



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Assembly**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Sixth Parliament  
First Session**

**Tuesday, 12 September 2017**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Tuesday, 12 September 2017**

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

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

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

*Notices*

### PRESENTATION

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I warn members on both sides of the House about the length of their notices of motions.

*Private Members' Statements*

### SURF LIFESAVING NSW AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (12:11):** It was a pleasure to attend the 2017 Surf Life Saving NSW Awards of Excellence on 5 August. The awards were also attended by the Minister for Emergency Services the Hon. Troy Grant and the newly appointed chief executive officer of Surf Life Saving NSW Stephen Pearce. The night was all about celebrating the achievements of surf lifesavers and all aspects of surf lifesaving. It was a pleasure to see so many from my electorate of Terrigal receive awards that night. I am proud that my electorate of Terrigal has seven surf lifesaving clubs, more than any other electorate in New South Wales.

Paul Lemmon of Terrigal Surf Life Saving Club was awarded Masters Athlete of the Year. Paul is a staunch Central Coast competitor. He also competed in many events in the 2017 Australian Masters Championships, receiving gold in the 45- to 49-year-old age bracket in the surf racing, rescue tube racing and Ironman categories. Paul also achieved fourth place in the 45- to 49-year-old surfboard rescue category. Paul is an amazing competitor and an all-round great guy. Ramzy Fawzy is another remarkable person. His achievements were highlighted at the recent awards ceremony as he was awarded Assessor of the Year and Facilitator of the Year. He is a great guy. No-one ever has anything bad to say about Ramzy. Over the years, he and his wife, Mary, have given many hours to the Wamberal Surf Life Saving Club. I congratulate Ramzy on his success and on the awards he received that evening.

Craig Sheppard has dedicated many hours over the past year to the Kilcare Surf Life Saving Club and was nominated for Volunteer of the Year. Volunteers are the backbone of any community organisation, especially surf lifesaving clubs. Once again I congratulate Craig on his outstanding accomplishment. The Central Coast branch also did incredibly well on the night, being a finalist in the Initiative of the Year, Community Education and Branch of the Year categories. The Central Coast Surf Life Saving Branch is by far one of the best performing surf lifesaving branches in New South Wales. Its main goal and mission is to save lives, create great Australians and build better communities. Central Coast Surf Life Saving displays all those qualities. I am more than happy to have the privilege to work collaboratively with Chris Parker and the teams at our local clubs.

Surf lifesaving is not just about competitions and awards; it is about saving and changing lives on the coast as well as around New South Wales and Australia. People forget about the hard work of these volunteers in saving many lives each year. In fact, last year they saved 1,115 lives on the coast alone. There were also 54 emergency call-outs, 2,141 first aid cases and 16,230 preventative actions. With just under one million people visiting Central Coast beaches last year, this highlights the importance of their service to our community. In addition to saving lives the volunteers also donate an incredible amount of time throughout the season. Last summer a total of 7,863 members including 5,355 active members gave 99,912 volunteer hours to surf lifesaving on the Central Coast, which highlights the need for us to support our surf lifesavers.

The Government is making sure it supports surf lifesavers and their clubs through initiatives such as the Community Building Partnership grants that have allowed me to deliver key amounts of funding to two clubs. Avoca Beach Surf Life Saving Club received a new jet ski, trailer and equipment to maintain safety during the hectic summer season when many thousands of people attend the beach each day. Secondly, Wamberal Surf Life Saving Club received money for new roller doors so equipment can be stored safely after the old doors became problematic. We are also supporting our surf lifesavers in their operational matters, with the Government committing \$9 million in funding for operations in New South Wales over the next three years. As the summer season approaches and as temperatures are already heading towards the thirties I want to get the message out there

that our lifesavers do a remarkable job protecting us at the beach. Once again, I congratulate all those who received a Surf Life Saving NSW Award of Excellence for their remarkable work in our community.

#### **MEAT AND LIVESTOCK AUSTRALIA ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN**

**Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (12:16):** My electorate of Auburn is home to Australia's first Hindu temple, Sri Mandir, which was established in 1977 to meet the religious, social and cultural needs of a growing Hindu community. Hinduism is one of the fastest-growing religions in Australia, consisting of almost half a million observers. A few days ago the member for Strathfield and I attended an Indian Australian wedding at Shri Durga Devi temple, which is also in my electorate. At the event many people expressed to me their disgust at the latest Meat and Livestock Australia campaign to promote lamb. Across the weekend, including on Saturday morning at the Flemington markets as I did the family grocery shopping, at polling booths around Sydney throughout the course of the day and at a large multicultural dinner at Parramatta on Sunday, Indian Australians approached me to register their hurt. Their outrage is shared by Hindus overseas. Indeed, the Indian Government has intervened with an official diplomatic complaint. The Consular General in Sydney has asked Meat and Livestock Australia to withdraw the advertisement.

The advertisement features a number of religious figures. There is no Prophet Muhammad, but there is Jesus Christ, Buddha, Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard, the Greek goddess Aphrodite and the Hindu deity Lord Ganesha—all having a lamb lunch. This is a major blunder. Lord Ganesha is regarded by Hindus as vegetarian. The crass insensitivity and lack of awareness demonstrated in this advertisement is its defining characteristic. The excuse from Meat and Livestock Australia is that the advertisement was designed to demonstrate inclusiveness. It is a pity that Meat and Livestock Australia and its advertising agency did not exercise the most basic diligence. It was a cheap stunt that was designed to attract attention, which was the stated intention of its marketing and of this advertisement.

Hindu community leaders see this advertisement as an assault on our diverse, multicultural and multi-faith society. I say to Meat and Livestock Australia to show respect for the hundreds of thousands of our fellow Australians who are Hindu and withdraw today this crude, moronic and hurtful advertisement. This peaceful, well-integrated, successful community has taken exceptional offence to the advertisement, and I ask Meat and Livestock Australia to show the community respect by withdrawing it. I extend an invitation to the leaders of Meat and Livestock Australia to accompany me on a visit to Australia's oldest Hindu temple, Sri Mandir in Auburn, so that they can engage respectfully with our Hindu community and come to understand their perspectives. I extend that invitation but, first, I ask that they do the decent thing, put their advertisement in the trash bin today and never bring it back.

#### **BLAYNEY PALLIATIVE CARE UNIT**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Lands and Forestry, and Minister for Racing) (12:20):** It gives me great pleasure to speak about a special event that took place last week in my electorate. As members of Parliament, we are proud to be part of special events that are important to our local community. Yesterday's opening of the palliative care unit at Blayney was one such event. For a number of years this project has brought the community together. This palliative care unit, which has seen significant support from the whole community, will now deliver much-needed care and support to individuals, as well as their families and carers, at the end of their lives.

Through this project, the community of Blayney has stepped up and shown its generosity by fundraising to provide for those in the local area who are most in need. This project is a great example of the achievements of the community. The palliative care unit at the Blayney Multi Purpose Service will deliver immeasurable benefits to the community. The funding of \$200,000 has come from the efforts of the Rotary Club of Blayney, which has raised more than \$100,000 towards this important project; Cadia Valley Operations, with a contribution of more than \$25,000; Regis Resources, which contributed more than \$5,000; and NSW Health, with the provision of \$65,000. The project also received support from Blayney Shire Council, with a community building grant secured to ensure the delivery of the unit.

I acknowledge also the Blayney Hospital Auxiliary. At the official opening yesterday, I spoke to an amazing group of ladies who raised more than \$10,500 that will go towards furnishing and curtains for the palliative care unit. One family has already utilised this service, the unit having been open over the past month. On my visit yesterday, I noted the unit's presentation and congratulated the staff. There is value in having not only good buildings and services but also quality staff. I thank all the staff at the Blayney health service. I thank also the Blayney health service manager, Kathy Hillier, for the incredible work she has done over the past couple of years in supporting this program. End of life is a difficult time. All of us would like our loved ones to pass away peacefully in an environment that is comforting and comfortable and one in which they are well cared for. If it is



not possible to pass away at home, it is important to have a place within one's community where end-of-life care is available.

The community support for the Blayney palliative care unit has made it all the more special. The one-bedroom suite, which has been built at the end of the pink wing at the Blayney Multi Purpose Service, includes an area where family can stay and be close to their relatives. In these situations, there is nothing more comforting than having loved ones close by. I congratulate Rotary member Miles Hedge, who has been a driving force in the fundraising efforts for the realisation of this facility. I congratulate also former Minister for Health Jillian Skinner on recognising the need for palliative care facilities, particularly in rural and regional areas, and her hard work in that regard. As I said, this facility will deliver enormous benefits. Sylvia Gore and her sister, Lorraine Gardner, who were present at the opening yesterday, spoke about the incredible support they had received at the Blayney Multi Purpose Service and the difference it made during the last few days they spent with their mum before her passing.

#### **PUTNEY-TENNYSON PROBUS CLUB TENTH ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Planning, Minister for Housing, and Special Minister of State) (12:25):** It is always a pleasure to inform this House about good achievements. Today I congratulate the Putney-Tennyson Probus Club on its tenth anniversary. Reaching 10 is always a milestone. For children, it is double figures; for married couples, they know they made the right decision; for singers, it is a pretty good place to be on the top 40 chart; and for the Putney-Tennyson Probus Club, it represents a lot of hard work, tangible achievements and friendships forged.

Probus was first formed in the United Kingdom during the 1960s. It spread to New Zealand in the 1970s, before a chance meeting on the New South Wales North Coast led to the calling of a meeting in Putney. Some 40 people attended the initial meeting, representing both Probus and Rotary, and a committee was formed. That committee acted quickly, electing Frank Dobosi president, Tom Gait vice president, Pamela Park secretary, and Eric Cairnduff treasurer. With that committee in place, the governing body gave permission for a new Probus club to be formed. Talk about trust. Membership fees were set at \$20 and Eric Cairnduff left the meeting with \$800 in his pocket without giving any receipts—the club was still to purchase a receipt book. The meeting time was set as 10.00 a.m. on the third Thursday of the month and the first get-together was at the Putney-Tennyson Bowling Club.

It was then up to Rotary and Probus South Pacific Limited to approve a name for this new entity. It approved the title "Putney-Tennyson Probus Club". It did not take very long before its membership exceeded 90 and as its members were retirees they had diverse interests in the activities of the club. Those who were physically fit were interested in bowls, golf, tennis, kayaking or walks. But, not surprisingly, lunching as a group has turned out to be the most popular pastime and there is at least one outing every month. These Probies do not mind getting away. For example, outings to the New South Wales north and south coasts are popular, as are visits to Canberra's Floriade. Last year a group even got away for a week to Norfolk Island, where they learned much about the history of that beautiful island. I mentioned the interest in bowls among some of the members. They play on the second Thursday of the month and whilst the games are always hotly contested I understand that some just turn up for Geraldine Rees's scones at morning tea.

The golfers in the club take their frustrations out on the greens of the Hudson Park Golf Course and they endure a 7.00 a.m. tee off on the third Friday of the month before getting to the nineteenth hole barbecue. Walking is another pleasurable reason for members of the club to get together. It was described to me as "good for body and mind". Alan Boyd is the member who takes responsibility for organising the walking route. Some members have remained with the club for its entire 10 years to date, including, and it is a long list, Betty, Michael, Roy, Warren, Don, Helen, Sue, Bob, Joan, Eric, Shirley, Carol, Des, Kaye, Gwenda, Brian, Gillian, Shirley, Jim, Carol, Doreen, David, Carol, Sandra, Marilyn, Lynne, Ian, Enid, Neil, Margaret, Cathy, Brian, Maureen, Robyn, Manfred and Daph.

As members of Parliament we have some interesting names for important people in this Parliament, including whips, ushers, and Hansard. Probus has some very quaint office bearers within its ranks. For example, Dee Keightley has the title "Let's Do Dinner". There is a person to handle apologies, a person in charge of the coffee club and at least three people to handle morning tea. To president Bob Prentice, his board and loyal members, I congratulate all involved in the Putney-Tennyson Probus Club on 10 years of devotion, fun and community commitment. Cheers and bravo.

