other businesses are subject to the levy charge, WestConnex and the Sydney Motorway Corporation have been given an exemption. The very reason this Government set up the Sydney Motorway Corporation was to establish it as a commercial entity, thereby shielding it from public scrutiny. Now the Government is seeking to extend to it the same protections it offers government entities. As the budget continues to blow out and the business case that the Government put forward for this project makes less and less sense, it is trying to claw back any costs it can. This is another example of the Government's deviousness around WestConnex. There is no public scrutiny and it does whatever it likes.

Likewise, TransGrid has been exempted from paying the levy, as have airports including Sydney Airport, which is on Commonwealth land. Previously, airports likely paid contributions towards emergency services through insurance premiums; however, they will no longer be required to pay. Labor is moving sensible amendments to make WestConnex and TransGrid pay the levy and ensure the Minister advises the House on negotiations with airport leasing companies to secure payments in lieu of a levy. Above all else, Labor is moving to improve transparency around this levy. We want the levy to be clearly labelled on rates notices so that residents know that this is a State-imposed charge. People have the right to know why their payments to councils have changed, and councils should not have to provide an explanation to households and landowners when it is the State Government pursuing this change and issuing the charge. Residents also have the right to know when the State Government makes changes to the levy, as may well occur in the future.

As the impacts of climate change become ever more apparent, we will see more and more extreme weather and greater pressure placed on our emergency services personnel. We on this side know that it is the families, the poor, the vulnerable, the uninsured who will suffer most as a result. I urge the Government to adopt Labor's amendments. These are sensible amendments that will hold the big end of town to account. They will ensure that information about the charges is provided to households and they will ensure better oversight of insurance companies to the benefit of residents.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (17:55):** I speak on the Fire and Emergency Services Levy Bill 2017, which might best be described as introducing a new \$1 billion tax to the people of New South Wales. I know that those opposite do not necessarily want to call it a tax. The Government has gone to great lengths over the past six years to call all the new fees and charges it has introduced anything but taxes. It has imposed "levies" and "surcharges" and "duties". It is almost as if it is allergic to the word "tax". The former Prime Minister of this country, the Hon. Tony Abbot, made his name on the little phrase "big new taxes". This is indeed a new tax but it is called a "levy" in this particular instance.

**Mr David Elliott:** It is not new.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR:** The value of it is approximately a billion dollars. The Minister opposite interjects, and I acknowledge his interjection. I hoped he would interject and I hope that he continues to interject during my speech because I have an answer for most of what he will say. Here is the first one: What is the difference between a tax and the current model of a levy? Under the current model, through the insurance companies a person has a choice whether or not to participate in the insurance. That choice has been described by at least one member opposite as either you are participating or you are a shirker. The difference is that with an insurance policy people have a choice but this new levy will apply to every single rateable property. So people no longer have a choice, and that is why I choose to refer to it as a tax.

**Mr David Elliott:** You choose to be a landlord.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR:** I acknowledge that interjection. People need to live somewhere so they either buy a property, in which case they pay the levy, or they rent, in which case the landlord pays the levy and there is

every chance that the lessee will pay for it in any case. Let us talk about who the true shirkers are here. This bill is fundamentally an effort by this Government to get out of funding our emergency services. I will explain why I say that. I start with the collection of the funds, or roughly what it costs to fund emergency services. As the former Minister for Emergency Services would know, it costs about a billion dollars to fund emergency services each year. About three-quarters, \$750 million, is funded through insurance premiums; about \$140 million comes from the State; and about \$110 million comes from our local councils.

In the bill before the House, there is no requirement for a minimum payment from government to the emergency services fund. There is a minimum payment for councils. There is a predictable payment in respect of the levy that will be charged against the council rates of taxpayers. The only missing link is what the minimum fund will be from the State Government. Half of the Fire and Rescue NSW call-outs are false alarms. Some 50,000 call-outs each year are false alarms. In 2012, at the time of the Government's discussion paper on this issue, the cost of a false alarm call-out was \$750 and the charge imposed by Fire and Rescue NSW was discretionary. Fast forward to 2017 and the charge for a false alarm call-out is \$1,750 and the opportunity to be discretionary has been removed.

**Mr David Elliott:** It has not. You are misleading the House.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR:** I will restate that. I have been informed by a local fireman in my electorate—

**Mr David Elliott:** An FBEU delegate?

**Mr CLAYTON BARR:** No. I have been informed that they are no longer able to be discretionary about this charge. I made a calculation. Approximately 50,000 false alarms attracting a charge of \$1,750 equates to approximately \$80 million. This is year zero. When considering how much the State Government contributes and funds in year zero, we have to commence with what it has funded previously and then monitor it as we go forward. The State Government sometimes carries the can and makes significant contributions to emergency services funding when there is a cost blowout. We have experienced terrible floods and fires when the amount budgeted has not been enough. Insurance companies cannot be expected to put in more for a particular year because they would have already collected the required amount based on a budgeted figure. Therefore, the unexpected additional cost of fires in the Blue Mountains or floods in the Hunter would be met by the Government.

Indeed, the budget of New South Wales is funded by the taxpayers. Under this new levy, if there is an unexpected blowout in respect of emergency services expenses, the Treasurer has the ability to adjust the ad valorem rate. The unexpected additional moneys spent in the previous financial year or the financial year before that can be added onto the ad valorem year so that those costs can be recouped. In essence, what we have is the ultimate shirker. The ultimate shirker is the bottom line of the New South Wales budget and this Government is trying to get out of its responsibility to fund emergency services.

I turn to the comment of the Minister for Emergency Services who described people who do not have insurance policies as "shirkers". I refer to the July 2012 discussion paper entitled "Funding our Emergency Services". I acknowledge the age of the document, but I note that this was the only discussion paper distributed by the Government to address this issue. I will assume that all of the figures in the document are true and accurate. I will take it on good faith that the Minister at the time who was responsible for overseeing the document included the correct figures. As I read through the discussion paper, I noted that some people are doing the heavy lifting and others are getting a free ride. I have no doubt that I will not hear the Minister refer to those groups as "shirkers", but one wonders about the balance of payment.

The 2012 document clearly states that the Emergency Services Levy collected from the three broad groups—rural, business and residential—was split as follows: 6 per cent from rural, 49 per cent from businesses, and 45 per cent from residential. Going forward, farmland owners will now pay 4.5 per cent, not the 6 per cent they used to pay; businesses will now pay 37 per cent, not the 49 per cent they used to pay; and the residential group will now pay 58 per cent, not the 45 per cent it used to pay. The Minister for Emergency Services referred to the people who were not paying their contribution to the scheme as "shirkers".

I am sure he would be more than happy to now refer to the business community as "shirkers" because it will pay significantly less. I am sure he will happily say that farmers, who will pay significantly less than they used to, also are shirkers. Indeed, given that this new levy provides an allowance for pensioners, it suggests that older aged people will not pay as much as others. So I am sure that the Minister for Emergency Services is looking forward to the opportunity to refer to the elderly as "shirkers". [*Extension of time*]

They are the figures as at 2012 compared with the new levy. The significance is that the Treasurer said in his second reading speech that the Government had no intention of adjusting the contributions made by different parties to the fund. It is important to note that the 2012 document indicates the nature of the call-outs. It was identified that 55 per cent of call-outs made by Fire and Rescue NSW went to businesses, which used to pay for

49 per cent of the entire fund. Based on the new bill, businesses will now pay 37 per cent of the fund, for which they receive 55 per cent of the services. We have been asked to swallow and digest the figures when dealing with this levy. There is a 2012 document, the Treasurer's second reading speech and a 2017 levy, and all three say different things. The Treasurer should address those issues in his reply speech.

I also raise a pattern for legislation introduced in this House by the Government. On many occasions previously I have referred to the "trust us" philosophy. The Government introduces legislation but does not provide all the details. It provides the detail by regulation further down the track. I give as an example the fundamental ad valorem rate. No ad valorem rate is available today as we debate the bill; it will come some time later. Members of this House and the people of New South Wales are being asked to consider a bill and to trust the Government that the ad valorem rate that will be decided down the track will be fair and reasonable and affordable. I reiterate that it is not in the bill.

I draw the attention of the House also to the part of the bill that deals with vacant land. I do so because I represent a mix of city and country constituents. In some of our country areas, a farm consists of seven or eight parcels of land and is run by a single family unit. It is entirely reasonable for that farmer to state that a number of parcels of land do not have a building on them and therefore should be treated as vacant land and that other parcels of land do have buildings on them and should be treated as either residential and/or farming. Interestingly, the way that issue is going to be dealt with is that each landowner will have to make application to the council and the council will have to go out, do an inspection and ascertain whether or not the land will be treated as vacant or otherwise. The point I am making is the cost shifting to councils in that they have to deal with that, process all that information and come to some sort of conclusion. I can see the potential workload for councils to work through issues such as this that are not clarified in the bill.

In conclusion, I will refer to some of the other States and how they deal with this issue. The levy that is applied in other States is applied in zones. For example, people who live in the city metro areas, where they have 24/7 fire coverage, may pay a higher ad valorem rate. People who live in a regional area, where they either rely on part-time fire stations or on volunteers, pay a lower rate. That option was available to this Government and it was considered in a 2012 document but it has not been addressed. So in the case of the good residents of Cessnock, where our fire station is manned only from 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. Monday to Friday, we will be paying the same ad valorem rate as some of our city colleagues who have 24/7 funding. I look forward to the amendments being moved by the Opposition.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch):** Order! I remind members that Standing Order 52 provides that members will be heard in silence.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (18:11):** I welcome the opportunity to speak in debate on the Fire and Emergency Services Levy Bill 2017. Today we have modern, well-equipped fire and emergency services. New South Wales has an emergency service capacity that is indeed the envy of the world and that is currently focusing its efforts on Queensland. Our fire and emergency service workers do amazing work continuously supporting our communities, especially in times of great upheaval and vulnerability.

In my electorate of Charlestown we are lucky to have Charlestown fire station. I have previously raised in this place the great work of the firefighters, both full-time and retained, and I will continue to do so. I have visited Charlestown fire station in the past and I am always impressed by the firefighters' passion for their work. Our firefighters, both professional and retained, leave their families, their homes and communities to help to protect our homes. They can be away for days on end and sometimes longer, with their families at home hoping that these courageous men and women return to them safely. At present, these frontline services are paid for by insurance companies through a variety of insurance policies such as home and contents, building and comprehensive motor vehicle insurance premiums. This has provided a massive injection of funding for our emergency services and it is the 16 years of Labor government that helped to achieve this.

From July 2017, the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government wants every local council to collect a new land tax for it—the Fire and Emergency Services Levy. This is a new State Government tax that will be included on all council rates notices. This bill proposes a way to fund the essential work done by our fire and emergency service providers—Fire and Rescue NSW, the Rural Fire Service, and the State Emergency Service. Under the existing insurance-based Emergency Services Levy [ESL] most of the cost of our fire and emergency services is borne by people who insure their properties. The Fire and Emergency Services Levy will spread the cost burden of emergencies across every property in New South Wales. The Government is portraying this as a fairer way of raising the same amount of money for vital services that protect life and property.

**Mr David Elliott:** What Labor did in the other States.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I acknowledge the interjection of the Minister for Emergency Services. At first glance, this is fine, but this levy is, in fact, another tax on vulnerable people. The Opposition supports any effort to reduce the cost of living. Indeed, Labor was founded on the principles of defending the living conditions of the working classes, and reducing the cost-of-living pressures on the most vulnerable, on those who can least afford it, is one of the guiding tenets of our party. Those landowners not paying insurance will be automatically worse off, and we should be concerned with the Government's assumption that \$100 or so will see those people instantly take up insurance.

For too many households, insurance is simply unaffordable. Others in this place have raised, and I reaffirm it, that 36 per cent of households in the State are without contents insurance and 5 per cent are without building insurance. This compares with an average of around 25 per cent without contents insurance in other States, meaning New South Wales has the highest level of non-insurance of all the States. Sadly, however, those who cannot afford insurance simply have to take this risk. The Government is naive if it thinks these changes will make insurance affordable for everyone. We have to ensure that those who are the most vulnerable, those who some on the other side call shirkers, do not fall through the cracks. These changes will impact those who can least afford it. This is another burden on families who are already doing it tough.

There are considerable transitional issues with this reform process and my office has been contacted by numerous constituents who believe they are being double-billed. My constituents are like many people who have purchased or renewed insurance up to 30 June 2017 and therefore will be paying the Emergency Services Levy for the 2016-17 financial year. Having just paid the old levy they will then, in the new financial year, receive a rates notice that will require payment of the new Fire and Emergency Services Levy for the 2017-18 financial year. Those two annual payments are not separated by 12 months but by a much shorter period of time. This is causing much concern in my community and in other communities across the State. The Government needs to do better in explaining the transition to the community, because at the moment people are confused and feel that they are being forced to pay twice by being double-billed. The role of the insurance monitor is essential in ensuring that those who can least afford it do not get ripped off, and for that reason the Opposition is calling on the Government to support amendments to ensure that the insurance monitor's term is extended. I certainly support those amendments.

Another amendment that we on this side of the House are asking the Government to support if we are to, in return, support the bill is the description of the levy. The description goes to the issue that local councils will be the collector of the levy if the bill is enacted. The Local Government NSW Cost Shifting Survey, conducted every two years and last conducted in 2015, identified that in the 2014-15 financial year, \$670 million in costs was passed on to councils, primarily by the New South Wales Government, through cost shifting. That is nearly 7 per cent of the total operating income of Local Government NSW chewed up by costs which have been the responsibility, and should be the responsibility, of governments other than local councils. The discussion paper on the levy, responded to by Local Government NSW in 2012 asked, in one of the questions:

Should revenue from a land based levy be collected by Local Governments or the Office of State Revenue?

The response of Local Government NSW was:

The New South Wales Government needs to engage with the Associations in detailed discussions and negotiations on a preferred option. It is evident from individual council responses that there are mixed views and many of the concerns relate to detail. These include debtor management, cash flow sequence and structure of the levy.

However, some matters are clear:

- Any agreement would be subject to full cost recovery by councils. The basis will need to be negotiated;
- The property levy would not form part of council rates. It would need to be separate and distinct from rates clearly identified as New South Wales Government levy. This could involve a separate invoice to the rate notice;
- Council rates are given priority where a property owner does not pay the full amount of the rates and the property levy;
- Councils should not bear the risk of non-payment (i.e. liability will remain with the property owner);
- That the levy collected by Local Government be fully and solely applied to the funding of emergency services; and
- The current ESL on Local Government would be replaced by the new property levy.

It is not at all clear that the Liberal-Nationals Government has participated in those requested detailed discussions and negotiations on a preferred option. Although the Treasurer, in his second reading speech, thanked Local Government NSW for their participation in discussions about local councils being the collectors, he did not say there was agreement. It seems, in fact, that local government may well feel left out in the cold with respect to this bill. For this reason—transparency of administrative cost shifting—I support the proposal that the levy, when being collected by local councils, be described very clearly as a New South Wales Government charge. If this Government wants to be at all transparent, its members should support Labor's proposal.

There are other aspects of the bill that we on this side of the Chamber have concerns about, including payment of the levy by WestConnex, Transgrid and airports. Some on this side of the Chamber have already spoken on those issues and others will speak further on them. I recognise the work done by the shadow Treasurer and member for Keira, Ryan Park, on this bill. He will put forward associated amendments to this bill and I commend other members of the Opposition who analysed and consulted on the bill. I urge the Government to consider and accept the amendments that Labor will be putting forward. They are positive amendments, aimed at ensuring that there are sufficient protections for consumers in the legislation. I commend those amendments to the Government.

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (18:21):** I contribute to the debate on the Fire and Emergency Services Levy Bill 2017, which proposes a new mechanism, a property levy as opposed to an insurance levy, to be collected by local government authorities to fund the invaluable work of fire and emergency services in New South Wales, including the services offered by Fire and Rescue NSW, the NSW Rural Fire Service, and the NSW State Emergency Service. As outlined by the shadow Treasurer, the Opposition is not philosophically opposed to the concept of replacing the existing Emergency Services Levy, which is an insurance levy, with a property model, as has been proposed by the Government.

All members of the community benefit from the work of our emergency services, particularly during times of natural disasters like Tropical Cyclone Debbie, which has been battering the coastal areas of north Queensland this afternoon. Cyclone Debbie highlights the importance of having this type of levy to support our emergency services and ensure that funding is always available. I have never taken for granted the work of emergency services crews in my electorate of Bankstown, which is home to one of the largest State Emergency Service [SES] units in the State. I have visited the Bankstown SES facility in Bass Hill many times. I attended as mayor when the then Minister, Steve Whan, opened that facility at Bass Hill. It is an amazing facility. I am incredibly thankful for the work that these volunteers undertake in emergency situations, such as the flooding of the Georges River in April 2015 and July 2016.

The new levy proposed in the bill will replace the existing Emergency Services Levy, which is currently collected from insurance agencies through contributions from home and contents insurance and building insurance. Under the existing levy, a property owner would not make a contribution to the levy if they had not taken out a home and contents insurance or building insurance policy. The new mechanism in the bill will introduce a levy to be collected by local government authorities on behalf of the New South Wales Government. I share the concern that the member for Charlestown has raised. As a former mayor I understand the cost shifting that has taken place over recent years from the State Government to local governments. It certainly places an incredible amount of pressure on local government authorities. That is why I agree with the amendment that the shadow Treasurer is proposing, to ensure that the rates very clearly specify that this new levy is a New South Wales Government levy and not a local government levy. It is very important to rectify that, particularly given the very difficult times that local governments face at the moment with amalgamations and mergers and all sorts of issues. I hope the Government will agree with that.

Councils will be required to collect the new levy along with the usual rates and charges paid by residents on an annual basis. This will be paid as a substitute for the contributions currently paid to the Government by insurance companies via home contents insurance and building insurance. All public benefit land, residential land, farm land, industrial land and commercial land is proposed to be subjected to the levy, with the exemption of government-owned land or land owned by state-owned corporations. While this bill may have some good intentions, in a broad sense, when one examines the finer details with respect to the application of the new levy it is immediately apparent that the Government clearly erred when it rushed to draft this bill. The Government has not considered the factors that might cause some distress to communities and create a situation where some entities which were previously paying a levy will no longer have to pay an insurance levy.

I share the concerns which have been highlighted by the shadow Treasurer and my colleagues on this side of the House regarding the organisations that would be exempt from a liability to contribute their fair share to this levy. We must keep in mind that this is effectively a new broad-based tax that will apply to all persons and entities irrespective of their circumstances. Proper scrutiny must be applied to the clauses of the bill which give favourable treatment to certain entities that are worth hundreds of millions of dollars to their shareholders—such as WestConnex, Transgrid and Sydney Airport—while at the same time requiring mums and dads, pensioners, and not-for-profit landowning groups to pay a contribution to the levy.

Schedule 3, part 2, division 2, clause 6 (6) (a) proposes that the land owned by WCX M4 Pty Limited be deemed as government land. WestConnex is a subsidiary of the Sydney Motorway Corporation which has been created by the New South Wales Government as a private corporation to deliver, finance and operate the WestConnex motorway. The effect of this provision is to exclude WestConnex—a privately owned commercial

entity—from being required to contribute to the new levy. While almost every other landowning privately owned corporation in the State will be required to make their contributions, WestConnex is exempt.

This is something that the Treasurer—I imagine the Treasurer will be making a speech in reply—must address. There is no logical reason for the Government to be granting a specific legislative protection for WestConnex, and placing this entity on a higher pedestal than others in our State. For the next 40 years, WestConnex is expected to reap billions of dollars in tolls revenue from Western Sydney motorists. This organisation should not be getting a helping hand from the Government and be exempt from its obligations to contribute to this very important levy. I support the amendment foreshadowed by the shadow Treasurer to remove this clause from the bill.

Another organisation which has been inexplicably granted exemption status in the bill is Transgrid. While State-owned organisations are exempt from contributing to the levy, schedule 3, part 2, division 2, clause 6 (5) specifically requires Essential Energy, Ausgrid and Endeavour Energy to make contributions to the levy. It is no coincidence that Transgrid is the only energy distributor which has been excluded from the requirements of the above clause. Transgrid, unlike the other energy distributors, was leased to the private market at 100 per cent. I join in the call of the shadow Treasurer for the Government to explain why Transgrid specifically was the only energy distributor omitted from the requirement to contribute to the levy.