*Visitors*

#### **VISITORS**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Anna Watson):** F65

I acknowledge our visitors in the gallery this morning, guests from Lomandra School: principal, Mark Smith; teacher, Stephen Cook; staff, Darren Lees and Summer Henwood; and students, Riley Parker, Shannon Wheeldon and Harry Boyden-Shepherd.

*Private Members' Statements*

**KOKODA TRACK**

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (12:29):** This year marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the New Guinea campaign, which marked the turning point for Australian defence of the Pacific front in World War II. I acknowledge the countless acts of heroism and endurance and pay my respects to the Australian diggers who so bravely fought across New Guinea at the battles of Kokoda, Bougainville, New Britain and many others. More than any other campaign in the long, dark months of 1942, the Kokoda campaign holds a sacred place in the hearts of many Australians and is a page in our nation's history we view with pride. From July to November that year, our soldiers fought a desperate battle over the Owen Stanley Ranges, considered the final frontier of the Japanese advance towards Australia. Our gallant diggers held their ground and forced the ruthless Imperial Japanese Army back.

Without a doubt, these pages in our nation's history are written in the blood of those who made the ultimate sacrifice so that we can enjoy the freedoms we have today. Members of this generation and generations to come are charged with preserving their memory. This year we remember the 625 Australian soldiers killed and the many wounded during the fighting that occurred along the Kokoda Track. Former member and Premier of this great State, the Hon. Bob Carr, showed he understood the measure of the men who fought at Kokoda and their place in the Australian collective memory, when he said:

The Kokoda Track isn't just a place where our salvation was won—Kokoda's now part of the Australian dreaming, a sacred site.

A few weeks ago, it was a special privilege to join the students and staff of Lomandra School in my electorate of Campbelltown to do the 96 kilometre trek from Owers Corner to the Kokoda village on the eastern peninsula of Papua New Guinea. Our group consisted of principal Mark Smith, staff members Stephen Cook, Summer Henwood and Darren Lees, and four students, Brandon Contreras, Riley Parker, Shannon Wheeldon and Harry Boyden-Shepherd. I thank them for being in the gallery today.

This was my second trek. My first effort was in 2014 as part of the Kokoda for Kids charity, which raised more than \$30,000 for the paediatric ambulatory care unit at Campbelltown Hospital and the Kids of Macarthur Health Foundation. I give a special thanks to our Adventure Kokoda trek leader Peter "Sneaky" Morrison and the ever warm, hospitable and friendly people of Papua New Guinea. The long comradeship of our two peoples began when the fuzzy wuzzy angels carried our wounded diggers to safety and took our dead diggers out over the Owen Stanley Ranges.

There is one word carved on each of the four marble pillars of the war memorial at Isurava. These four words summarise the efforts of the Anzacs at that place: courage, endurance, mateship and sacrifice. To recognise the efforts of the four students from Lomandra who completed this impressive feat of endurance at such a young age, I presented each with a certificate with one of the words from the pillars of Isurava ascribed to them. I hope that in years to come they remember not only the time they spent in Kokoda but also every one of the diggers who walked with pride through that place. It was an honour to visit the grave of Fred Murray of the 2/3rd Battalion, who died on 6 November 1942 on the advance to push the Japanese back to the ocean. Fred's brother, John Murray, is a former deputy mayor of Camden and a long-term resident of Macarthur.

During their journey I believe the students learnt something they will carry through their lives: the principles and values the trek teaches of endurance, strength, mateship and many others. I believe they have benefited from the friendship that united them on the trek; each of us who participated benefited as a result of the trek. We can never doubt the importance of our young people in their role of carrying the flame of history and the proud stories of our great nation that originated in the jungles of Kokoda. I call on the Federal Government to review the funding model and other measures that are in place for the Kokoda Track Authority. I am not confident that the current framework provides the best efficiencies for the Government and, most importantly, for the people of Papua New Guinea.

There are lots of flashy, shiny signs around but not much else. In one area a medical facility was built but it did not even have band-aids or bandages, and not one doctor or nurse had visited it. The beautiful country of Papua New Guinea is experiencing serious issues and we must help its wonderful people, who helped us so much in 1942. Apart from words, the best way to show our appreciation is with action, and that can only be achieved by a Federal Government with the correct measures in place.

### **BARRABA MULTI PURPOSE SERVICE HOSPITAL AUXILIARY**

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (12:34):** I bring to the attention of the House the great township of Barraba. Barraba is a community of approximately 1,150 people who do a fantastic job in promoting their town and in looking for opportunities to grow tourism by attracting visitors to the town and finding ways to entertain them. One group that does a great job in Barraba is the Barraba Multi Purpose Service [MPS] Hospital Auxiliary, headed by president Joan McCarthy. I was contacted recently by Sue Abrahams of the auxiliary, who was looking at fundraising opportunities.

Fundraising is always difficult—the fundraising pie is getting smaller and many organisations have professional fundraising teams. Other community groups and charitable organisations continually have to look at new and innovative ways to fundraise not only for the benefit of their organisation but ultimately for the betterment of their community. Barraba MPS Hospital Auxiliary came to me with a cracking idea. The auxiliary staff wanted to purchase a coffee machine, which would be used to raise funds for the hospital. We had a great discussion about it. They did their research and established that, by purchasing an automatic coffee machine and selling the beverages at \$4 each, they would make a healthy profit that could be used for infrastructure for the Barraba MPS that would ultimately benefit the community and to buy much-needed equipment for patients at the MPS.

I wrote to the Deputy Premier setting out our case for the purchase of a coffee machine to help the Barraba community, and I thank him for agreeing that this was an important way of contributing to the community and improving the quality of lives of those in our smaller regional centres. On Wednesday 6 September I had the pleasure of being at the Barraba MPS with Joan, Sue and members of the Barraba MPS Hospital Auxiliary. We enjoyed a cup of coffee from the coffee machine they purchased—and it was a beauty. In the month following the installation of the coffee machine—and in a hospital in a town of about 1,150 people—the sale of coffee raised \$500 of pure profit. The word is spreading around Barraba that if anyone wants a good coffee he or she should head to the Barraba MPS. I am pleased to say that, because of the good work of Sue Abrahams and the Barraba MPS, the coffee machine is likely to raise \$8,000.

I thank hospital auxiliaries right across the Tamworth electorate: They do a magnificent job and continually look at ways of fundraising for their hospitals and multi purpose services—for things such as kids wards, heart monitors and products that help elderly patients. We need to unite as a community, and no-one does that better than the smaller communities in the Tamworth electorate. I congratulate the Barraba MPS and its hospital auxiliary. I was pleased to be able to provide \$8,000 to make this happen. I look forward to continuing to work with our hospital auxiliaries right across the Tamworth electorate. I thank them for the great job they do in support of our communities.

### **NORTHERN RIVERS BIOBRIDGES PROJECT**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (12:39):** An important initiative taking place in my electorate is the biobridges project, which aims to preserve our unique World Heritage listed natural environment. The Northern Rivers is an area of high conservation and biodiversity value, with rich varieties of plants and remnant Gondwanaland treasure spots as well as unique species of animals. Our natural heritage, which we must fight to protect from overdevelopment, is of vital importance not only because we need our waters and rivers, food-growing and agricultural areas that sustain us physically but also because they provide us with economic and employment opportunities, prosperity and a wonderful lifestyle.

However, only a few dinosaurs opposite would deny that the climate of the planet is changing and that we are experiencing a warming planet caused by carbon emissions. Across the globe extreme weather events are becoming commonplace, which are the exact signals of what scientists said a decade ago would happen with global temperature rise and sea level rise. Reports from the New South Wales Government's own Office of Environment and Heritage predict that in the future the weather of the Northern Rivers will be more unpredictable and much warmer. Our dry months will be dryer and our wet months will be wetter. The storms will be more severe and the bushfire risk will increase. The community recognises that the region's unique wildlife needs help to navigate those changes. From all walks of life, landowners and community groups from Brunswick together with people from the Tweed, Richmond and Upper Clarence are ready to work with their local Landcare group to build and restore a regional network of biobridges.

Biobridges are natural corridors of vegetation that provide pathways across the currently cleared and fragmented landscape. They provide the opportunity for wildlife to move to cooler areas, safer areas and areas of new food supplies to find new mates as well as new homes, and will conserve wildlife populations. The biobridges project has grown from innovative thinking and is community endorsed. Where appropriate, the Aboriginal community will be consulted regarding site selection and actions on the ground. The project is being progressed with not only the needs of wildlife in mind but also the regional economic drivers of sustainable agriculture and tourism. Landcare in the Northern Rivers is known for its commitment, professionalism, skills and knowledge. It

has built local and regional partnerships, delivered significant on-ground projects and generated employment outcomes. Every week that I am in Ballina I speak to farmers and landowners who are working closely with Landcare.

Landcare has leadership, ideas and community support, but it now needs government funding. While Landcare already gratefully receives funding for various programs, the scale of this biobridge project across the Northern Rivers region is much larger than most local projects. As a result, it needs a larger funding commitment. The project is a very out-of-the-box and holistic initiative worth \$6 million. Although my Federal colleagues in the Senate were able to obtain a large sum of money for Landcare, sadly because the project is so large, holistic and out of the box the current funding regime does not match it. We need the Government to look differently at this unique and out-of-the-box project. The biobridges concept has been developed by the community and for the community, but it is also backed with the latest scientific thinking. It is a bottom-up approach to project development and has been developed directly based on the feedback of landowners in our area. This is what they have been telling the Brunswick Valley Landcare group and other Landcare groups that they want to do: Imagine a network of green spaces, corridors of native trees with birds, koalas and other wildlife that residents can go for walks in and that tourists can admire.

That is the biobridge concept—providing habitat for our wildlife while working with urban and agricultural landowners. Added benefits will be weed and pest control, revegetation, fencing, employment and carbon offset. The Northern Rivers is known for its progressive and creative community members, who think big picture and who want to make a difference. Previous investments in building the capacity of the community have paid dividends. The communities are now ready to tackle difficult issues on a scale that is large enough to make a significant difference. By its very nature and scale, biobridges will be a flagship. It showcases community-initiated strategic action that is backed by scientific rigour and implementation across the landscape. Because of this, it also needs a large-scale investment. It is too large for existing funding opportunities. As such, Landcare needs consideration for special government funding. I call on this Government to meet with Landcare representatives, talk to them about the concept and give them the funding needed to make this a reality.

#### **WILLIAMTOWN LAND CONTAMINATION**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (12:44):** I speak today of my constituents at Fullerton Cove, the residents of which have become the latest victims of the Royal Australian Air Force [RAAF] Base Williamtown contamination. Last week I spoke with the residents of Fullerton Cove after it had been revealed that the suburb—which is outside the designated red zone—has not been assessed appropriately as a surface and groundwater flow path. Last Tuesday the *Newcastle Herald* revealed that two residents, Lori and John Butler, had decided to have their blood tested after Lori had been experiencing health problems for a number of years. They thought they would not be at risk as the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] had told them they were not. Until they spoke to their doctor, they were not aware that blood level tests were freely available.

When the results were returned, the tests revealed that Lori had a perfluorooctane sulfonate [PFOS] level of 45 nanograms per millilitre and her husband registered a higher level, at 48 nanograms per millilitre. The results were 10 times the national average for their age group in 2011. Also alarming is the fact that a nearby mother has also discovered elevated levels of this chemical in her toddler. These residents live just down the road from the cancer cluster on Cabbage Tree Road and the designated contamination zone. With the water sources being untested by the EPA since the original outbreak two years ago and the groundwater moving outside the zone, more testing needs to be undertaken immediately. The EPA needs to step in and do regular testing on the outlying areas as this situation continues. Many of my constituents in Fullerton Cove are not connected to the town water but use bore water and rainwater tanks as their source of water. This may be the cause of increased PFOS concentration in their blood.

In December 2015, when the then Premier promised residents in Williamtown they would be connected to town water as part of the New South Wales plan to help those affected by the contamination, the Government committed to funding up to 200 affected residents at a cost of \$4 million. Hunter Water said Defence would then be sent the bill. A resident I met at Fullerton Cove, Sue Walker, was told she would not be able to get town water connected unless she was prepared to pay \$10,000. Sue does not have \$10,000 to pay for what she should already have—a safe supply of drinking water. Until recently, residents did not know their water was polluted with PFOS. They should not have to pay for something that has been dumped on them by a Defence base that has done little to clean up this big mess.