As was also noted by the shadow Treasurer, the Sydney Airport Corporation—among other airport lessee corporations—will not be required to make a contribution to the levy as it occupies Commonwealth land. I note for the record that the Sydney Airport Corporation, according to media reports, raked in almost \$100 million of pure profit from car parking fees alone in the past 12 months. While the shadow Treasurer noted that there is no constitutional basis for the New South Wales Government to tax Commonwealth-owned land where airports are located, it is important to recognise that airport lessee companies, such as Sydney Airport Corporation, have set a goodwill precedent of making payments in lieu of council rates which they have no legal obligation to pay.

Under the Emergency Services Levy scheme, which this bill proposes to abolish, airport lessee companies have contributed millions of dollars to the scheme through the payment of their respective insurance premiums. It is understandable that our emergency services crews, particularly Fire and Rescue NSW, are required to regularly attend airports. My electorate of Bankstown is a neighbour of the Sydney Bankstown airport in Georges Hall. Bankstown and Camden airports are leased from the Commonwealth Government by BAC Holdco and in December 2015 BAC Holdco was sold for about \$203 million to First State Super and Altis Property Partners. I understand that they bought that from Mirvac and Colonial. They had 36 years remaining on their lease of both Bankstown and Camden airports and potentially have an option for another 49 years.

Those commercial entities have long-term leases. They have already been paying the levy through their insurance premiums. My concern is that they will no longer be in a position where they have to pay. We all know how much airports rely on emergency services. On 24 February this year Fire and Rescue NSW provided immediate assistance at Bankstown airport following a plane skidding off the runway, assisting the two passengers involved in the crash and helping with the clean-up of the fuel spillage.

I hope the goodwill of the airport lessee companies is extended to making voluntary contributions to the new levy proposed by the bill, as our emergency services are doing a tremendous job in assisting those airports. I agree with the shadow Treasurer that it is important that that exemption be removed and that the Government legislate to ensure that they are, in fact, paying this levy, particularly in instances where they are long-term lessees, making tremendous profits from these sites. [*Time expired.*]

**Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (18:32):** I contribute to the debate on the Fire and Emergency Services Levy Bill 2017. I will start on a subject some of my colleagues have already discussed: the question of why the Sydney Motorway Corporation has been exempted from the bill. As the shadow Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, I am getting a little sick of the way in which the Sydney Motorway Corporation is treated by this Government. It always seems to receive favourable treatment. The bill exempts the corporation from paying the levy because it is a government entity. The corporation is a government entity when it suits the Government and a commercial entity when it suits the Government. For instance, the Sydney Motorway Corporation is exempt from Government Information (Public Access) Act [GIPAA] applications, which means that the Opposition cannot access the remuneration figure of the chief executive officer. It is also exempt from parliamentary oversight, so at budget estimates we are not entitled to ask any questions of the Sydney Motorway Corporation about WestConnex.

The Government has sought to exempt the Sydney Motorway Corporation from the requirements of the bill. I find that extraordinary but also offensive because, in recent weeks, the Sydney Motorway Corporation has spent millions of dollars sponsoring the Greater Western Sydney Giants. It is the first time in history that a toll road has sponsored a sports club. The Sydney Motorway Corporation is doing that in order to get the WestConnex

branding on a building, yet it cannot pay a levy for fire and emergency services. The Sydney Motorway Corporation should be treated in the same way other entities are treated. If the Government wants to call it a government entity and exclude it from the levy, then the corporation must be subject to GIPAA rules and parliamentary oversight, and information regarding it should be available through budget estimates.

This bill establishes a new mechanism for funding fire and emergency services in New South Wales. It establishes a more efficient revenue base for Fire and Rescue NSW, the NSW Rural Fire Service and the State Emergency Service. They are important organisations that do tremendous work right across the community. Many of those on our side who have spoken on this bill today have spoken about the importance of these organisations within the communities that we represent, and I think each of us in the Parliament is grateful for the work that they do. This bill seeks to abolish the current insurance levy placed on home contents and building insurance and replace the system with a new property levy. The levy will be paid by landholders in single or quarterly instalments beginning in July 2017. As we have heard, local councils will be required to collect the tax on behalf of the Government and the existing levy is collected by insurance providers. In principle, Labor supports this bill. The shadow Treasurer has just entered the House and I acknowledge the work that he has done in regard to this bill. We have already indicated that he will be moving amendments to it.

While the Opposition supports this bill in principle, it is worth noting that most other States have already completed this reform and the Government has been working on consultation for more than four years after taking the policy to the electorate in 2011. Some would say it is about time this bill came before Parliament. We are now six years on from when the Government indicated that it would be looking at this reform. The bill also follows recommendations provided by the Henry Tax Review, the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal and the 2013 parliamentary inquiry into the existing levy.

I have already mentioned the Sydney Motorway Corporation but it is also disappointing that the Government has failed to ensure that TransGrid is subject to the levy. The Government would do well to remember that it privatised the electricity transmission network and therefore TransGrid should be subjected to this levy. As I indicated, the shadow Treasurer will introduce amendments to this effect. As many of my colleagues have said, the Opposition does not oppose this bill. We think it has some good elements and we will support the bill. However, I again raise the Sydney Motorway Corporation's exemption. The corporation is treated as a private entity or a government entity depending on what suits the Government. It is treated differently from other entities that control the infrastructure in this State. That issue will be dealt with in the amendments that we put forward. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (18:38):** I speak on the Fire and Emergency Services Levy Bill 2017. I commend the shadow Treasurer on his commonsense, reasonable amendments to this bill. I get a bit nervous when big insurance companies start praising legislation because it usually means that, once again, the Government is increasing profits for big corporations at the expense of the people of New South Wales. That is why Labor has proposed several amendments to this bill. The Emergency Services Levy directs funds to the State Emergency Service [SES], the NSW Rural Fire Service and Fire and Rescue NSW. These are all essential services and we must ensure that they are equally, equitably and adequately funded to do their important jobs.

When Maitland was hit by devastating floods in recent years, volunteers from these services were the ones who answered the call and rescued people from floodwaters. Indeed, the SES was formed after the devastating 1955 floods in Maitland. As such, its continued viability and ability to provide those services is very dear to the people of my electorate. The Emergency Services Levy is currently paid by New South Wales individuals and businesses who purchase home contents insurance and building insurance. This increases the cost of this insurance and makes it harder to attain for low income earners in our State. But, as the shadow Treasurer outlined, the "average savings" spruiked by the Government and the Treasurer are misleading. Those who do not pay for home contents insurance currently will be subject to the new levy. This means those with the least means will be subject to further financial pressure from the Government. The Government must address this issue.

How will the Government ensure that the transition from our current system to this new levy will not abandon those in our community who can least afford it? Farmers, for example, across New South Wales are very concerned about this new reform. Previously they had no need to pay for home contents insurance and building insurance on farmland with no buildings. The real impact of the introduction of this levy on farmers is unknown, especially in cases where the farmer's home is on a separate parcel of land. The Government has refused, yet again—as it does with so much of the legislation it brings to this place—to hand over the modelling information and it has left it until the very last minute to introduce this bill before 1 July 2017. It is another example of this Government introducing legislation without letting the whole community know the costs and whether it will leave farmers worse off.

This is another example of the Government abandoning regional New South Wales in favour of corporations who inhabit the central business district of Sydney. I will continue, with my colleagues, to hold

The Nationals members to account for the countless occasions on which they have abandoned their constituents. Farmers are meant to be represented by the National Party of New South Wales but once again the party has proved it does not have the gall to stand up to the corporate sycophants of the Liberal Party. Labor is committed to regional and rural New South Wales and will always stick up for our farmers against the Sydney-obsessed Coalition Government. If The Nationals members fail to stick up for their constituents as they failed with the greyhounds, the commercial fishers and the Tweed Valley Women's Service, Labor will be there.

I have some further concerns about the transition from the current system to the new levy. If someone purchases or renews their insurance policies up until the end of this financial year, they will then be paying for the new levy shortly after. If Mrs Jones renews her insurance in June for the 2016-17 financial year and then receives her rates notice not long after for the 2017-18 financial year, her household budget will be put under significant strain. How is this not double dipping? The Government is being very tricky about this legislation. The Government talks about graduating people from the old system to the new one. There is no graduation for Mrs Jones—all she gets is two big bills, thanks to this Government.

How is the Treasurer going to help the people of New South Wales in this transition? The people of New South Wales are sick to death of being accused of being bludgers and leaners because they protest against this Government's big business agenda. The less well-off among us do not deserve to be stung twice as a result of this transition. If the Premier's big insurance company mates are not providing assistance to these people then the Government must act. This Government is too weak-kneed to stand up to the insurance companies in this State. Labor is not.

Time and again, big business has promised to pass on the benefits of government reform only for consumers to realise later that it was all just talk. Labor's proposed amendments to this bill are commonsense, reasonable additions which will mean reduced premiums for consumers. By extending the term of the insurance monitor, consumers will be guaranteed savings from this reform. If the insurance monitor's monitoring period is allowed to end on 31 December 2018, consumers are not guaranteed the benefits of this change. That is why I urge the Government to agree to the shadow Treasurer's amendments. That date is only 18 months after the proposed reforms would be implemented. As a result consumers may find their insurance premiums are increased arbitrarily in 2019. That is why Labor proposes extending the monitoring period to July 2022 to create a real transition period. This would allow the insurance monitor to prevent the corporate mates of the Premier and the Treasurer from taking the benefits of this reform and jacking up premiums to increase their profits.

The second aspect of Labor's amendments in relation to the insurance monitor is the proposal to extend its monitoring period to date back to the 2012-13 financial year. If insurance companies over-collect from consumers, the consumers are entitled to be refunded what was not passed on to the emergency services. There is no room for super profits for insurers here. The bill proposed by the Government only allows the monitor to look into over-collection from the 2015-16 and 2016-17 financial years. Labor's amendment would allow the monitor to investigate over-collection from the 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 financial years.

This Government is happy to leave the insurance companies in control of distributing their over-collected funds. This is another example of this Government responding to the insurance company Christmas wish list. First we saw it with workers compensation. Time after time the insurance companies write the policy and this Liberal-National Government implements it. Labor's amendments would ensure that consumers who paid more than what was passed on to emergency services will be refunded their overpayment from 2012 onwards. When people have received their little cheques from an insurer—for a tiny amount—the concern that people in this State rightly have is about how much has been held back from all the previous years.

The other amendments proposed by Labor ensure that major government entities are contributing their fair share of this new levy. Our proposed amendments that subject WestConnex to the levy are critical. As the shadow Treasurer and the shadow transport Minister have said, if WestConnex can sponsor a footy team, it can pay the levy for emergency services. Another one of Labor's commonsense amendments makes sure that the lessees of the Sydney, Bankstown and Camden airports also contribute to the funding of emergency services in New South Wales. Though they cannot be subjected to this levy at the moment as they occupy Commonwealth land, they should still make payments in support of our emergency services. The Sydney Airport Corporation is hardly struggling to make a buck and should contribute to New South Wales emergency services.

Requiring the Minister to report to the Parliament on the progress of negotiations with the airport lessee companies is another reasonable amendment which will make sure this reform is an equitable one. The most important thing is that the Treasurer and this Government are held to account to deliver what they actually promised. It is not one of those moments when they can just wriggle out of it. The Premier is constantly talking about housing affordability as the number one issue that the Government is trying to address. However, when the Government is allowing a double dip by insurers and failing to monitor and ensure that the overpayments of

previous years are repaid to consumers, we see that the Government's talk is just that—talk—and talk is very cheap.

The Government needs to act to ensure that those who are lucky enough to own a home in this State are not being charged once by insurers and once by local government councils. We need to ensure that overpayments are repaid and that large corporations pay their share. I urge the Government to adopt the reasonable, commonsense amendments of the Labor Opposition and prove for once that it is really working for the betterment of the people in this State, not just for the self-interest of big corporations.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (18:47):** It is fascinating to hear how Labor treats sensible reform. New South Wales is the last of the mainland States to adopt this particular reform. I welcome the Treasurer into the Chamber as I make my few comments about this. This levy system that we have inherited goes back to the Great Fire of London in 1666 and the emergence of fire brigades funded by private insurers to prevent that kind of tragedy happening again. We have moved on a little bit in the last few centuries. All other States of Australia have moved on in the last few centuries. It is time that we adopted a modern, fairer and more sensible system that captures all properties in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Hawkesbury—Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations) (18:48):** In reply: I thank members for their contributions to the debate on the Fire and Emergency Services Levy Bill 2017. As many of the speakers have noted, the replacement of the insurance-based Emergency Services Levy with the Fire and Emergency Services Levy [FESL] is a major piece of tax reform for New South Wales. It will be fairer by sharing the burden across all property owners. I say from the outset that the Government does not accept the Opposition amendments because, while they are well intentioned, they are unnecessary. I thank the member for Keira and shadow Treasurer for his interest in the matter and constructive contribution to the debate. Through the FESL this Government is doing more to reduce home and contents insurance premiums and protect consumers than the Opposition ever did when in Government.

I note Opposition members have raised concerns about supposed cost shifting to councils. Under the FESL, councils will undertake a range of functions to implement the FESL. To support councils the Government is reimbursing councils for all reasonable costs of the FESL implementation, conducting a series of webinars and training events, providing on-the-ground support for councils when necessary, operating a local government support network able to respond rapidly to questions raised by council staff regarding implementation and providing information for council staff through a web-based portal.

Under cost guidelines released by Treasury, councils will be reimbursed for all reasonable costs associated with the implementation of the FESL. As part of these cost guidelines council can request to be reimbursed under a formula approach or based on all costs incurred. The former approach involves Treasury nominating specific compensation amounts for each implementation activity. In essence, this was a light touch approach that was expected to compensate councils for costs incurred without imposing a significant administrative burden. Where a council feels that the formula approach will not cover its expected costs, a council can choose full costs recording. This approach involves maintaining a detailed record of costs incurred that must be submitted to Treasury. The vast majority of councils have chosen the former approach to cost reimbursement, reflecting their confidence that funding being provided by Treasury will meet the expected FESL implementation costs.

Before closing the debate I will discuss the proposed structure of the FESL rates. As outlined in the bill, the FESL will consist of a fixed amount per property and an ad valorem rate based on each property's own land value. From 2017-18 the fixed amounts are \$100 for residential land and public benefit land, and \$200 for all other properties subject to the levy. These fixed amounts will be adjusted each year by 30 April in line with the consumer price index. The ad valorem rates will be determined each year based on target revenue shares for each property sector as well as data provided by councils to the Valuer-General.

Importantly, in setting ad valorem rates the Government will maintain the existing shares of revenue contributed under the insurance-based Emergency Services Levy for the residential, farm land and non-residential sectors. While maintaining these revenue shares, the FESL rate for the public benefit land will be set equal to that of residential land. As public benefit land typically pays commercial rates of insurance this will result in a significant benefit or saving for public benefit land. The FESL rates will be set to ensure that the ratio of the ad valorem rate for industrial land is 1½ times the ad valorem rate for commercial land. This reflects the higher fire and emergency risks industrial land typically represents and also adjusts for the typically lower per square metre value of industrial land. Victoria maintains a similar ratio in the ad valorem rates for commercial and industrial land under its fire service property levy.

In order to implement this rate structure the revenue shares for each property sector in the bill will change by way of regulation based on data that is currently being provided by councils to the Valuer-General. The order

fixing the FESL rates will be published on the Government's legislation website before 30 April 2017. I emphasise that the FESL rates determined in April will maintain the existing shares of revenue contributed under the insurance-based Emergency Services Levy for the residential, farm land and non-residential sectors. This is an important bill that ensures that fire and emergency services are funded in a way that is fair for all the community. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**Consideration in detail requested by Mr Ryan Park.**

### Consideration in Detail

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch):** By leave: I shall propose the amendments in one group of clauses and schedules.

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (18:55):** By leave: I move Opposition amendments Nos 1 to 20 on sheet C2017-007A in globo:

**No. 1 Description of levy**

Page 27, clause 78 (3), lines 16 and 17. Omit all words on those lines. Insert instead "The levy is to be described as the 'NSW Government Fire and Emergency Services Levy—this is a NSW Government charge' or as the 'NSW Government FESL—this is a NSW Government charge'. The description may include a reference to the".

**No. 2 Payments by Commonwealth lessees**

Page 48. Insert after line 34:

**151 Report on negotiations with Commonwealth lessees**

(1) The Minister is to negotiate with Commonwealth lessees for the purpose of securing contributions from them in lieu of the levy.

(2) A report on the outcome or progress of those negotiations is to be tabled in each House of Parliament by 30 November 2017.

(3) In this section:  
*Commonwealth lessee* means a lessee of land owned by the Commonwealth.

**No. 3 Liable State owned corporations**

Page 55, Schedule 3, clause 6 (5). Insert after line 17:

(d) TransGrid.

**No. 4 Land treated as Government land**

Page 55, Schedule 3, clause 6 (6) (a), line 20. Omit all words on that line.

**No. 5 Extension of price monitoring period**

Page 58, Schedule 4.1. Insert after line 31:

**[5] Section 10 Price monitoring**

Omit section 10 (3). Insert instead:

(3) For the purposes of subsection (2), the monitoring period is the period commencing on 1 July 2012 and ending on the beginning of the day that this Act is repealed.

**No. 6 Investigation of over-collection under scheme**

Page 59, Schedule 4.1 [9], lines 21 and 22. Omit all words on those lines. Insert instead:

*final 5 years of the scheme* means the financial years commencing on 1 July 2012, 1 July 2013, 1 July 2014, 1 July 2015 and 1 July 2016.

**No. 7 Investigation of over-collection under scheme**

Page 59, Schedule 4.1 [9], line 38. Omit "final 2 years". Insert instead "final 5 years".

**No. 8 Investigation of over-collection under scheme**

Page 60, Schedule 4.1 [9], line 4. Omit "final 2 years". Insert instead "final 5 years".

**No. 9 Investigation of over-collection under scheme**

Page 60, Schedule 4.1 [9], line 9. Omit "final 2-year". Insert instead "final 5-year".

**No. 10 Investigation of over-collection under scheme**

Page 60, Schedule 4.1 [9], line 11. Omit "final 2-year". Insert instead "final 5-year".

No. 11 **Investigation of over-collection under scheme**

Page 60, Schedule 4.1 [9], line 13. Omit "final 2-year". Insert instead "final 5-year".

No. 12 **Term of Emergency Services Levy Insurance Monitor**

Page 63, Schedule 4.1. Insert after line 23:

**[14] Section 79 Repeal of Act**

Omit "1 January 2019". Insert instead "1 July 2022".

No. 13 **Statutory review of Monitor**

Page 63, Schedule 4.1. Insert after line 23:

**[14] Section 80**

Insert after section 79:

**80 Review of Monitor**

- (1) The Minister is to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the Monitor and of the exercise of the Monitor's functions under Part 3A.
- (2) The review is to be undertaken as close as practicable to the date that is 6 months before the repeal of this Act.
- (3) A report on the outcome of the review is to be tabled in each House of Parliament as soon as practicable after its completion and, in any case, no later than 3 months before the repeal of this Act.

No. 14 **Term of Emergency Services Levy Insurance Monitor**

Page 63, Schedule 4.1. Insert after line 23:

**[14] Schedule 1 Provisions relating to Monitor and Deputy Monitor**

Omit clause 3. Insert instead:

**3 Terms of office**

- (1) The Monitor holds office for the period specified in the Monitor's instrument of appointment.
- (2) The term of office of the person holding office as Monitor immediately before the substitution of this clause by the Fire and Emergency Services Levy Act 2017 ends on 31 December 2018. However, that person may be re-appointed as Monitor.
- (3) The Deputy Monitor holds office for the period specified in the Deputy Monitor's instrument of appointment.
- (4) The term of office of the person holding office as Deputy Monitor immediately before the substitution of this clause by the Fire and Emergency Services Levy Act 2017 ends on 31 December 2018. However, that person may be re-appointed as Deputy Monitor.
- (5) The term of office for which the Monitor or Deputy Monitor is appointed or re-appointed must expire on or before the date of repeal of this Act.