Unfortunately, it would appear that when former Premier Baird left the Government the focus on Williamtown went with him. During budget estimates the shadow Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy, the Hon. Adam Searle, asked the Premier about the former Premier's promised \$4 million worth of town water connection to those in the red zone. He asked:

Two years on there are still many properties not connected to town water and many of those people have elevated levels of perfluorooctane sulfonate [PFOS] chemicals in their blood. As a matter of urgency, will you call on Hunter Water to ensure that all those who should be connected to town water are? Will you also tell the Committee how much of the \$4 million has been spent and why two years on this process has not been completed?

That would seem like a simple premise for such a large issue near the State's second-largest city. Has the Premier checked on the \$4 million allocated to those currently experiencing the effects of a horrible defence department scandal? Is everyone who needs help currently getting help? The Premier had no idea. Until recently, residents did not know their water was polluted with PFOS. They should not have to pay for something that has been dumped on them by a Defence base that has not done a great deal to clean up the mess. The EPA needs to come out to Fullerton Cove and do the tests again. There they will find that they need to extend the red zone further and give these residents, who are now deeply affected, the same access to support services.

The Premier did not manage those questions too well in budget estimates and clearly she had little idea about the situation. The Premier should understand that the people who are experiencing this environmental disaster are New South Wales residents. They are part of the population of New South Wales and they deserve the Premier's immediate attention. The Premier should take a leaf out of the former Premier's book. I invite Premier Berejiklian to come to Fullerton Cove, meet the residents, see the blood test results, and see the area. She should then contact the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] and get it to redo the tests.

Only once these residents are declared part of the contaminated zone will they be able to access the services they need, for example, the water connections the Premier could not recall. The Premier may also want to get her Parliamentary Secretary Mr MacDonald to get the Williamstown Elected Representative Group back up and running. She should also keep the Premier's department on the Williamstown Community Reference Group, instead of outsourcing it. The Premier should get a Minister for the Hunter instead of a Parliamentary Secretary so we can get this important issue on the Cabinet table. Shame, Premier.

#### SHOALHAVEN BUSINESS AWARDS

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (12:49):** After growing up in a small business family I am passionate about supporting small businesses in my electorate. It is in that vein that on Friday 25 August I was pleased to attend the 2017 Shoalhaven Business Awards at the Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre. This is the region's most anticipated annual business event and was another star-studded occasion. I acknowledge the President of the Shoalhaven Business Chamber, my very good friend, Brendan Goddard; the Awards Manager, Miranda Packer, who did an outstanding job; and, of course, the ambassadors for the evening, my good mate, Matt Simms, and Peter Russell from Integrity Real Estate. There was also an awards insider podcast happening on the night, which was fascinating to watch.

I acknowledge the following category winners and nominees because I think these businesses are great examples of what can be achieved in the region. The winner of the Business Leader category was Garry Wilbraham from the Bomaderry Bowling Club. The nominees were: Brian Bramble from Clifton Accountants, Ian Henry from Nowra Toyota, and Terry Rayner from ANZ Mobile Lending. The award for Young Business Executive went to Patrick O'Regan from Pepperell and Associates. Teagan Caunt from Fire Service Plus was also nominated for that award for her great work. The award for Young Entrepreneur went to Sian Ludlow from Stella Studioz. Other nominees included Ali Nazim from Choice Pharmacy Vincentia and Amy Holder from DanceWorks by Amy Evison. Excellence in Small Business went to ABABY. Other nominees include: Bridges Financial Services, Clifton Accountants, Hotondo South Coast, Jervis Bay Hearing Centre, Stella Studioz and Turfco.

The award for Excellence in Business went to Nowra Toyota, Ulladulla Toyota, Nowra Mazda, and South Nowra Mitsubishi. Other nominees included: Air Affairs Australia, Ison and Co, Nowchem, Quest Nowra, RMB Lawyers, and WorkforceXS Nowra. Start Up Superstar went to South Coast Kids. Other nominees included the Marketing Clan. Excellence in Innovation went to RMB Lawyers. Other nominees included: Carter Ferguson Solicitors and Southern Cross Housing. Employer of Choice went to ANZ Mortgage Solutions South Coast. Other nominees included: Aquatique, Nowra Toyota, Ulladulla Toyota, Nowra Mazda, South Nowra Mitsubishi, and WorkforceXS Nowra. Excellence in Community Service went to the Oolong Aboriginal Corporation. Other nominees included: Bomaderry Bowling Club, Bundanon Trust, SAHSSI, and Southern Cross Housing.

The award for Excellence in Professional and Commercial went to RMB Lawyers. Other nominees included: Bridges Financial Services, Clifton Accountants, Jervis Bay Hearing Centre, and Pepperell and Associates. Outstanding Home-Based Business went to Kimberlie and Co Cleaning. Other nominees included: Natalie Allan Consulting. Excellence in Tourism and Hospitality went to the Bomaderry Bowling Club. A new business to Nowra, the Quest Apartments Nowra, was also nominated in this category and I was pleased to see the business there on the night. Excellence in Retail and Personal Services went to the Jervis Bay Hearing Centre. Other nominees included: ABABY, Nowra Toyota, Ulladulla Toyota, Nowra Mazda and South Nowra Mitsubishi.

Excellence in Production went to Nowchem. Other nominees included Tim Webster Building and Turfco Australia. The award for Employee of the Year went to Eric Coulter from Southern Cross Housing and Alana Byrne from Choice Pharmacy Vincentia. Other nominees included Belinda Becker from Lyrebird Preschool, Kerren Currie from Fire Service Plus, Norman O'Neill from WorkforceXS Nowra, and Tim Corbett from Stormtech. Excellence in Inclusion went to Kimberlie and Co Cleaning. Other nominees included: Bomaderry Bowling Club, Nowra Toyota, Ulladulla Toyota, Nowra Mazda, South Nowra Mitsubishi, Quest Nowra, Southern Cross Housing, and Southern Fitness and Martial Arts; Excellence in Social Responsibility went to The Oolong Aboriginal Corporation. Other nominees that I would like to acknowledge included: Bundanon Trust, Carter Ferguson Solicitors, Hotondo South Coast, Kimberlie and Co Cleaning, Nowchem, SAHSSI, and Southern Cross Housing.

Many of the owners of the businesses that attended the evening have taken a risk. They have sold their houses and cars to get into business and provide opportunities to employees right across Shoalhaven. The Shoalhaven Business Chamber brings all these wonderful businesses together on the night to celebrate what is so good about our community. People who have not been in small business do not realise how hard these businesses have to work or how diligent they have to be. I take this opportunity to remind the Government of my objection to things such as payroll taxes, which continue to mean that businesses cannot employ more staff as they need to pay more to the Government. I encourage the Federal Government to change the tax mix so that we can put in place a fairer tax regime. Dollars that are spent on taxing businesses for employing people are not productive dollars, and we must make sure we have the tax mix correct. I will always support our small businesses and I will continue to be their advocate. I am delighted to acknowledge these outstanding examples of Shoalhaven business.

**Ms TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Women, and Minister for Ageing) (12:54):** On behalf of the House and the Government, I congratulate all the incredible businesses that not only participated in the awards process but also took out the awards. They have demonstrated an extraordinary amount of dedication to not only their business but also their customers and staff. I convey my thanks for their hard work, attitude and commitment to their businesses and staff and also the wider community. I thank the member for Kiama, Gareth Ward, for bringing these extraordinary businesses and business owners to the attention of the House. Small business is the engine room of the New South Wales economy. This Liberal-Nationals Government will always be the best friend of small business in this State.

#### **HASTINGS ROTARACT CLUB**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (12:55):** A relatively new organisation in the Port Macquarie-Hastings area has been created to benefit others in the local community and, in fact, further afield. In just a few months this group of young people has shown through its actions that it is serious in its endeavours. Established only 14 months ago, the Hastings Rotaract has attracted 16 members to form a Rotary partnership specifically for 18- to 30-year-olds. On 12 August this year my husband, Don, and I were pleased to receive an invitation to attend the charter dinner for the Hastings Rotaract Club.

The inaugural president, Katie Hall, announced on the night that the Hastings Rotaract had achieved its first community goal of raising funds to support a local charity. A cheque presentation for \$1,142 was made to Erin Denham, and Cory and Meg Urquhart from Make a Difference—known as the MAD Foundation—in Port Macquarie's Orange Sky laundry van appeal. The night was made even more special when Erin Denham, on receipt of the cheque, was able to announce that as the MAD goal had been surpassed, and as it approached \$110,000, the Orange Sky laundry van had been ordered that day.

Representatives from the Hastings Rotaract attended a conference in Brisbane last year and once they viewed the presentation by Orange Sky's founders, Nicholas Marchesi and Lucas Patchett, they knew it was a great concept that we should aim to bring to our local area. They then heard about another group in Port Macquarie with similar goals and in January met with the energetic and determined Erin Denham. From that meeting they embarked on assisting the local MAD Foundation in Port Macquarie with their goal to fundraise \$110,000 to purchase a mobile laundry. Rotaract held two fundraising Zumba events with the support of Your Life Fitness, and a bubble soccer event, supported by the Ark Sports Centre. On the night, a surcharge of \$5 on each charter dinner ticket brought the total donation to \$1,142.

Christina Parkin, who is a member of the Rotary Club of Port Macquarie Sunrise, was appointed as an adviser to the members of the new Rotaract club. It is usual that in a metropolitan Rotaract club only one Rotary Club will serve as a sponsor club, but Christina identified the benefits of having the new Hastings Rotaract co-sponsored by a collaboration of all five rotary clubs in the Hastings—Laurieton, Port Macquarie, Port Macquarie West, Port Macquarie Sunrise and Wauchope. To attract members, Christina invited Hastings Education Fund recipients and Rotary Youth Leadership Award participants to become the core of the new Rotaract. Their hard work in establishing a stable foundation under the new rotary banner will allow them to

continue to achieve great things in the future, not only for the community in which they live, study and work, but also for themselves.

Rotaract provides great opportunities for personal and professional development, and many of the members have had a taste of that when their local rotary clubs supported their attendance at the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards [RYLA]. They have those former Hastings Education Fund recipients, who are keen to give back to the community that provided them with assistance when they commenced their own studies. Hastings Rotaract meets weekly at the Charles Sturt University campus, but that does not mean that membership is confined only to students. Hastings Rotaract encourages anyone who wants to make a difference in their local community to join as they set their future goals to support others.

Finally, I take this opportunity to acknowledge the Hastings Rotaract Charter members: Andrew Stokes, Tim Cook, Jack Wilson, Carly Bullard, Morgan Eyre, Brittani Harris, Ashley Kiem, Ben Clarke, Amy Taylor, Luca Piggott, Elissa Burgin, Katie Hall, Natalie Schmitzer, Montanah Terry and Harley Lindley and Tahli Keller. I congratulate each of these young, hardworking and industrious members of our first Hastings Rotaract. I wish them all the best in achieving their future community goals and thank them most sincerely for their contribution.

### INGLESIDE ANIMAL SHELTER

**Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Education) (13:00):** I inform the House of the concerning news about the closure of the Animal Welfare League's Ingleside shelter in my community of Pittwater. This matter is of concern to many people in my community, because there is a great need to provide appropriate care for animals that are abused, neglected or abandoned right across the State, particularly in metropolitan areas. With the closure of the Ingleside shelter, effectively there will be no animal shelter available across the Northern Beaches and the northern region of Sydney. This will have profound negative consequences for the welfare of animals as well as impacts upon local wildlife and families. Animal shelters play an important ancillary role in our community because in many cases, when families move or there is a family breakdown, there is an opportunity for pets to be looked after at shelters and rehoused in a humane way, consistent with the principles of animal welfare.

The Ingleside shelter has been performing this role superbly for the past 20 years staffed by people like Peggy Brown, for example, who has been instrumental in animal welfare in the Ingleside area for many years. It is of great concern when a facility like this, which has been part of the fabric of our community and has provided many local jobs, is subject to closure. I commend locals like Kerry Stewart and Tim Crossman, as well as many others including those working at local vet practices, who have made representations to me about the importance of having a facility such as the Ingleside animal shelter. These shelters are important facilities that are ancillary to urban development and urban purposes. Ingleside is an ideal place for a facility like this, which was opened in 1997 and last upgraded, as a result of a bequest, only four years ago when \$750,000 was invested in the shelter. I am shocked and perplexed that the board has made the decision to close this shelter after it received such a significant investment just a few years ago.