No. 15 **Investigation of over-collection under scheme**

Page 73, Schedule 4.2 [19], lines 17–34. Omit all words on those lines. Insert instead:

**37 Commissioner to make final 5-year assessment**

- (1) The Commissioner must make an assessment, in relation to each insurance company that was required to make fire brigade contributions in any of the final 5 years of the scheme, of the total amount of fire brigade contributions payable by the insurance company for the final 5 years of the scheme (a *final 5-year assessment*).
- (2) The final 5-year assessment is to consist of the total of the following amounts, as assessed by the Commissioner:
  - (a) the final contribution payable by the insurance company for the final year of the scheme (excluding any insurer loading payable by the insurance company),
  - (b) the total of fire brigade contributions payable by the insurance company for the financial years commencing on 1 July 2012, 1 July 2013, 1 July 2014 and 1 July 2015.
- (3) The Commissioner is to give the final 5-year assessment to the Monitor.

- (4) The Commissioner must give to the Monitor a final 5-year assessment in relation to an insurance company within 30 days after making an assessment of the final contribution payable by the insurance company for the final year of the scheme.
- (5) In this clause:  
*final 5 years of the scheme* means the financial years commencing 1 July 2012, 1 July 2013, 1 July 2014, 1 July 2015 and 1 July 2016.
- No. 16 **Investigation of over-collection under scheme**  
Page 73, Schedule 4.2 [19], line 40. Omit "final 2-year". Insert instead "final 5-year".
- No. 17 **Investigation of over-collection under scheme**  
Pages 84 and 85, Schedule 4.6 [20], line 38 on page 84 to line 10 on page 85. Omit all words on those lines. Insert instead:
- 35 Commissioner to make final 5-year assessment**
- (1) The Commissioner must make an assessment, in relation to each insurance company that was required to make rural fire brigade contributions in any of the final 5 years of the scheme, of the total amount of rural fire brigade contributions payable by the insurance company for the final 5 years of the scheme (a *final 5-year assessment*).
- (2) The final 5-year assessment is to consist of the total of the following amounts, as assessed by the Commissioner:
- (a) the final contribution payable by the insurance company for the final year of the scheme (excluding any insurer loading payable by the insurance company),
- (b) the total of Rural Fire Brigade contributions payable by the insurance company for the financial years commencing on 1 July 2012, 1 July 2013, 1 July 2014 and 1 July 2015.
- (3) The Commissioner is to give the final 5-year assessment to the Monitor.
- (4) The Commissioner must give to the Monitor a final 5-year assessment in relation to an insurance company within 30 days after making an assessment of the final contribution payable by the insurance company for the final year of the scheme.
- (5) In this clause:  
*final 5 years of the scheme* means the financial years commencing 1 July 2012, 1 July 2013, 1 July 2014, 1 July 2015 and 1 July 2016.
- No. 18 **Investigation of over-collection under scheme**  
Page 85, Schedule 4.6 [20], line 16. Omit "final 2-year". Insert instead "final 5-year".
- No. 19 **Investigation of over-collection under scheme**  
Pages 94 and 95, Schedule 4.7 [21], line 44 on page 94 to line 15 on page 95. Omit all words on those lines. Insert instead:
- 19 Commissioner to make final 5-year assessment**
- (1) The Commissioner must make an assessment, in relation to each insurance company that was required to make SES contributions in any of the final 5 years of the scheme, of the total amount of SES contributions payable by the insurance company for the final 5 years of the scheme (a *final 5-year assessment*).
- (2) The final 5-year assessment is to consist of the total of the following amounts, as assessed by the Commissioner:
- (a) the final contribution payable by the insurance company for the final year of the scheme (excluding any insurer loading payable by the insurance company),
- (b) the total of SES contributions payable by the insurance company for the financial years commencing on 1 July 2012, 1 July 2013, 1 July 2014 and 1 July 2015.
- (3) The Commissioner is to give the final 5-year assessment to the Monitor.
- (4) The Commissioner must give to the Monitor a final 5-year assessment in relation to an insurance company within 30 days after making an assessment of the final contribution payable by the insurance company for the final year of the scheme.
- (5) In this clause:  
*final 5 years of the scheme* means the financial years commencing 1 July 2012, 1 July 2013, 1 July 2014, 1 July 2015 and 1 July 2016.
- No. 20 **Investigation of over-collection under scheme**  
Page 95, Schedule 4.7 [21], line 21. Omit "final 2-year". Insert instead "final 5-year".

I acknowledge the Treasurer's comments and the briefing that I received from Treasury officials—some I know and some I do not. As discussed in detail in my contribution to the second reading debate, I thank Treasury and the Treasurer for allowing that to take place. The Opposition believes the amendments are sensible reforms that

will enhance the bill from an economic perspective. The Opposition understands that from an economic theorist perspective it makes sense to broaden the base, but it believes the proposed amendments will enhance the bill. I thank the shadow Ministers involved and their staff, and the various stakeholders who have contributed to this detailed legislation. It is a large-scale reform and the Opposition will monitor it carefully. That is the spirit upon which it has moved these amendments.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch):** The question is that Opposition amendments Nos 1 to 20 on sheet C2017-007A be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....34  
Noes .....44  
Majority..... 10

**AYES**

Aitchison, Ms J	Atalla, Mr E	Barr, Mr C
Car, Ms P	Catley, Ms Y	Chanthivong, Mr A
Cotsis, Ms S	Crakanthorp, Mr T	Daley, Mr M
Dib, Mr J	Donato, Mr P	Doyle, Ms T
Finn, Ms J	Greenwich, Mr A	Harris, Mr D
Harrison, Ms J	Haylen, Ms J	Kamper, Mr S
Lalich, Mr N (teller)	Leong, Ms J	Lynch, Mr P
McDermott, Dr H	McKay, Ms J	Mehan, Mr D
Mihailuk, Ms T	Minns, Mr C	Park, Mr R
Piper, Mr G	Robertson, Mr J	Scully, Mr P
Smith, Ms T F	Warren, Mr G	Washington, Ms K
Watson, Ms A (teller)		

**NOES**

Anderson, Mr K	Aplin, Mr G	Barilaro, Mr J
Berejiklian, Ms G	Bromhead, Mr S (teller)	Conolly, Mr K
Constance, Mr A	Coure, Mr M	Davies, Ms T
Dominello, Mr V	Elliott, Mr D	Evans, Mr L
Fraser, Mr A	Gibbons, Ms M	Goward, Ms P
Grant, Mr T	Gulaptis, Mr C	Hazzard, Mr B
Henskens, Mr A	Humphries, Mr K	Johnsen, Mr M
Kean, Mr M	Lee, Dr G	Maguire, Mr D
Marshall, Mr A	Notley-Smith, Mr B	O'Dea, Mr J
Patterson, Mr C (teller)	Pavey, Mrs M	Perrottet, Mr D
Petinos, Ms E	Piccoli, Mr A	Provest, Mr G
Roberts, Mr A	Rowell, Mr J	Sidoti, Mr J
Speakman, Mr M	Stokes, Mr R	Taylor, Mr M
Toole, Mr P	Upton, Ms G	Ward, Mr G
Williams, Mr R	Williams, Mrs L	

**PAIRS**

Foley, Mr L	Hancock, Mrs S
Hoening, Mr R	Ayres, Mr S
Hornery, Ms S	Tudehope, Mr D
Zangari, Mr G	Hodgkinson, Ms K

**Amendments negatived.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch):** The question is that clauses 1 to 150 be agreed to.

**Clauses 1 to 150 agreed to.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch):** The question is that schedules 1 to 4 be agreed to.

**Schedules 1 to 4 agreed to.****Third Reading****Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....47  
 Noes .....31  
 Majority.....16

**AYES**

Anderson, Mr K	Aplin, Mr G	Barilaro, Mr J
Berejiklian, Ms G	Bromhead, Mr S (teller)	Conolly, Mr K
Constance, Mr A	Coure, Mr M	Davies, Ms T
Dominello, Mr V	Donato, Mr P	Elliott, Mr D
Evans, Mr L	Fraser, Mr A	George, Mr T
Gibbons, Ms M	Goward, Ms P	Grant, Mr T
Gulaptis, Mr C	Hazzard, Mr B	Henskens, Mr A
Humphries, Mr K	Johnsen, Mr M	Kean, Mr M
Lee, Dr G	Maguire, Mr D	Marshall, Mr A
Notley-Smith, Mr B	O'Dea, Mr J	Patterson, Mr C (teller)
Pavey, Mrs M	Perrottet, Mr D	Petinos, Ms E
Piccoli, Mr A	Piper, Mr G	Provost, Mr G
Roberts, Mr A	Rowell, Mr J	Sidoti, Mr J
Speakman, Mr M	Stokes, Mr R	Taylor, Mr M
Toole, Mr P	Upton, Ms G	Ward, Mr G
Williams, Mr R	Williams, Mrs L	

**NOES**

Aitchison, Ms J	Atalla, Mr E	Barr, Mr C
Car, Ms P	Catley, Ms Y	Chanthivong, Mr A
Cotsis, Ms S	Crakanthorp, Mr T	Daley, Mr M
Dib, Mr J	Doyle, Ms T	Finn, Ms J
Harris, Mr D	Harrison, Ms J	Haylen, Ms J
Kamper, Mr S	Lalich, Mr N (teller)	Leong, Ms J
Lynch, Mr P	McDermott, Dr H	McKay, Ms J
Mehan, Mr D	Mihailuk, Ms T	Minns, Mr C
Park, Mr R	Robertson, Mr J	Scully, Mr P
Smith, Ms T F	Warren, Mr G	Washington, Ms K
Watson, Ms A (teller)		

**PAIRS**

Ayres, Mr S	Hoenig, Mr R
Hancock, Mrs S	Zangari, Mr G
Hodgkinson, Ms K	Foley, Mr L
Tudehope, Mr D	Hornery, Ms S

**Motion agreed to.****GREYHOUND RACING BILL 2017****First Reading****Bill introduced on motion by Mr Paul Toole, read a first time and printed.**

## Second Reading

### **Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Lands and Forestry, and Minister for Racing) (19:14):**

I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Greyhound Racing Bill 2017 is critical to securing the future of the greyhound industry in New South Wales. This bill does two things. First, it repeals the Greyhound Racing Prohibition Act 2016. In doing so, it removes the legislated prohibition on greyhound racing in New South Wales which would otherwise come into effect from 1 July 2017. Secondly, it sets the foundations and governance arrangements for a sustainable greyhound racing industry with the highest animal welfare and integrity standards in the country. The Government and many people in the industry have made it clear that together we must address issues of overbreeding, live baiting, high levels of injury and the euthanasia of healthy dogs.

This Government has listened to the community, which wants the industry to have the opportunity to prove it can operate appropriately. It is clear that the community wants the industry to provide jobs and continue to make a valuable economic and social contribution to this State. Nowhere is that sentiment felt more strongly than in parts of regional New South Wales where greyhound racing is the source of direct and indirect employment for so many and where clubs exercise an important social function in bringing people together and providing services to the community. We have listened to community and engaged with the industry to find a sustainable way forward for greyhound racing in New South Wales.

Many of us want to see a strong greyhound industry and many of us are sickened by those who do the wrong thing. We have seen the work of the special commission of inquiry and the work headed by Dr John Keniry. We also acknowledge the genuine willingness of the industry to change its ways. And it was also clear that sections of the community supported giving the industry a final chance to reform. The Government listened to all those concerns and announced that the industry would be given a further chance to prove itself. In doing so, the Government also made it very clear that there can be no return to the status quo. Live baiting, cruel treatment and unnecessary killing of healthy dogs will not be tolerated.

In October 2016 the New South Wales Government established the Greyhound Industry Reform Panel. The panel was asked to recommend a new regime that would allow the industry to continue while applying the strictest animal welfare standards in the country. The panel was chaired by former Premier Morris Iemma and included the chief executive officer of the RSPCA NSW, the chief executive officer of the Greyhound Alliance, the New South Wales Chief Veterinary Officer and a deputy secretary from the Department of Premier and Cabinet. The panel submitted its report to Government in February 2017, and made 122 recommendations. I will highlight something important. Of the 122 recommendations, the RSPCA and industry representatives failed to agree on just two recommendations and even then their respective positions were not miles apart. I think that is remarkable and I thank both parties for the way in which they approached this work.

In summary, the panel's reforms involve a new governance framework that separates the commercial and regulatory functions of the industry, a comprehensive and best practice animal welfare plan, registration and accreditation requirements for industry participants and new offences and stronger penalties for animal cruelty. The Government will implement all but one of the recommendations put forward by the panel in its report delivered to the Government earlier this year. The one recommendation not accepted relates to the form of the commercial entity, that is, while the panel proposed Greyhound Racing NSW be reconstituted as a statutory state-owned corporation, under this bill it will remain a body corporate that does not represent the Crown. This is a more administratively appropriate form for the body.

This bill introduces new governance, regulatory and animal welfare arrangements and will build trust in the integrity of the greyhound racing industry. These arrangements will set the benchmark for all other jurisdictions. The bill will separate the regulatory and commercial functions currently being carried out by Greyhound Racing NSW. This will minimise potential conflicts between the commercial imperatives of industry and animal welfare considerations. This separation will help build the community's confidence in the industry.

To perform the regulatory functions, a new integrity commission will be established. It will set standards, register participants, and supervise and regulate greyhound racing across New South Wales. The Minister for Racing will be responsible for the commercial entity and the integrity commission, with the Minister for Primary Industries having a concurrence role for the commission on certain key animal welfare related decisions. This governance model is consistent with ministerial arrangements in Queensland. The Government is confident that the bill will put in place appropriate checks and balances to ensure that we have a thriving greyhound industry that adheres to the highest animal welfare standards in the world.

I now turn to the substance of the bill. The bill is divided into nine parts. Part 1 of the bill provides preliminary information. Part 2 of the bill will establish a greyhound welfare and integrity commission, which will promote and protect the welfare of greyhounds, safeguard the integrity of greyhound racing and breeding, and maintain public confidence in the greyhound racing industry. The integrity commission will be led by a chief commissioner and will supervise and regulate greyhound racing across New South Wales. The chief commissioner will be supported by two other commissioners, one of whom must have been an Australian lawyer for at least seven years. Commissioners will be appointed by the Governor on the recommendation of the Minister for Racing and with the agreement of the Minister for Primary Industries.

To ensure that the integrity commission operates independently and transparently, a person will not be eligible to be appointed as a commissioner if the person is or has at any time been a greyhound racing industry participant. A chief executive will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the commission and the implementation of the commissioner's decisions. The commission will initiate, develop and implement policies and standards relating to the welfare of greyhounds. It will also undertake research and investigations of best industry practice. The commission will also be responsible for monitoring and enforcing compliance with the regulatory framework, including the greyhound racing rules. The bill makes it clear that the Government is committed to ensuring that the greyhound industry operates under the highest animal welfare standards in this country.

Part 3 of the bill provides the operation of the reconstituted Greyhound Racing NSW. Greyhound Racing NSW will be responsible for developing greyhound racing in New South Wales as a competitive and sustainable industry. It will be independent of the Crown and does not represent the State. It will have significant autonomy in determining how to structure the industry in order to achieve commercial sustainability. It has been afforded a number of responsibilities through this bill, including for: conducting greyhound race meetings or authorising greyhound race meetings to be conducted by greyhound racing clubs, developing track safety standards and operating the greyhounds as pets adoption program.

Greyhound Racing NSW will be required to hold an operating licence to authorise its role as the industry's commercial body. This will provide autonomy to meet its commercial imperatives and manage daily operations, while still allowing the Government to set the high order requirements and conditions for the industry's operation. The Minister for Racing will be able to issue, amend, suspend or cancel the commercial body's licence. Prior to doing so, the Minister must consult with the integrity commission. This provides a mechanism for the Government to take action where, for example, the commercial entity is found to be breaching its licence or the integrity commission identifies matters of concern.

I now turn to part 4 of the bill, which builds on the establishment of the integrity commission. The bill creates a strong welfare framework for those greyhounds involved in the industry. Part 4 of the bill creates a greyhound industry animal welfare committee to provide advice to the commission. The five-person committee will provide advice to the integrity commission, including as the enforceable code of practice relating to the welfare of greyhounds is developed. The code of practice will address standards for keeping, treatment, handling and care of industry greyhounds. It will also set standards for the facilities, equipment and conditions at premises where greyhounds are kept, trained or raced.

The commission may make compliance with the code of practice a condition of registration for industry participants, and any contraventions may constitute grounds for disciplinary action such as deregistration. For balance and appropriate scrutiny, the code must be signed off by both the Minister for Racing and the Minister for Primary Industries. Breaches of the code will be dealt with through new penalties, including: infringement notices, fines, suspension or disqualification. There will also be the option of prosecution action, with a potential jail term of two years for some offences.

The bill also amends other legislation. For example, schedule 6 to the bill inserts a new offence of serious animal cruelty into the Crimes Act with a maximum penalty of three years imprisonment. The offence for live baiting under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 will be strengthened to prohibit the use of animal carcasses or products in training greyhounds. These changes address the significant evidentiary issues that have been faced previously in prosecuting alleged live baiting offenders. The problem of live baiting will also be addressed in other ways.

Clause 40 of the bill puts in place a life ban where a person is found guilty of committing a live baiting offence under either the Crimes Act or the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. This disqualification will provide a significant disincentive to doing the wrong thing. Clause 41 of the bill prohibits keeping at the same time both greyhounds and animals that could be used as a lure. The offence carries a maximum penalty of \$110,000 for corporations and for individuals \$22,000 or imprisonment for two years or both. The commission is permitted to make an exemption order to these requirements in very limited circumstances. However, no exemptions will be allowed for the keeping of possums or rabbits.

In summary, greyhound welfare is the centrepiece of this bill and the Government's reforms. The combination of a new integrity commission, a greyhound industry animal welfare committee, an enforceable code of practice and strengthened live baiting offences demonstrate the Government's commitment to implementing the highest possible animal welfare standards in the industry. I now turn to part 5 of the bill, which sets out the control and regulation of the greyhound industry. This bill introduces a new registration framework that will improve transparency over the industry and enable the commission to implement whole-of-lifecycle tracking for every greyhound that enters and exits the industry. The bill requires all greyhounds involved in the racing industry to be registered. It will be an offence to fail to register a greyhound or not update the register as required.

Registration will be crucial in addressing overbreeding and unnecessary euthanasia of greyhounds. The bill will allow for an up-front bond for each registered greyhound to be paid to the commission, coupled with an ongoing registration fee. The bond would be transferable with ownership and will be refundable in prescribed circumstances—for example, if the greyhound is successfully rehomed or dies of natural causes. The bond will increase the financial value of greyhounds bred for the purposes of potential use in the greyhound racing industry. Importantly it will also assist in reducing unnecessary euthanasia of greyhounds and ensuring that all greyhounds bred are adequately cared for. The bill requires all greyhound racing industry participants to be registered with the commission. This includes persons who own, keep or breed greyhounds that are or are intended to be used for the purposes of greyhound racing. It also includes greyhound trainers, greyhound handlers, greyhound racing bookmakers and bookmakers' clerks, and persons who provide prescribed health services to registered greyhounds.

The commission will be able to impose conditions on any registration, including, for example, to require industry participants to comply with the code of practice for the welfare of greyhounds and to participate in education programs. This will help to ensure all participants understand their obligations to animal welfare and can be held accountable. Evidence provided to the commission of inquiry highlighted the questionable practices of "muscle men", who are often used as a cheap alternative to veterinary care. The bill will tighten oversight around such practices and ensure persons acting as greyhound health assistants are registered with the commission and regulated as industry participants. This will assist with ensuring they are acting within their capabilities and not denying a greyhound the treatment it requires.