I am advised that the reason for the decision to close the shelter is concerns about sewerage and drainage. I am happy to place on the record that I will use my best endeavours to help the shelter raise the necessary funds to deal with the sewerage and drainage issues. I am sure that the issues are not insurmountable and that, with the support of the community and the council as well as looking for support from the State Government, we can find a way to keep this shelter open and running. My plea to the Animal Welfare League is to reconsider this decision. I am told that the Animal Welfare League made the decision based on the fact that it was unaware that the broader Ingleside area was slated for residential redevelopment. Again, that is surprising because it has been slated for residential redevelopment for more than a century, and all the local landowners have known this for a long time. Nevertheless, I say to the directors of the Animal Welfare League that the purpose of having an animal shelter becomes only more important with residential development, such as that in the area surrounding the Ingleside shelter.

An increase in population is likely to lead to an increase in the number of animals requiring care. This is a concern within the Pittwater community as it is an area that is home to a large range of native fauna. If an animal shelter is closed that will lead to more stray animals in the bush and the resultant risks to native wildlife as well as endangering the welfare of abandoned animals. It is an important urban service. The welfare of animals is not spoken about in this place often enough and this is my opportunity to say, on behalf of my community, we are concerned about the planned closure of the Ingleside shelter. I implore the Animal Welfare League to work with the community in order to keep this important resource open.

### TRIBUTE TO NORMAN RABBETT

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (13:05):** Too often when we talk about history, we focus on the larger-than-life figures at the expense of the day-to-day lived experiences of ordinary people. We know the names of kings and queens, presidents and prime ministers, generals and revolutionaries, but forget what life was like for those who came before us. I will take a moment to discuss one everyday bloke from my electorate. Norman Rabbett has been a resident of Wallsend for many years, and has a uniquely Australian story. To hear him tell that story is to take a tour through Australia's development as a nation. Norm was born on 24 November 1928 on the border of Queensland and New South Wales. He lived with his grandmother until he was four.

His family was impoverished, as many were and still are in the northernmost parts of New South Wales. Norm's mother married an Aboriginal man and the family moved to Gunyan Station, where Norm's stepfather found work. The Depression hit hard, and Norm remembers his family living on the riverbank near Texas in Queensland. His younger brother was born there. To ensure that his brother was not taken away by agents of the Aboriginal Protection Board, Norm remembers the family staying on the New South Wales side of the border. In 1935 Norm started school as his stepfather had found work. He was sent to Royal Far West in Sydney for 11 months when he was found to have fly-blown ears. He learnt to read, write and do arithmetic in Sydney before he returned home.

Norm worked from a young age trapping and skinning rabbits to help his stepfather feed the station's sheepdogs. Norm eventually left home and found work as a drover. He lied about his age at the outbreak of the war, saying he was in his mid-teens when he was barely 12 years old. Norm assisted the war effort by helping to maintain the supply of meat and wool. He remembers those times as days spent in the saddle and nights sleeping out under the stars. His story is uniquely Australian. During the war, Norm found work as a shearer. At that time an organiser named Jack Tanner presented him with the union books. He then assisted Mr Tanner in negotiations with a station manager 50 kilometres outside Aberdeen. Over a drink of whiskey—"rarer than gold during the war years"—Tanner, Norm and the manager hammered out a deal. This was the beginning of Norm's lifelong connection to the labour movement.

Victory against Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan came just months before his seventeenth birthday. Norm travelled to Newcastle with the name of a relative he had never met and was greeted upon arrival by a police constable who was waiting to arrest him for fare evasion—he had sneaked into the empty first class carriage for an easier ride. It was in the shearing sheds that he first became involved in the union movement, but it was in the steel mills of Newcastle that his union activism blossomed. Norm walked into Lysaght's wearing jodhpurs and a wide-brimmed hat, a country boy looking for a job in post-war Australia. He started at and left Lysaght's 11 times over 10 years, heading off to the sheds in shearing season and coming back when the season was over. He stayed in Newcastle, worked at the ironworks and eventually built a home and a life for his family, which was a far cry from the poverty that he knew growing up. He worked hard to build a better life for himself and through his work with the unions he built a better life for all Australians.

Norm joined the Federated Ironworkers' Association of Australia [FIA] staying with the union through the split of the 1950s as running battles between communists and anti-communists threatened to tear it apart. Norm was awarded life membership of the FIA and the Australian Workers' Union, which merged with the FIA in the early 1990s. Norm displays his life membership certificates with pride in his home in Wallsend, along with his life membership of the Australian Labor Party. Even though Norm is approaching 90 years of age, he keeps active around his home. Norm's stories of growing up in rural Australia during the Depression, of keeping Australia going during the war and his firsthand view of the decades of rapid change are stories to remember. We thank Norm for his contribution to Wallsend and to our community.

### KIDS GIVING BACK COMMUNITY ORGANISATION

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Local Government, and Minister for Heritage) (13:10):** On 31 August 2017 I was delighted to join Kids Giving Back to celebrate its fifth birthday. Kids Giving Back, a community organisation, provides volunteering experiences for young people aged six to 18 in my electorate. I joined co-founders Ruth Tofler Riesel and Carole Schlessinger and volunteers at Rough Edges, a homeless community partnership in Darlinghurst, Sydney. I know from my early days as a young volunteer that those experiences create deep connections with communities. I was honoured to join Kids Giving Back at this special milestone celebration. The mission of Kids Giving Back is to create the next generation of generosity in which young people volunteer through hands-on and meaningful experiences. Its belief is that when young people volunteer they develop respect for community, resilience and leadership skills as well as the ability to engage positively in the community.

Kids Giving Back announced its new volunteer program—Food Clothing Shelter—which celebrates diversity and aims to move the barriers that prevent young people in Sydney's west from engaging with the



community. Kids Giving Back, together with community partner Rough Edges, works with students to prepare care packages of food and clothing for vulnerable people such as asylum seekers and the homeless. Ruth and Carole, who both had young children, started Kids Giving Back in 2012 in the belief that one is never too young to help others. When Ruth's son was only nine years old she took him to Thailand to teach English and to work with elephants for a few weeks. Kids Giving Back was born from that inspiration and desire to enable children such as Ruth and Carole's children to give back to others who are not as privileged as they are. Ruth and Carole wanted their children and other children to have these experiences and to learn compassion from a young age.

Kids Giving Back matches young people to volunteering opportunities, either directly or through a partner program and by listening to their interests it provides them with unique and personalised volunteering experiences. The organisation also runs its own programs—Cook4Good and Scones4Good—in which young people, families, schools, community organisations and corporate businesses participate. Cook4Good, a half-day program for students from year 6 and up, assists them in cooking meals at a community kitchen which are then delivered to homeless shelters and community cafes for the homeless. Three different programs for high school students link to the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education [PDHPE] Syllabus. Don't Judge a Book By Its Cover leads to breaking down barriers in our community. Homelessness is Not a Choice looks at factors that create homelessness. Valuing Difference and Diversity focuses on the balance between a sense of self and the importance of independence, and the health and wellbeing of students and others around them.

Scones4Good, a half-day program for primary and high school students, breaks the isolation experienced by older people in our community. The program's educational component introduces students to different ways of interacting with the elderly, including those suffering from dementia. Students bake scones at a community kitchen followed by an afternoon tea at an aged-care home. An hour is then spent serving scones and chatting with the elderly to help make a big difference to their day—and often their entire week—which is evident when one participates in these kinds of activities.

The New South Wales Government has proudly supported Ruth and Carole. Thanks to the Premier's good graces, it was able to provide \$21,000 in funding to help with volunteering initiatives for young people in the eastern suburbs. I thank the former Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Multiculturalism, the Hon. John Ajaka, who made it possible through his intercessions, and the former chair of Kids Giving Back, Connie Carnabuci. Kids Giving Back works with a variety of local charity partners, such as Our Big Kitchen, Bnai Brith, Friendship Circle, Holdsworth Community, and many local schools, including Cranbrook, Kambala, Kesser Torah College, Moriah College, Reddam, Rose Bay Secondary College, Scots College and Waverley Action for Youth Services POEM School.

There is much to celebrate about Kids Giving Back. It is a huge achievement that more than 10,000 young people have participated in its volunteering programs and that it has provided more than 36,000 meals to those in need. I congratulate its board members David Schlessinger, Roxanne Dunkel, Connie Carnabuci, Anthony Chesler, Jennifer Crossman and Nadine Ben-Mayor. I commend my private member's statement to the House.

### **HIS HOLINESS POPE TAWADROS II AUSTRALIAN VISIT**

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (13:15):** His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, the 118th Pope of Alexandria and the Patriarch of the See of St Mark recently visited Sydney. The Coptic Orthodox Church has approximately 20 million members worldwide. Australia has a vibrant Coptic community with more than 100,000 adherents and is considered to be the third largest Coptic community outside Egypt. The Coptic church in Sydney has grown since its first establishment in 1969 when the community had only one priest and one church. It now has 40 churches, 72 priests, three schools, colleges and monasteries.

As the first Coptic member to be elected to Parliament, it was a great honour and a joy to welcome His Holiness at the airport on his first Australian visit since being ordained as the religious leader in 2012. I also had the pleasure of attending many of the events around Sydney during his short six-day visit. Some of the events His Holiness attended included visits to a number of Coptic churches around Sydney, the laying of foundation stones for new churches and a reception at Parliament House. His Holiness also attended the Macquarie University Theological College and a youth meeting at Darling Harbour, where he was well received by more than 3,000 youths.

His Holiness attended a general mass and meeting with the Coptic community at the International Convention Centre at Darling Harbour, which was attended by more than 6,000 community members. I also had the privilege of being present at a gala reception at Rosehill Gardens in his honour, which was attended by more than 1,200 people, the New South Wales Premier, the New South Wales Leader of the Opposition, and many Federal and State members of Parliament. His Holiness was also met by the Prime Minister and the Ambassador to Egypt, His Excellency Mr Mohamed Khairat.

A special reception was held for His Holiness at the residence of the Egyptian Consul General in Sydney, His Excellency Mr Youssef Shawki and Mrs Dalia Zaki, which was attended by many religious and community leaders. The Pope's visit to Sydney has been historic and an inspiration to the many Australian Coptic church followers. It was also pleasing to witness the positive response of many people from all faiths and denominations to His Holiness's maiden visit to Australia. I am honoured to have met His Holiness Pope Tawadros II and the papal delegation. I take this opportunity to thank him for his pastoral visit to Australia.

### WESTERN SYDNEY RAILWAY STATION UPGRADES

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (13:18):** Today I speak about investment in transport in Western Sydney, a key priority of the New South Wales Government and one of the most important issues in my electorate. On 31 July the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Mr Andrew Constance, visited Seven Hills to inspect the new facilities at the Wentworthville and Pendle Hill train stations. The train station upgrades will mean easier accessibility for all local commuters, particularly those with a disability, parents with prams, and the elderly. The upgrades at Wentworthville station include four new lifts, a new concourse area, family accessible toilets, stairs with canopies for weather protection and the refurbishment of existing footpaths. Pendle Hill station was the beneficiary of four new lifts, a new concourse and footbridge, new stairs and adjoining canopies, and the addition of a family accessible toilet. Seven Hills station was recently refurbished and upgraded with new lifts, accessible family toilets, a canopy over the stairs and a commuter transport bike cage.

Such upgrades in my electorate have been made possible by the New South Wales Government's Transport Access Program. This program will deliver a further 125 car spaces at Pendle Hill station. Work has recently begun on upgrades to Toongabbie station, which include lifts, stairs, platform canopies, bike facilities and additional lighting. Through improving services we are improving the quality of life of people in the electorate of Seven Hills. The new train timetable for Western Sydney, which begins in November, includes an additional 300 weekly services. This will ease overcrowding and reduce travel time for commuters, particularly the mums and dads who commute to and from work every day.

During peak hours, there will be 20 express trains between Parramatta and the central business district [CBD], with a train arriving every three minutes. This is an incredible improvement for the roughly 50,000 people who commute from Parramatta to the CBD every working day. More than 250 express train services will travel from Parramatta to the CBD each week—40 per cent more than there are now. Like many other train stations across Western Sydney, Parramatta station will become a turn-up-and-go station. This marks a great change in train services for the people of the electorate of Seven Hills. The Government's \$1.5 billion investment in new services and upgrades is due to a 10 per cent increase in patronage since last year and an expected 21 per cent growth in demand for train services by 2021.

This Government is responding to the issues of Western Sydney residents and preparing for the future, particularly in the Seven Hills electorate. Other Western Sydney train stations such as Penrith, Kingswood and Werrington stations will receive upgraded services and soon trains will arrive every 7.5 minutes instead of every 10 minutes. St Marys and Mount Druitt stations will receive additional train services; on average a train will arrive every six minutes. Rooty Hill and Doonside stations will receive new services that will benefit commuters. The weekend capacity of public transport in Western Sydney will be boosted, particularly at Seven Hills and Westmead stations and at the immediate connection stations of Blacktown and Parramatta.

All four stations will service commuters with a train arriving every 10 minutes. Seven Hills residents and commuters will gain an extra four city-bound trains per hour, or a train every 3.5 to four minutes. This Government has delivered more than 19,000 additional weekly transport services via buses, trains and ferries. This includes 1,500 extra weekly train services and more than 750 additional weekend services. Last week I had the pleasure of joining the Premier and the Minister for Transport at Westmead Children's Hospital to talk about the Parramatta Light Rail, yet another example of this Government's investment in public transport in Western Sydney. We have allocated \$2.5 billion to the Parramatta Light Rail out of the \$73 billion infrastructure program underway across New South Wales.

Stage one of the Parramatta Light Rail will be 12 kilometres long and will cover 16 stops, with a two-way track from Carlingford to Westmead. The light rail will be operational after the completion of stage one in 2023. Stage two is in development, with the collaboration of Sydney Metro West. The light rail will link the booming CBD with communities in North Parramatta and Telopea and it will assist those in the health precinct of Cumberland Hospital, Westmead Children's Hospital and Westmead Hospital. By delivering station upgrades, increased services and light rail, this Government is doing great work for the people of Western Sydney. We will ensure that they receive the transport and infrastructure they need and deserve.

### GLENBERNIE ORCHARD

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (13:23):** I commend an outstanding business in the Heathcote electorate which has been family owned and operated for four generations and which consistently punches way above its weight. Glenbernie Orchard is situated in the beautiful Darkes Forest in my electorate of Heathcote. The owners of the orchard planted their first commercial apple trees in 1952 and Glenbernie has been a stalwart part of our community ever since. It is difficult to find a local resident who has not visited the farm a number of times either to purchase products from the farm gate or to take part in the orchard's pick-your-own opportunities. Four years ago, after a glut of produce, the owners decided to branch out and produce their own cider. What a decision that turned out to be. I was thrilled when owner Joanne Fahey informed me that in August Glenbernie won a gold medal for its Howler Cider at the World Cider Awards in London.

This amazing achievement is not the only accolade Glenbernie Orchard has received. Recently, its Darkes Brewing Apple Cider Vinegar won a gold medal at the Royal Hobart Fine Food Awards and went on to take out the title of champion in the savoury preserves category, finishing ahead of 95 other contenders. Yesterday Joanne was able to discuss the orchard's success with the Premier when she visited Helensburgh to meet local small business owners. Joanne spoke of the orchard's work with Destination NSW in further promotion of the business. She also paid tribute to the younger family members for convincing the family to branch out. She declared that the international gold medal was just the beginning.

A couple of years ago I attended Batlow CiderFest, representing Daryl Maguire, the outstanding member for Wagga Wagga. The festival was preceded by a cider symposium and cider judging at which Howler Cider won the award for most outstanding cider. So popular was the cider at the festival that they ran out of tasting glasses. Realising this, I sprang into action and hunted down more glasses to support them to continue to spread the reputation of their fine product. I congratulate Glenbernie Orchard on its awards and wish it continued success in the future.

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

#### *Announcements*

### MEMBER FOR ROCKDALE

**The SPEAKER:** Congratulations to the member for Rockdale, who has become a grandfather for the sixth time. A baby boy was born to Paul and Stephanie Kamper on 12 August 2017 and named Stephen Paul Kamper.

#### *Visitors*

### VISITORS

**The SPEAKER:** I acknowledge all our guests in the gallery this afternoon. I extend a very warm welcome to the Hon. Peter Walsh, MLA, Leader of The Nationals in Victoria and member for Murray Plains, accompanied by his chief of staff, Deb Cole. They are guests of the Deputy Speaker and member for Lismore. I also welcome student leaders, their parents and teachers from Eastwood Public School, Melrose Park Public School and St Therese's Catholic Primary School, guests of the Minister for Finance, Services and Property and member for Ryde. I also welcome and acknowledge Emily Zhang from North Sydney Girls High School, guest of the member for North Shore. I also acknowledge and welcome members of the South Coast Labor State Electoral Conference, guests of the Hon. Penny Sharpe, MLC.

#### *Commemorations*

### CENTENARY OF FIRST WORLD WAR

**The SPEAKER (14:20):** During the months of the Gallipoli campaign, it became increasingly common for young men to be shamed as "shirkers". Many were sent white feathers symbolising cowardice or stopped on the street by strangers and questioned as to why they were not in uniform. This wave of public humiliation was particularly hard to bear for the thousands of men who had volunteered only to be turned away on medical grounds. In the first year of the conflict, approximately one third of volunteers in Australia were rejected as medically unfit for service. They were too old or too short, or had bad teeth, poor eyesight or some other condition.

One such volunteer was Reginald George Henry Campbell, a 36-year-old clerk in the Legislative Council. Campbell volunteered in January 1917. He was assigned to a rifle regiment and underwent training as a gunner. On 14 September, however, following a final pre-embarkation medical examination, he was discharged on account of pleurisy and neurasthenia. He returned to his role in the Legislative Council, later serving as Usher of the Black Rod for many years. In New South Wales, the Rejected Volunteers' Association [RVA] was

established to protect the rights and dignity of men turned away from duty. The RVA produced badges for rejected volunteers to wear in public and provided support to ensure they were not discriminated against in their workplaces. Unable to fight alongside their mates, many rejected volunteers sought out opportunities to support the war effort in other capacities, often in public service. Lest we forget.

*Members*

**REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS**

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I inform the House that the Attorney General will answer questions today in the absence of the Minister for Police, and Minister for Emergency Services.

*Announcements*

**DEATH OF JOHN CAMERON BOOKS, FORMER MEMBER FOR PARRAMATTA**

**The SPEAKER:** It is with regret that I inform the House of the death, on 17 August 2017, of John Cameron Books, a former member of the Legislative Assembly, who served as the member for Parramatta from 19 March 1988 to 3 May 1991. On behalf of the House, I extend to his family the deep sympathy of the Legislative Assembly in the loss sustained.

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

**DEATH OF JAMES CAIRD BRUXNER, FORMER MINISTER OF THE CROWN**

**The SPEAKER:** It is with regret that I inform the House of the death, on 22 August 2017, of the Hon. James Caird Bruxner, a former Minister of the Crown, who served as the member for Tenterfield from 3 March 1962 to 28 August 1981. On behalf of the House, I extend to his family the deep sympathy of the Legislative Assembly in the loss sustained. The death of the Hon. James Caird Bruxner will be the subject of a motion of sympathy on a future day.

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

*Bills*

**SYDNEY PUBLIC RESERVES (PUBLIC SAFETY) BILL 2017**

**CHARITABLE FUNDRAISING AMENDMENT (INQUIRIES) BILL 2017**

**COAL MINE SUBSIDENCE COMPENSATION BILL 2017**

**ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT AMENDMENT (STAGED DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS) BILL 2017**

**ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT AND ELECTORAL LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (PLANNING PANELS AND ENFORCEMENT) BILL 2017**

**JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2017**

**TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (AUTOMATED VEHICLE TRIALS AND INNOVATION) BILL 2017**

**Assent**

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

*Governor*

**ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT**

**The SPEAKER:** I report the receipt of the following message from His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor:

T F BATHURST  
Lieutenant-Governor

Government House  
Sydney, 26 August 2017

The Honourable Thomas Frederick Bathurst, AC, Lieutenant-Governor of the State of New South Wales, has the honour to inform the Legislative Assembly that, consequent on the Governor of New South Wales, His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley, AC, DSC (Ret'd), being absent from the State, he has assumed the administration of the Government of the State.

**ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT**

**The SPEAKER:** I report the receipt of the following message from His Excellency the Governor:

DAVID HURLEY  
Governor

Government House  
Sydney, 27 August 2017

General David Hurley, AC, DSC (Ret'd), Governor of New South Wales, has the honour to inform the Legislative Assembly that he has re-assumed the administration of the Government of the State.

### ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT

**The SPEAKER:** I report the receipt of the following message from His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor:

T F BATHURST  
Lieutenant-Governor

Government House  
Sydney, 2 September 2017

The Honourable Thomas Frederick Bathurst, AC, Lieutenant-Governor of the State of New South Wales, has the honour to inform the Legislative Assembly that, consequent on the Governor of New South Wales, His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley, AC, DSC (Ret'd), being absent from the State, he has assumed the administration of the Government of the State.

### ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT

**The SPEAKER:** I report the receipt of the following message from His Excellency the Governor:

DAVID HURLEY  
Governor

Government House  
Sydney, 3 September 2017

General David Hurley, AC, DSC (Ret'd), Governor of New South Wales, has the honour to inform the Legislative Assembly that he has re-assumed the administration of the Government of the State.

### *Members*

### ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF BLACKTOWN

#### Vacant Seat

**The SPEAKER:** I advise the House that on 25 August 2017 I received a letter from John Cameron Robertson resigning his seat as member for the electoral district of Blacktown.

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** I move:

That in accordance with section 70 of the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912, the seat of the member for Blacktown be declared vacant, by reason of the resignation of John Cameron Robertson.

**Motion agreed to.**

### ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF COOTAMUNDRA

#### Vacant Seat

**The SPEAKER:** I advise the House that on 1 September 2017 I received a letter from Katrina Ann Hodgkinson resigning her seat as member for the electoral district of Cootamundra.

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** I move:

That in accordance with section 70 of the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912, the seat of the member for Cootamundra be declared vacant, by reason of the resignation of Katrina Ann Hodgkinson.

**Motion agreed to.** [*During the giving of notices of motions*]

### *Notices*

### PRESENTATION

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

### *Question Time*

### WATER MANAGEMENT AND COMPLIANCE INTERIM REPORT

**Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (14:30):** My question is directed to the Premier. Given the Matthews report found her Government's agencies allowed unethical behaviour and a group culture contrary to good public administration, why has she not dumped Minister Blair?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The question is in order. Members will come to order.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:31):** First, I acknowledge and thank Mr Matthews for the report he handed down yesterday. He produced the report within a short time frame, as the

Government requested. Nobody can deny that the report is very confronting. Nobody who has looked at the report would deny the serious issues he raised, which the Government already is committed to addressing. The Government takes such matters extremely seriously. I am grateful to Mr Matthews not only for the report but also for his ongoing work. As the House would appreciate, the Government asked for an initial report within a month and a more detailed follow-up report in addition to a number of other ongoing investigations.

I do not for a second take away from the fact that the issues he raised are serious. The systemic issues he raised are so serious that yesterday the Government took action. The Government adopted all the recommendations in principle. I will provide more information to the House as we examine the issues. I re-emphasise and state for the record the Government's gratitude to Mr Matthews. I also reassure the community that the Government will take whatever action is necessary to ensure that it not only deals with the systemic issues but also restores confidence in the process, which is an important issue. In relation to the Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry, Niall Blair, I state in the strongest possible terms that he is an outstanding Minister.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Yesterday Minister Blair demonstrated his capacity when he not only held up to account various issues raised by Mr Matthews but also took swift action.