The Government is also committed to stamping out the cruel practice of live baiting. The bill requires all greyhound trial tracks to be registered with the commission. The commission can also require the use of closed-circuit television as a condition of registration. Knowing where these facilities are and understanding their usage will improve oversight of the industry's training practices. The bill allows for the commission, in consultation with Greyhound Racing NSW, to make rules, including in relation to the conduct of greyhound race meetings, education and training requirements, the breeding of greyhounds and the functions of stewards. The commission may take disciplinary action for any contraventions of the greyhound racing rules, as outlined in part 6 of the bill.

Part 6 of the bill outlines a variety of disciplinary actions that can be taken by the integrity commission and by Greyhound Racing NSW. The integrity commission may take disciplinary action for any contraventions of relevant legislation, regulation, code or rule. Disciplinary action can also be taken if the commission is of the opinion that a person is no longer fit or proper to be registered. The integrity commission can impose sanctions, including suspending or cancelling registration. It may impose conditions on a registration, impose a fine of up to \$22,000, disqualify or warn off a person, or prohibit persons or greyhounds from participating in greyhound racing.

The bill provides that Greyhound Racing NSW may take disciplinary action against racing clubs, such as for non-compliance with a direction issued or a minimum standard set by Greyhound Racing NSW. Like the commission, Greyhound Racing NSW will be able to suspend, cancel or impose conditions on a club's registration. It may also issue fines of up to \$22,000 or disqualify or warn off any official of a club. Division 3 of part 6 allows for complaints to the commission, including with respect to functions carried out by Greyhound Racing NSW officials. It allows for the commission to investigate and report to the Minister as appropriate.

I now turn to part 7 of the bill, which outlines the strengthened investigation and enforcement powers available to the integrity commission. We know that both industry and the community want to remove the unsavoury elements of the sport. These powers help to make that happen. In the first instance, the integrity commission will be able to appoint inspectors. The bill also allows the commission to enter into arrangements with the police and animal welfare bodies to exercise inspector functions to better detect and respond to animal welfare offences. Strict eligibility requirements will be applied to inspectors to ensure independence and appropriate probity.

The bill contains a suite of new investigation powers. Inspectors will have powers to require information and records, enter and search premises at any reasonable time, inspect and seize objects, and apply for search

warrants. Appropriately, inspectors will not be able to enter any part of premises used only for residential purposes without the consent of the occupier or the authority of a search warrant. These new powers will also allow inspectors to take photographs, films, audio, video and other recordings. These powers will enable inspectors to effectively monitor and enforce compliance with the new regime and ensure those who are doing the wrong thing are held accountable for their actions. However, there will be limitations on these powers to safeguard rights and privileges.

To ensure these new powers can be executed and our inspectors can do their jobs, we are creating offences for failing to comply, without reasonable excuse, with a requirement of an inspector; providing false or misleading information; intentionally delaying or obstructing inspectors; assaulting, threatening or abusing inspectors; and impersonating inspectors. These new offences will attract maximum penalties of up to 100 penalty units—\$11,000—and, for some offences, imprisonment for six months. The offences in this part of the bill aim to promote cooperation with inspectors so that they are able to effectively discharge their functions under the new regime and create a framework of compliance.

Part 8 of the bill sets up a framework for inquiries that can be conducted by the integrity commission into any matter relating to the greyhound racing industry. Either the Minister for Racing or the integrity commission can determine that an inquiry will be conducted. The concurrence of the Minister for Primary Industries is required where an inquiry is to be related to animal welfare. Importantly, the bill specifies that inquiries will be public and transparent. Part 9 of the bill covers a range of miscellaneous but important matters. To ensure that the new integrity commission, local councils, animal welfare bodies and the New South Wales police can effectively work together the bill allows for information sharing arrangements to be put in place. This key new provision will allow for a range of information about greyhounds to be shared—for example, whether a greyhound is registered under the Companion Animals Act—so appropriate action can be taken and agencies can work together cooperatively.

Appropriately, the bill ensures individuals who are aggrieved by a reviewable decision made by the commission or a steward can seek an internal review. This new internal review right is in addition to any right of appeal a person has under the Racing Appeals Tribunal Act 1983. Another change will enable all management members of a syndicate to be held accountable for breaches of the Act, regulations, code of practice or rules of racing—including the potential for prosecution or disciplinary action. Finally, this part of the Act contains a regulation-making power and a provision requiring a statutory review of the Act three years following assent. This is consistent with the reform panel's recommendations. The review will assess the effectiveness of the reforms in improving animal welfare outcomes. The bill allows for the review to be comprehensive. It will cover the appropriateness of a target for unnecessary euthanasia of greyhounds and a breeding cap and will use the comprehensive data collected by the commission through the new greyhound racing register.

This bill reflects the outcomes of exhaustive public inquiry and stakeholder engagement over the past several years. This includes a 2014 parliamentary inquiry. It includes the work undertaken through the special commission chaired by Justice McHugh, the work undertaken by Dr John Keniry through the task force and the work that the Greyhound Reform Panel undertook under the leadership of former Premier Morris Iemma. Members representing the RSPCA and the Greyhound Alliance were encouraged to talk to their stakeholders and voice issues raised by those stakeholders during the panel's discussions.

Implementing the new governance, welfare and integrity arrangements outlined in this bill will present challenges. These will be in terms of both the logistics of moving to the new arrangements and the financial support that is required to enable the industry to adjust to the new governance, animal welfare and integrity requirements. Separating the welfare and integrity and commercial functions of the two new bodies will take time. In the short term it will involve some sharing of functions as recruitment for the integrity commission is undertaken, information technology systems are established and registration of participants is completed. As the new entities become operational, there will be a focus on developing the central pillars of the new arrangements, particularly the rules of racing, the animal welfare code of practice and track safety standards. It is expected that all aspects of the new arrangements will be finalised before the middle of 2018, with a statutory review occurring by the middle of 2020.

When the greyhound industry asked the Government to give it an opportunity to reform, it said that it could implement the requisite animal welfare standards within the existing resources. With the release of the panel report, some individuals raised concerns that the costs of the new arrangement would be too high and could impact on the industry's sustainability. It is important to remember that right now, under the current arrangements, the industry is responsible for funding the integrity, welfare and commercial functions of Greyhound Racing NSW. In effect, the new arrangements are a continuation of the status quo.

I have heard greatly exaggerated statements about what these new rules and governance arrangements will do to the industry. These fears are overstated. The new arrangements will not be setting the industry up to fail. That is not, and was never, the intention. I emphasise again the Government's acknowledgement of the

important social and economic contribution that the greyhound racing industry makes to New South Wales and, in particular, to regional New South Wales. The panel report acknowledged that the new arrangements would result in increased costs to industry and that a pathway to sustainability was necessary. Recognising these real concerns, funding will be provided to support the transition process. This will be directed at offsetting the start-up and operational costs of the new integrity body, as well as capital contributions to support the upgrade of infrastructure to meet new safety and animal welfare standards.

On the operational side, a public contribution of \$11 million will be provided towards the costs of regulation. Funding will commence in 2017-18 and will continue for the next four years. This contribution is based on the bottom-up development of what the new welfare and integrity commission will need in its initial set-up phase, its staffing requirements and associated staffing costs, and realistic assumptions of additional non-staff costs. In terms of capital funding, \$30 million over five years has been proposed as appropriate to meet minimum requirements for capital upgrades. This bill aims to fundamentally reform the regulation of greyhound racing in this State. As I have outlined, the provisions in the bill demonstrate the Government's commitment to upholding the highest possible standards of animal welfare, governance and integrity in the greyhound racing industry. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

*Private Members' Statements*

**TRANSIT SYSTEMS INDUSTRIAL ACTION**

**Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) (19:42):** On Tuesday 7 March 2016 in my electorate of Cabramatta bus drivers working for Transit Systems took part in two stop-work actions—from 7.00 a.m. to 8.00 a.m. and from 2.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m. These actions were taken to protest the lack of pay increases over the past 2½ years. The drivers were not receiving additional pay yet Transit Systems had received funding of more than \$1 million from the New South Wales Government for wage increases. The disruptions along our bus routes, which were during peak travel times for students travelling to and from school, were the result of this Government's failure to ensure that Transit Systems bus drivers were receiving those taxpayer funds.

Some 15 schools in the Cabramatta electorate were affected. It is of the utmost importance that students attend school on a daily basis. Put simply, this situation is just not good enough. The incompetence of the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure and the Berejiklian Government has once again let the students in my local community down—for example, the multi-million dollar school maintenance backlog in Cabramatta schools; the funding of dodgy private colleges; the shambolic changes to TAFE colleges; and now the Government's failure to ensure that Transit Systems bus drivers receive the pay rises they deserve. These stop-work actions also had a substantial impact on my community; most of the bus routes that run through Cabramatta were impacted. Where is the transport Minister? What is he doing to rectify this situation?

The Government has a lot to answer for in failing to prevent this stop-work action. For two years it has sat on the sidelines while negotiations for a pay increase for these bus drivers took place. It has stood by while this company kept taxpayer funding intended to be used for wage increases whilst its workers continued to go about their jobs for the benefit of the community. I do not blame the Transit Systems bus drivers for wanting to earn a decent wage—they have not had a pay increase in the past 2½ years. They are seeking pay parity with the rest of the industry, which this taxpayer funding ought to have addressed. I urge the Government to put pressure on Transit Systems to pass on the additional funding to its employees who rain, hail or shine deliver quality bus services to commuters in this State and the Cabramatta electorate. Our students, our elderly citizens and our community needs certainty. The Government can provide that certainty by pressuring Transit Systems to pass on the taxpayer funding it has received from the New South Wales Government. Surely it is not too much to ask that bus drivers who provide an important service to our community be well paid.

**ASSYRIAN NEW YEAR**

**Ms TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Women, and Minister for Ageing) (19:45):** I inform the House about an extraordinary anniversary that our community is preparing to celebrate on 2 April 2017. This Sunday the Assyrian community will celebrate the 6,767th Assyrian New Year. Together with many other community and cultural groups we will join together with our Assyrian-Australian friends to celebrate this incredible milestone. It is an amazing achievement to reflect upon one group of people which has been in continuous existence throughout many challenges, attacks and changes across the centuries. It is astounding that for 6,767 years the Assyrian people have a documented and clearly defined history of artefacts, writings, genealogy, buildings and inventions.