[Interruption]

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Kogarah to order for the first time. That was an outrageous interjection. He will not yell and scream across the Chamber. If the member for Kogarah continues to interject he will be called to order for the second time.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I am grateful to Minister Blair for taking swift action because the Government is committed to addressing the serious issues.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I am interested in comments made by the Leader of the Opposition, who suggested that because some irrigators made donations to The Nationals that party should not be looking after the Regional Water portfolio. That is an interesting threshold for the Labor Party to set. On that basis, given that the Health Services Union donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Labor Party, the Labor Party should never hold the Health portfolio. The Rail, Tram and Bus Union donates funds to the Labor Party, so the Labor Party should never hold the Transport portfolio. I could go on.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Opposition members will come to order. Some interjections are ridiculous and stupid.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Unlike Opposition members, when there are issues to be fixed, this Government will fix them. When there are issues to be dealt with, this Government will deal with them. I state that in the strongest possible terms.

### ENERGY PRICES

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (14:34):** My question is addressed to the Premier. How will families, senior citizens and small businesses benefit from the New South Wales Government's energy relief package?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:35):** I thank the member for Heathcote for his question. Yesterday he and I had a lovely morning at Helensburgh where we spoke to many shopkeepers about the opportunities the New South Wales Government is creating to support small businesses when they might experience increased energy prices.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Prospect is on his final warning. The member for Port Stephens will come to order.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I am pleased to state that the Liberal Party, in addition to being the party for the workers, is also the party that represents households, senior citizens and small businesses. When it comes to energy, New South Wales is leading the nation in both securing supply and putting downward pressure on prices. The New South Wales Government is committed to supporting anyone who may be unduly stressed because of the increasing cost of energy. A couple of weeks ago, alongside the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Energy and Utilities, I was pleased to announce the nation's most comprehensive package of reforms to support the most vulnerable households, and senior citizens, working families who might be doing it tough because of increased energy prices, and small businesses.

The New South Wales Government appreciates that small businesses are the backbone of employment and our communities but, if they are impacted adversely by increased prices, the Government does not want those increases passed on to consumers. That is why the Government announced a package of measures that are the strongest in the nation by a mile. Why is the New South Wales Government able to do that? It is because this Government has a strong budget position and a strong economy. That is why it is able to support the most vulnerable in our communities.

I am pleased to state that from early next year small businesses that need to operate refrigerators and air-conditioning can receive hundreds if not thousands of dollars in savings when they upgrade their equipment. The Government will discount up to half the cost of that equipment. It is estimated that many small businesses will benefit from a reduction in costs of approximately \$1,900 or almost \$2,000 in the cost of energy during a 12-month period. This means that small businesses will be able not only to absorb increased energy prices but also to upgrade their equipment. If they do not have the up-front capital cost, the Government will support them in purchasing new equipment that could last them for many years—way beyond the current challenge.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Yesterday I was pleased to join the member for Heathcote in visiting small businesses in Helensburgh and to explain the business opportunities to them. They were extremely receptive and very positive about that.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Shellharbour to order for the first time. Opposition members will cease interjecting.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I was also pleased to join the member for Oatley when he spoke to many family-run business proprietors in Mortdale who really appreciate the support the Government is offering. We may have put on a bit of weight in Concord as we visited some coffee shops and cannoli cafés in Drummoyne, but similarly we spoke to many business proprietors. I was also pleased to join the member for Seven Hills when we visited the Winston Hills shopping centre and spoke to local residents and business proprietors. The Liberal Party is the political party that supports workers, small businesses and households.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the member for Prospect that he has received his final warning.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I am also pleased to say that all households can receive hundreds of dollars worth of discounts when replacing lighting and air-conditioning equipment. Households can save up to \$500 a year by purchasing more efficient appliances. The Government knows that those who are doing it toughest are those who are receiving existing rebates. This Government not only has increased the number of people who are eligible for rebates but also has extended rebates not previously covered when Labor was in government. In addition, the Government immediately increased rebates by 20 per cent. Anybody who is currently receiving a rebate immediately has extra dollars in their pockets. When those people get their next bills they will appreciate that they have a State Government that cares about them.

I am pleased that all people on existing rebates will see that increase when they get their next bill. That includes not only vulnerable seniors but also recipients of family tax benefits and other arrangements. That is great news for the hundreds of thousands of affected households across New South Wales. We appreciate that it is important for us not only to support those who are doing it tough during this power price increase but also to make sure we do not follow the big energy price mistakes that those opposite made when they were in government.  
*[Extension of time]*

When we had a Labor Government we unfortunately saw New South Wales go from having the lowest electricity prices to having prices that were higher than the national average. The Labor Government managed to turn what it had inherited into an absolute disaster for households and families. It is interesting that one of the apparent highlights in the budget reply speech of the Leader of the Opposition was about re-regulating the energy market. The experts tell us that that will push prices up, not down. People do not need to listen to what we say about that; they need to listen to the Australian Energy Council, which is the peak body for Australia's major energy businesses.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** The council said on 22 June that the policy of the Leader of the Opposition "will do nothing to protect households from the rising cost of living". That is the policy of those opposite.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Cessnock will come to order. This is not a debate.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** The Labor Party wants to take us back to the Dark Ages figuratively, metaphorically, and literally. I reiterate the comment of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal that "in the two years since prices were deregulated in New South Wales we have seen substantial innovation and continued price discounting delivering benefits to customers."

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** All the experts have given their verdicts: The Labor Party is hopeless when it comes to managing the cost of living and putting downward pressure on pricing. We are the party of the worker, of small business, of households, and of seniors.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order. I remind members that interjections are disorderly at all times.

#### WATER MANAGEMENT AND COMPLIANCE INTERIM REPORT

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) (14:42):** My question is directed to the Deputy Premier. Given the current investigation into water theft on an industrial scale, will The Nationals cease accepting donations from those cotton irrigators who are the subject of current inquiries and investigations?

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

**Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional New South Wales, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business) (14:42):** Yesterday's report did bring some transparency around an issue that has been plaguing this State for more than a decade. Ken Matthews indicated that a lot of the enforcement issues have been 10-plus years in the making. This is not a deliberate attempt by public servants or government—

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

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** No, not at all. Unfortunately, it has got to the point—as we saw from the *Four Corners* story—where there have been some allegations of water theft. We take those allegations seriously. I have spoken in this House about the 500-plus investigations that happen each and every year around water theft in this State and the prosecutions that come off the back of those investigations. Remember that the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, which we support, is all about finding the balance between the environment, irrigators and, of course, communities. It is about making sure that water is used in a way that supports all three of those pillars. We will continue to be the Government that cracks down on water theft. That is the issue. Ken Matthews' report released yesterday made it absolutely clear that there are issues to which the Government needs to respond.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order. Those who continue to interject will be removed from the Chamber.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** I have great confidence that Minister Niall Blair will deal with what are legacy issues. As to the question about donations, let us not forget that over the past six years this side of House has put in place some of the toughest donations laws in this nation.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Opposition members will come to order. I call the member for Wyong to order for the first time.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order before I hear the point of order from the member for Maroubra.

**Ms Gladys Berejiklian:** He has barely said anything.

**Mr Michael Daley:** What was that?

**Ms Gladys Berejiklian:** Exactly. Sit down.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Maroubra will cease arguing across the Chamber.

**Mr Michael Daley:** My question was about donations; it was not about enforcement or anything like that. We are asking whether The Nationals will cease accepting donations from the irrigators who are under the gun.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Maroubra should listen to the answer. The Deputy Premier has been entirely relevant to the question asked.



**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** I am being relevant to the question relating to donations. The Liberal-Nationals Government has put in place the toughest donations regime. That came off the back of the pre-2011 days. We know what happened with the donations culture that was fostered under the Labor Party pre-2011. We came to government and put in the toughest donations regime. The Premier touched on this point, but the question came from the side of politics that receives union money from across different sectors. So we must question whether those opposite are then able to hold any portfolios, including Health, Transport or Industrial Relations.

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

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** We also know about the donations culture in Labor and Sussex Street regarding Chinese donors. We have seen it over and over again. Tobacco companies donated more than \$400,000 to the Labor Party.

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

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** Those tobacco companies donated \$200,000 to the State Labor Party and \$200,000 to the Federal Labor Party.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will cease interjecting. I cannot hear the Deputy Premier.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** Sam Dastyari has now seen the light and is lecturing his own side of politics that things must change when it comes to donations.

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

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** The donations that the member for Maroubra refers to are a \$10,000 donation in 2011 to Federal member Mark Coulton and the Federal Party, and a \$1,400 donation in 2016 to the New South Wales party.

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

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** That compares with the hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations that the Labor Party receives from the unions, its tobacco mates, and its Chinese mates. I do not think those opposite can lecture this side of the House about donations. I will finish as I started by saying that the Liberal-Nationals Government has put in place one of the toughest donations regimes in the country.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Maitland to order for the second time. She will cease shouting across the Chamber.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** It is a transparent regime that makes sure the people we represent can have confidence in the decisions of the Government in New South Wales.

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

### SMALL BUSINESS

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (14:48):** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, the Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business. How is the New South Wales Government supporting small businesses to grow and expand across this great State?

**Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional New South Wales, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business) (14:48):** I thank the member for Tweed for that fantastic question; that is the way to ask a question in question time. It is great to see the Leader of The Nationals in Victoria, Peter Walsh, in the gallery. Welcome, mate. This is how government is run in the number one State. Hopefully, Mr Walsh will take some messages back to the Andrews Government and show them how it is done. That is why New South Wales is the number one State.

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

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** It was fantastic to be back in the Tweed last week. My previous great trip to the Tweed was during the budget this year, when we announced \$534 million for the new Tweed Hospital. That has been welcomed by the people of Tweed.

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

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** It will probably help the southern end of Queensland as well, as people cross the border for health services.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Maitland will come to order. This is her final warning.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** It is a significant investment in health in New South Wales, and I congratulate the Minister for Health. It is part of the \$7.7 billion this Government is spending on health infrastructure across the State over the next four years. Often in this House I have spoken about the importance of small business. Small businesses in New South Wales, especially in regional New South Wales, represent 97 per cent of businesses. It is important to have the right environment to encourage small businesses to invest and to grow, which leads to the employment of more people. Since 2011, 330,000 new jobs have been created in New South Wales, with many of those jobs created by small businesses.

These businesses carry the burden, with many small business owners having to mortgage their homes and to show the courage to invest in their businesses and by so doing to create jobs. This is a story we will hear time and again in regional New South Wales: 70,000 new jobs were created because of the strength of small businesses. Recent data has shown that regional businesses have the highest business confidence in nine years. These businesses are confident about hiring employees and investing in their businesses. They are making sure that they continue to play a role in the New South Wales economy, where they are part of a great story because 90 per cent of business activity in Australia is taking place in New South Wales.

This State is underpinning the economy of Australia, not just of New South Wales. This reflects the courage of small business owners, who are investing in their businesses. However, for many of these businesses, access to finance has been difficult. The regulatory framework of banks makes it difficult for businesses to borrow money to invest in plant and equipment, unless the owners have bricks and mortar as security. Many business owners looking to expand their businesses are looking to invest in technology and innovation. They want to invest but are sometimes restricted in growing their businesses due to their lack of access to finance. That is why last week we announced a number of loan products under Jobs for NSW that are aimed at small businesses, especially those in regional New South Wales. The Regional Growth Loan is a small business loan of up to \$500,000. This interest-free loan means that small businesses can access funds over four years to help them expand their operations.

The loan has been taken up by a great surfboard manufacturing business, The Glass Lab, which is in the electorate of the member for Tweed. It is run by great young entrepreneur Adam Wessel. At the age of 16, surfer Adam left school to follow his passion and turn his hobby into a small business. In the past 14 years he has grown his operation to create a significant small business in the Tweed, in regional New South Wales. It operates in a competitive environment. His boards sell for about \$850, while imported boards from China sell for around \$500. So Adam's success means that he must offer something in his boards that the others do not. What he offers are quality, service and a niche product. He has grown his business and currently manufactures 7,000 boards for both the domestic and the export market.

Adam has received \$300,000 from Jobs for NSW and the New South Wales Government, which means he can fast-track the expansion of his business. He has moved into new premises and bought new machinery. He has automated part of his business and is growing it from 13 jobs to 30 jobs. Jobs for NSW is about job creation through small business by improving access to finance. In Adam's case, he was able to create more jobs through a loan product from the New South Wales Government of \$300,000 to grow his business. Queensland tried to entice him to move his business there, but he chose to stay in New South Wales because he was born and bred here. *[Extension of time]*

Instead of going across the border to Queensland, Adam is remaining in New South Wales and continuing to be part of our strong economic story for small businesses. It was exciting to see his business. His proud parents were there on the day that we attended the official opening. Adam is a fantastic example of the small business owners, the entrepreneurs, we have in regional New South Wales. These loans are not confined to regional areas. We also have the flexible Accelerating Growth Loans through Jobs for NSW for metropolitan businesses with a turnover of \$500,000 or more. We also have a loan product for the bigger end of small business, for businesses that turn over more than \$1 million. They have access to a loan product introduced by the New South Wales Government of between \$500,000 and \$1.2 million. These products are part of Jobs for NSW promoting small businesses as well as creating an environment in which small businesses can flourish. Jobs for NSW is a \$190 million fund and an initiative of the New South Wales Government. It is headed by chairman David Thodey, formerly of Telstra and IBM.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Those members who wish to have private conversations will do so outside the Chamber.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** There are representatives on the board of Jobs for NSW from regional businesses, including Jane Cay, who comes from my region of Cooma. She runs a fantastic online fashion business called Birdsnest that hires 120 staff in regional New South Wales. Those are the sorts of entrepreneurs and small business owners we want to support through loan products and grants from Jobs for NSW. There are other resources that these businesses can access, including through the NSW Business Connect program, which gives

advice to small businesses. In the budget we announced a \$30 million investment in digital and financial literacy training to empower small business owners. It is clear why New South Wales is powering ahead when it comes to small businesses, but there is more to be done. We want to work with small businesses. Direct investments from Jobs for NSW have already resulted in the creation of 13,000 new jobs in this State. We will continue to work to create the most fertile environment for small business in the nation.

*Visitors*

**VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** Before I call the member for Kogarah, I welcome to the gallery newly elected Independent Councillor Carlos Da Rocha, who was elected on Saturday to Randwick City Council.

*Question Time*

**WATER MANAGEMENT AND COMPLIANCE INTERIM REPORT**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (14:55):** My question is directed to the Premier. Given the Matthews inquiry has limited powers and investigated the actions only of departmental officials, will the Premier now call a judicial inquiry into the conduct and actions of successive Ministers from The Nationals?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will cease interjecting. The Premier does not require any assistance from Government members.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:56):** I would have thought the shadow Minister for Water would be aware that there are in fact five ongoing investigations in relation to the allegations raised.

**Mr Michael Daley:** None of them judicial.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Those opposite always interject when they ask a dud question, so I have no doubt that that was dud question.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** As I understand it, there are about five current and ongoing investigations.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I think the public can have confidence that our Government is being completely up-front in making public whatever the investigations find, whatever systemic issues are identified and the confronting nature of and revelations in the Matthews report. Our job is to make sure that we fix any systemic issues.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Gosford will come to order. This is not a debate.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** If there has been any wrongdoing, those people will be dealt with. If we can make further reforms, we will make them. We are an upfront and transparent government. As soon as the Government absorbed the report it made sure that it made those findings public. I assure the community that any report commissioned by this Government will be released because at the end of the day we need to do what is right by the community. I find it curious that the member for Kogarah asked this question because in June this year a newspaper report identified that an electorate officer for a New South Wales frontbencher—often touted as a future party leader—holds a senior position in a Chinese Communist Party aligned lobbying organisation.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order—

**Ms Kate Washington:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Strathfield will resume her seat or I will hear the point of order of the member for Port Stephens. I will let the member for Strathfield have it. The Minister for Corrections will come to order. He will not talk to the member for Strathfield. The member for Strathfield will not look at Government members. Government members will come to order. What is the member for Strathfield doing?

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Do I have the call?

**The SPEAKER:** Yes. I gave the member for Strathfield the call three times.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** I did not know. You were telling me to sit and stand, you were telling the Minister not to talk to me and me not to talk to myself.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Strathfield does not listen. What is the member's point of order?

**Ms Jodi McKay:** I refer to Standing Order 129. This is a serious issue about water theft, and it is about a judicial inquiry.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The seriousness of the issue has nothing to do with the point of order.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** The Premier was carrying on about something that has nothing to do with the topic.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I am not rejecting the point of order but I will hear further from the Premier.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** The shadow Minister for Water asked a question about integrity and I am answering a question about integrity.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Maitland will come to order. This is her final warning.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** But the member for Kogarah will be relieved that he at least has the votes of the member for Port Stephens and the member for Strathfield whenever he is challenging the Leader of the Opposition.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Kogarah will cease interjecting or he will be removed from the Chamber.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** When it comes to matters of integrity, I simply say to the shadow Minister for Water that serious issues were raised.

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129, relevance. It is not about anyone's integrity except this Government's. The Government has been asked whether it will have a judicial inquiry.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I think I have made my point about integrity and the member for Kogarah.

[*Interruption*]

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** You want more do you? I will finish the quote. It said that the party leader holds a senior position.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order: Can we accept what the Premier just said about making her point?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! What is the member's point of order? This is not an argument.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** It is under Standing Order 129.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. I said that I would hear further from the Premier.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Look at the way we responded to the report, and look at the abominable behaviour of members opposite.

#### **SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING FUND**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (15:01):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Family and Community Services, Minister for Social Housing, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. How is the Government supporting vulnerable people and families by creating more social and affordable housing in New South Wales?

**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) (15:01):** I thank the member for Seven Hills for his question and for his support of the vulnerable in his community. This Government is committed to an integrated social and affordable housing continuum, ensuring that the most vulnerable in our community have a safe and affordable place to live. I am pleased to inform the House that today the Premier and I announced the second phase of the Social and Affordable Housing Fund—or SAHF.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Bankstown will come to order. If she continues to interject she will be removed from the Chamber. This is her final warning.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** The Government has now committed to targeting an additional 1,200 homes—bringing the total figure to 3,400 new social and affordable houses through the SAHF, following the 2,200 announced in March. The SAHF provides access to accommodation, asset and tenancy management and tailored support accommodation coordination services for each tenant and household member. The SAHF encourages people to live independently and, where possible, to move beyond the need for social housing. This will ensure that more people will get homes connected to transport, jobs, education and tailored support services. We also know that women aged 55 and over are one of the fastest growing homeless cohorts in Australia.

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

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** That is why for phase two of the SAHF we are encouraging proposals that cater to older women in the community. The sector has welcomed the fund.

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

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** NSW Council of Social Service chief executive officer [CEO] Tracy Howe said that the fund "provides assurance that the Government has a long-term commitment" to social and affordable housing. Scott Langford, Group CEO of St George Community Housing, said, "We congratulate the New South Wales Government for their continued commitment to support vulnerable people access the services they need to connect to their communities and make the most of opportunities to improve their lives." I strongly encourage community housing providers, not-for-profit and commercial organisations to be part of the tender process for phase two when market sounding commences next month. Phase two follows the announcement earlier this year of the successful proponents of phase one of the fund.

Phase one will deliver 2,200 additional social and affordable homes across New South Wales over the next four years to 2020. The first tranche of homes, consisting of 33 dwellings, has already been rolled out by Uniting. People who were once on the social housing waiting list have now moved into homes funded under the SAHF. Construction of dwellings under phase one is also continuing, with 130 dwellings currently under construction. Gone are the days when the Government simply built and managed social and affordable homes. The SAHF model is intended to help break intergenerational disadvantage by providing services to those who need them. In these locations our partners are building and procuring high-quality homes close to train stations and bus stops, shops, schools and services so that people can be involved in their communities, not isolated from them.

But the SAHF is just one part of New South Wales' strategy to grow social and affordable housing. New South Wales now has the biggest social housing building and replacement program of any State in the country. As part of Future Directions, we have committed to our Communities Plus program, which will create 23,000 new and replacement social housing dwellings, 500 affordable housing dwellings and 40,000 private housing dwellings. The flagship of Communities Plus is the renewal of large housing estates. This includes sites in Telopea, Waterloo, Ivanhoe, Riverwood and Arncliffe.

These ageing estates will be transformed into mixed communities where social housing blends in with private and affordable housing, with better access to transport and employment, improved community facilities and open spaces. There is also a number of neighbourhood projects in metropolitan Sydney and regional areas of New South Wales in places such as Liverpool, Seven Hills, Glendale and the Tweed. There is no doubt that New South Wales is leading the way when it comes to new and innovative ways of providing social and affordable housing. We have a strong, comprehensive reform program that is a far cry from the record of those opposite. *[Extension of time]*

It is important to note that for the 16 years those opposite were in power the Labor Party had no significant plan for social housing. There was no focus on social outcomes.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Bankstown to remove herself from the Chamber for a period of two hours.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Bankstown left the Chamber at 15:07.]*

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** Housing was simply a government asset given to a tenant with no consideration of the social needs of the tenant. It has taken a Coalition Government to come up with a real plan for social housing, an enabling plan for social housing that includes a social housing building program that is the envy of the country. I am proud this Government is helping to transform the lives of some of the most vulnerable in our community.

**MURRAY-DARLING BASIN PLAN**

**Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (15:08):** My question is directed to the Premier. Will the Premier commit to visiting communities, such as Menindee and Wilcannia on the Darling River, that have suffered because of the massive theft of water—as I did last year and again last week?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (15:08):** I do not thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question; it was not a very good question. From the day that I became Premier I made a commitment that rural and regional New South Wales would be front and centre of our Government's commitment to delivering for every community, and we have stuck by that. The Deputy Premier, the whole team and I have made it clear that we govern for all of New South Wales. Whether it is in the north, the south or the Far West—no matter where one lives and no matter what one's postcode is—every person in this State and their families should have the opportunity to be their best. I am extremely proud of that. One of the things I enjoy most about my role as Premier is the opportunity to visit communities across the State. I will continue to do that.

**Ms Anna Watson:** The Premier should come to Shellharbour Hospital and let them hear what she has to say.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I find it curious that the Labor Party has suddenly discovered rural and regional New South Wales. I have an interesting article from the *Australian* from 28 July 2017, which reads:

Senior NSW ALP officials say the Country Labor arm of their party has become an “embarrassment” after coming close to insolvency and requiring a \$1.68 million loan to survive.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The question was specifically about Menindee and Wilcannia. One would think those communities were important to The Nationals.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier is referring to other parts of the State that she has visited. The member for Strathfield will resume her seat. She will not restrict the Premier to referring only to three towns.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** The article reads:

...Labor's NSW party machine, based in Sydney...

—which is typical of those opposite—

...attempted to provide a financial bailout last year after the state election campaign in 2015 had left Country Labor seriously short of money from funding regional candidates.

That is how much those opposite care about country life.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** It is also interesting that although Country Labor has an official website where its policies can be uploaded, it has not uploaded anything for a few years. There is nothing there. In rural and regional New South Wales, unfortunately, the Labor Party cares only about one thing: preference deals. Whenever there is a preference deal to be had, the Labor Party is all over it. However, when it comes to repairing infrastructure, providing services or supporting the community, those opposite do not care about rural and regional New South Wales.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** When will the Premier visit communities on the Darling River? You are not visiting those communities.

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

**Ms Jodi McKay:** I am trying to help her.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier does not need the assistance of the member for Strathfield.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** We on this side of the House not only believe in rural and regional communities; we have acted to ensure that a third of our Government's infrastructure spend will go to those communities. In this year's budget we announced record funding for a number of special areas in rural and regional New South Wales.

**Mr Luke Foley:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. If she is not going to visit the Darling River communities, she should just admit it.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier has indicated that she has visited those communities and will continue to visit them.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** While those opposite are in the back room organising preference deals with the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party, we are delivering for rural and regional New South Wales and for every part of the State.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** We know that, in addition to funding valuable infrastructure, what is needed in rural and regional New South Wales is our physical presence. I will continue to visit those communities, as will the Deputy Premier and all of our team. The health Minister was in the bush yesterday. Every one of our team will make sure that rural and regional New South Wales receives the attention it deserves.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members who cannot sit still will leave the Chamber.