This Sunday at Fairfield Showground a community family fun day and formal proceedings will celebrate this special day in the ancient Assyrian calendar and help to keep a tradition inherited from their forefathers alive.

Many in our community would not be aware of the impact of the ancient Assyrian people throughout millennia. One cannot imagine leaving home without locking the door—it was in Assyria where locks and keys were first used. One cannot imagine driving without paved roads—except some of my Nationals colleagues. It was in Assyria where paved roads were first used. The list goes on, including the first postal system, the first use of iron, the first magnifying glasses, the first libraries, the first plumbing and flush toilets, the first electric batteries, the first guitars, the first aqueducts, the first arch construction design and so on.

Ideas that would shape the world also originated in Assyria—for example, the idea of imperial administration of dividing the land into territories administered by local governors who report to a central authority. This fundamental model of administration has survived to this day. The 6,767 years of Assyrian history can be divided into six historic periods. The most recent historical period, from 1918 A.D. to the present time, is called Diaspora—the scattering of people away from an ancestral homeland. Sadly, in this century Assyrians have suffered massive genocide, they have lost control of their ancestral lands and they are in a struggle for survival. Many Assyrians living in the Middle East are suffering. They are being forced to leave their lands, churches, businesses, and in some cases their families, in order to survive.

Assyrian New Year is a time when Assyrians will consider with great concern and anxiety the future, especially for fellow Assyrians in their homeland of the Middle East. Whilst we take this time to celebrate the greatness of the Assyrian people, their resilience and culture, it is also a time to make our Assyrian New Year resolution to commit all our efforts to help alleviate the plight of Assyrians in the Middle East and bring an end to their persecution. We hope and pray that Iraq will restore its stability and security so that all citizens can return to their way of life and build a quality lifestyle in which individuals are able to achieve their personal best. We hope that Assyrians, Iraqis, Syrians and all other groups may have the opportunities we have in Australia to live life to the fullest. I congratulate all Assyrian community leaders who have worked tirelessly with all levels of governments of both persuasions. They have stood with the Assyrian people and recognised their plight to live in harmony in their homeland.

I congratulate the Assyrian Australian community on their historic efforts for an announcement some years ago about a proposed plan for a Nineveh Plain province for Christians of Iraq by the Government of Iraq. The Assyrian New Year is organised by the Assyrian Universal Alliance Australian Chapter and the Assyrian Australian National Federation. With assistance and support from the Young Assyrians, Fairfield City Council, numerous other businesses and individual sponsors, the event draws up to and above 20,000 people to celebrate the Assyrian New Year as one community.

I personally thank two very hardworking and dedicated leaders of the Assyrian community, Mr Hermiz Shahan, Deputy Secretary General of the Assyrian Universal Alliance, and Mr David David, President of the Assyrian Australian National Federation, for their steadfast advocacy and leadership on behalf of their Assyrian communities. I look forward to joining with the Assyrian community to celebrate and reflect upon their achievements and the challenges at hand. I stand with them and their families and continue to uphold their cause in prayer and activity. As chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Assyria I stand in proud leadership in the parliamentary ranks to highlight the plight of Assyrians in and around the Middle East and call on governments across the world to stand united to support them in their homeland.

#### **CAMPBELLTOWN ELECTORATE PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (19:51):** I draw the attention of the House to the ongoing public transport issues in Campbelltown and the broader Macarthur area and more specifically the train and bus services issues. As I have stated many times, Campbelltown is one of the fastest growing regions in the State. Massive increases in population are projected for the area over the next two decades and beyond. The Baird and now Berejiklian governments have not acknowledged these problems or taken the appropriate action. The problems will only get worse as our population grows unless significant action is taken. I have seen firsthand the struggles of university students who have to wait hours for a bus to the University of Wollongong only to find it dangerously overcrowded and be forced to stand as they travel the notorious Appin Road.

I have spoken with commuters who are forced to swelter in summer and freeze in winter because as many as one in four trains leaving Campbelltown is not air conditioned, which is inconsistent with the Government's promise in 2011. I and many other members know that local commuters will suffer greatly as a result of the Government's recent decision to cut all direct train services to Liverpool, Blacktown and Parramatta. The 887 bus service between Campbelltown and Wollongong is unreliable. It is overcrowded and does not run nearly frequently enough. Students, workers and pensioners are being packed into those buses. It has become a constant issue that impacts far more people than I feel the Minister and the Premier realise.

I am constantly bombarded with complaints from not only students but also parents and guardians who are genuinely concerned for their children's safety. Students are left stranded on campus for up to three hours with

no bus home and are then forced to cram into an overcrowded bus when it finally comes. It is clear that the Government simply must take action. I have made endless representations about this problem to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure to ensure the voices of students affected by the inadequate service are heard loud and clear. Despite the numerous representations that I and many in our local community have made, the Government takes no action. I acknowledge the Government's concerns and responses but they are clearly inconsistent with the expectations and requirements of commuters.

The Government's inaction for public transport users in Campbelltown is not limited to University of Wollongong students. Earlier this year Campbelltown, along with the rest of the State and the country, experienced extreme heatwave conditions. Recent media reports have indicated that on days where the temperature outside was around 35 degrees Celsius—well below the recorded high temperatures experienced on some days earlier this year—the temperature inside non air-conditioned train carriages in Campbelltown exceeded 50 degrees Celsius. Much like the 887 bus issue, I have been inundated with complaints from commuters who have suffered in sweltering conditions on older trains despite the Government announcement almost three years ago that every train service in Sydney would be air conditioned. A freedom of information request I lodged earlier this year revealed that as many as one in four trains leaving Campbelltown is not air conditioned, which is completely inconsistent with the Government's claims.

One month ago the Government announced that it would end all Cumberland and South line services at Leppington station, rather than continuing them through to Campbelltown. That means that commuters throughout my electorate and the Macquarie Fields electorate have had every one of their direct services to Liverpool, Parramatta and Blacktown cut. As we know, Campbelltown is a major hub for the Macarthur region in the Government's urban growth plan. I note I moved a notice of motion in this place calling for Government costings and time lines regarding the 450-space car park. This is a matter of regional significance which will only continue to grow as urban growth and development continues. Despite the Government ignoring the transport issues facing our great city people are already struggling with the Government's negligence. These issues will continue to worsen until we get action.

#### **TRIBUTE TO BOB AND ANNE STEELE**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (19:56):** I pay tribute to Mr Bob Steele, OAM, and Mrs Anne Steele, OAM, of Parkes, the founders of the Parkes Elvis Music Festival. In 1981 Bob and Anne opened a reception centre and restaurant in Parkes. They were both diehard Elvis fans. Bob and Anne named their new establishment "Gracelands" after Elvis's glamorous and palatial estate. In 1992 the Steeles' restaurant and reception centre hosted an Elvis-themed birthday party. Channelling their inner Elvis, splendidly clad guests of all ages enthusiastically embraced the leg-shaking and hip-swaying theme with great delight. With much fun had by all, the occasion was certainly memorable. I am sure many of those who attended reflect fondly on the night and in astonishment at the vital role that intimate and exclusive Elvis-themed party played in establishing a far greater spectacle for Parkes locals and Elvis enthusiasts to enjoy.

Encouraged by the spirited birthday party, Bob and Anne discussed plans for an event the whole community could enjoy centred on the theme of "The King". Boosted along by much interest throughout the area the Steeles set about planning and coordinating the event in 1993. In support many passionate locals from across the Parkes community enthusiastically launched into Elvis party preparations. In 1993 the inaugural Parkes Elvis Festival was born, attracting some 200 Elvis devotees. From there the fledgling festival quickly established itself in the hearts and minds of fans who, arriving in Parkes on the weekend closest to Elvis's birthday on 8 January, would celebrate his life and memory. Including an Elvis movie screening, a tribute concert, an Elvis look-alike and sound-alike competition, a street parade, markets and a tour of the Parkes region, the festival was a highlight on the social calendar.

Addicted, Bob and Anne continued to oversee the planning and coordination of subsequent Parkes Elvis Festivals. The Parkes Shire Council, State Government entities and numerous corporate sponsors also became involved in supporting and growing the event in both attendance levels and diversity of activities year by year. Dedicated Elvis fans faithfully attended annually, along with many people curious to see what all the fuss was about. Powerless to resist the contagious fun and laughter that resulted from the array of events, attendees were hooked. Community engagement and interaction flourished, as did businesses that supported the event through the significant financial injection that followed. The reputation of Parkes as a friendly country township spread steadily. It was soon known as a fantastic family friendly destination.

Fast forward 24 years and the Parkes Elvis Festival has just celebrated its twenty-fifth continuous celebration. This year's event, which I attended, attracted more than 20,000 visitors and generated more than \$13 million for the region through accommodation, food, transport and ticket sales. The event, recognised internationally, continues to see many people travel from abroad to celebrate all things Elvis. Every January, Elvis aficionados gather in Parkes to celebrate the timeless performer who, remarkably, left the building 40 years ago.

Now an iconic Australian event and a permanent fixture on the New South Wales calendar, the Parkes Elvis Festival is synonymous with liveliness and great fun. Bob and Anne Steele might not have envisioned such growth nor the widespread interest the festival would generate around the globe, but that is exactly what they have achieved. Conceived from a themed birthday, stacks of passion and a desire to draw people together to share interest, fun and laughter, the Parkes Elvis Festival is a testament to what can be achieved and it is a great community event.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Tourism and Major Events, and Assistant Minister for Skills) (20:00):** I thank the member for Orange for his contribution and join with him in congratulating and acknowledging Bob and Anne Steele on starting an absolutely amazing festival celebrated not only throughout rural and regional New South Wales but also across the State and Australia. I too, like the member for Orange and at the invitation of his predecessor, have been to the Parkes Elvis Festival. I have seen Andrew Gee in the flesh singing on the back of a truck and wearing his bright, sequinned jacket, which I think he wore in this place during his valedictory address.

The festival is very proudly supported by the New South Wales Government and Destination NSW. As the member for Orange correctly identified, the thousands of visitors it attracts each year and the millions of dollars worth of value it adds to the local economy cannot be understated. I thank Bob and Anne Steele for their vision, their commitment and their passion. They should be very proud of what they have created.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 20:01 until  
Wednesday 29 March 2017 at 10:00.**