### **COST OF LIVING**

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) (15:13):** My question is addressed to the Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations. How is the New South Wales Government beating the nation in driving down the cost of living?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I am watching some recalcitrant members on the Opposition front bench. I remind the member for Prospect that he has been warned five times. The member for Maroubra will come to order or he will be removed from the Chamber.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Hawkesbury—Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations) (15:14):** I thank the member for Camden, the great Government Whip, for his question. It was great to be out in Harrington Park at the Narellan Chamber of Commerce recently to address the business community and the young future leaders of the Camden area, who know all too well the importance of strong financial management in being able to bring down the cost of living for families across this State. They know, as I know, that no government in the history of this State has done more to address issues around cost of living than the Berejiklian-Barilaro Government. Not only are we future-proofing New South Wales with our enormous and significant infrastructure agenda but we are also making record investments in hospitals, new roads, rail and public transport, and—under our great Minister for Education—new and upgraded schools across the State.

This Government is keenly focused on the challenges faced by families across the State. Wage growth has softened across Australia. The entire nation is at a crossroads on issues such as electricity prices. Now more than ever people across Australia need their elected representatives to fight for a fair go for them and their families. Which governments around Australia are in a position to do something about this? Not the Western Australian Government which—as we saw in its recent budget—is too busy increasing taxes; not its comrades in South Australia who are busy building a giant battery; and certainly not those lazy Queenslanders. The Queensland Government makes the 16 years when those opposite were in government look quite good. The Queensland Government must be the most awful government in the history of this country.

While other governments around this country are floundering, one Government has the budget back in the black. We have our economy humming and we are making a difference. We are helping first home buyers with the most generous housing affordability package in the nation. We are saving first home buyers up to \$34,000 and helping them get a foot in the door. This has already eased the squeeze. The latest data shows that July was the biggest month for first home buyers in five years. We are helping communities by capping Opal fares at the consumer price index. Under Labor, there were transport hikes of 87 per cent. Under Labor, Sydney Water prices were the second highest in the country. Under us, they are lowest in the nation. We reduced water bills by \$100 last year.

**Mr Chris Minns:** What about the desalination plant?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** The desalination plant? I cannot believe the member for Kogarah has brought up the desalination plant, which is the creation of those opposite.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Lakemba to order for the first time. I call the member for Lakemba to order for the second time. He will cease interjecting. The member for Cessnock will cease interjecting. I have warned him 10 times.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** We are also giving families a \$217.3 million investment that will lower the cost of early childhood education and help their children get the best start in life. We saw a great package in the budget from the Minister for Sport, which gives a \$100 rebate to every school-age child to get them involved in community sport and other activities. The finance Minister has done great work with compulsory third party insurance, saving families an average of \$120 per year on green slips. In health and for hospital patients and their families we have cut the cost of parking at hospitals by around \$200 each week.

These measures do not just happen; they happen if the Government is in a strong budget position. None of this would be possible under a Labor government, as we have seen in Labor governments across the country. When it comes to energy there is no-one doing more to tackle power bills than the Liberals and Nationals. As the Premier has mentioned, we have extended the energy rebate scheme by 20 per cent, we have introduced a discount on energy efficient appliances and we have introduced the most comprehensive energy relief package for small business. *[Extension of time]*

We are the only State in Australia where citizens have been guaranteed that the network prices will be lower in 2019 than they were in 2014. The fact is that the Labor Party pays lip service to the pressures faced by families across the State but then sells them down the river. Labor members put their ideology and politics before the people that they are elected to represent. Whilst it would be enough, it is not just me who is saying it. The great former Labor Treasurer Michael Costa said recently:

Bill Shorten doesn't understand electricity markets ...

They have gone a long way from the good old Labor days, I can tell you. He said:

... prices reflect the distortions that governments have created ...

[Labor] should remember the electricity market reforms were started by the Keating government. [Labor] is sounding more and more like a left-wing socialist ideologue. Labor's 50 per cent renewable energy target is a further betrayal of blue-collar workers and will lead to the deindustrialisation of Australia.

So Blackout Bill has sold out the working people of New South Wales again. What would Michael Costa make of Whiteout Luke's own left-wing socialist proposals to re-regulate the industry—a proposal, as the Premier has said, that the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] has said will increase electricity bills for working families across the State? When Michael Costa says that the problem is too much interference, what is NSW Labor's response? It is more government interference. Whether it is on energy or anything else, Labor will put politics first; we will put the people of New South Wales first.

#### NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (15:21):** My question is directed to the Minister for Disability Services. Given the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] linkages and capacity building are not yet operating, are underfunded and have gaps in who is covered, what will the Minister do to ensure that independent information and advocacy services continue to receive New South Wales Government funding and support after June 2018?

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Disability Services) (15:22):** I take a moment to acknowledge the role advocates have played on behalf of people with disability, and indeed on behalf of some of the most vulnerable members of our society. It has been a great role. In the past, advocates have been funded by the New South Wales Government to lobby it for funding for people with disability.

**Ms Liesl Tesch:** And to protect the rights of people with disabilities.

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

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** As of July next year, funding for people with disability will not be an issue. This Government will spend every cent of its \$3.2 billion budget—it will be invested in the NDIS. That \$3.2 billion from our Government will be matched by the Federal Government to the tune of an additional \$3.3 billion. That will be a doubling of funding for some of the most vulnerable people in New South Wales—those with permanent disability. Funding will not be an issue. We have placed the importance of people with disability first and foremost and we have led the way with the NDIS. Indeed, if it had not been for this Government being the first government to sign up to the NDIS, the scheme across this country would have been placed in jeopardy. We have not only led the way in this country but we have also led the way around the world in our focus on people with disability.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order. The member for Maitland will come to order. This is her final warning.

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** A disgrace!

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Maitland to remove herself from the Chamber for a period of three hours.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Maitland left the Chamber at 15:25.]*



**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** That is because every person with disability in the future will through that funding have the choice of their services, the choice of their supports and the choice of their accommodation to ensure that they lead the most inclusive and best quality life they can in this State.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Port Stephens to remove herself from the Chamber for a period of three hours.

**Ms Kate Washington:** A disgrace!

**The SPEAKER:** You are a disgrace. I direct the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms to remove the member for Port Stephens from the Chamber under Standing Order 249.

*[The member for Port Stephens left the Chamber accompanied by the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms.]*

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** Included in that is choice for people with disability. The Labor Opposition does not care about the most vulnerable people in this State. Labor members do not care about people with disability because every time I answer a question they are thrown out of the Chamber. They do not want to hear—

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

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** In the future, people with disability—

**Ms Liesl Tesch:** Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129. Labor members care about this issue.

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

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** I acknowledge that point as it relates to one member, but one would think—

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order: I ask the Minister to withdraw that comment. Will he withdraw that comment?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Strathfield will resume her seat or she will be removed from the Chamber.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** In the past the NDIS had bipartisan support in Parliament, but every time it is raised there are all these interjections from the Labor Opposition.

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

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** We have placed people with disability—the most vulnerable people—first and foremost. Coming back to the question at hand, the New South Wales Heads of Agreement for the NDIS implementation stipulate that New South Wales will no longer fund specialist disability supports under the full NDIS scheme. However, under our agreement the New South Wales Government's three-year advocacy funding will continue until June next year, which provides assurance of funding throughout the transition period of the NDIS. We will provide funding of \$10.6 million to 42 providers of specialist disability advocacy services—

**Ms Liesl Tesch:** It doesn't mean that people with disability will have access after 30 June.

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

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** —and information under the three-year agreement. We will also provide resources in the form of a one-off supplementary grant of \$1.7 million to assist 43 disability information and advocacy providers with increased demand for information supports. On top of that there will be an additional \$1.5 million in one-off grants on behalf of advocates going forward.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Gosford to remove herself from the Chamber for a period of two hours.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Gosford left the Chamber at 15:27.]*

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** The NDIS is also providing information, linkages and capacity-building [ILC] supports. The ILC is the component of the NDIS that provides information, linkages and referrals to connect people with disability, their families and carers with appropriate disability supports. The second round of ILC funding opened on 16 August and will close on 29 September. I am happy to answer further if the member for Sydney would like more information. *[Time expired.]*

### COMPULSORY THIRD PARTY INSURANCE

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (15:27):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Finance, Services and Property. How much can motorists in my electorate of Oatley expect to save off their premiums as a result of the Government's compulsory third party insurance reforms?

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Finance, Services and Property) (15:28):** A lot of people in this Chamber and, in fact, across New South Wales want to know what the reduction in their premium will be by the end of the year when the reforms really kick in on 1 December. The New South Wales Government understands that the costs of green slips place a strain on household budgets.

Each year motorists across the State experience bill shock when they renew their green slip insurance because premiums have risen an incredible 85 per cent in Sydney over the past decade. This makes compulsory third party [CTP] premiums in New South Wales among the highest in the country, mainly due to a significant spike in minor injury claims, insurer super-profits, and fraud. Without reform, green slips in New South Wales were expected to continue to rise to an eye-watering average of \$708 per premium. The average household has two cars, therefore it would not be unusual for them to be paying green slip premiums totalling \$1,400 per year.

The New South Wales Council of Social Service, which works with and for people experiencing poverty and disadvantage, puts it simply: "There is a fundamental need to reform the CTP scheme to make it more affordable." As I have said in this House before, more than half a million motorists are starting to see a reduction in their premiums even before the start date of the new scheme on 1 December. That is because of the outstanding work done by the people in the NSW Police Force in reducing fraud and bringing fraudsters to justice. I will have more to say about that in the months ahead.

Once this new scheme begins, motorists will receive an average premium reduction of \$120 per policy, as well as a reduction in taxi premiums of up to 40 per cent. For an average family in the electorate of Oatley, for example, these premium savings could be more than \$300 per family per year. That is real money that the New South Wales Government is putting back into the pockets of families to help ease cost-of-living pressures. The Berejiklian-Barilaro Government understands that the cost of living is an issue. There are so many individuals and families across our great State struggling to keep up with the cost of living. These savings will help the hip pocket and allow motorists to spend more money where it matters most.

I have some good news for members of this House. We will deliver savings to motorists in every electorate in our State. I will give a few examples. Average premiums for Sydney motorists will be slashed. I am sure the following members would like to know what the average savings for motorists in their electorates will be. The member for Holsworthy would be interested in the reductions in her electorate. The member for East Hills would be interested because his constituents would want to know what their reduction will be, as would the constituents of the member for Coogee and the member for Heathcote. All the motorists in these electorates will save around \$156 per year. That is a reduction of 22 per cent. The good news is not confined to the inner city; it also applies to outer Sydney motorists. For example, motorists in the electorates of Hawkesbury, Wollondilly, Camden and Penrith will receive premium reductions of the order of \$163 per year. That is a 29 per cent reduction in premiums.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** How about Strathfield?

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO:** Strathfield is in the inner city. Those constituents will have reductions of about \$156 on average. I know that the member for Strathfield will be very happy. That is good news for the motorists in Strathfield.

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

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO:** Motorists across Newcastle—in areas such as Terrigal, Gosford, The Entrance, Swansea, and Charleston—will see their premiums reduced by about \$112, which is a saving of about 24 per cent. Wollongong motorists—those in the electorates of Keira and Shellharbour—will not be left out. Their premiums will reduce on average by \$128, or a 23 per cent saving. Finally, country drivers will also save, including those in Griffith, Murray, Monaro, Cootamundra, Lismore, Bega, Barwon, Ballina, Myall Lakes, Tweed Heads and Albury. Country drivers should expect their premiums to be slashed by \$58, or 12 per cent. [*Extension of time*]

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister has the call and will be heard in silence.

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO:** Country drivers will also benefit from greater protections given to drivers involved in single-vehicle accidents—a big issue in the bush. So these reforms not only reduce premiums significantly but also provide greater protections for those in most need. The savings and benefits will also extend to taxidriviers, who currently pay a whopping \$8,000 on average for their green slips. But under the State

Government's reforms, Sydney taxidriviers will save more than \$3,000—about 40 per cent—bringing much-needed relief.

The new scheme delivers on the elusive trifecta: It improves important benefits for those injured on our roads; it significantly reduces the cost of premiums for motorists and taxi owners alike; and it will see the end of insurer super-profits. The premium savings that will be delivered through the reform of the New South Wales CTP scheme are proof of this Government's commitment to reducing the cost of living for motorists and families across New South Wales.

#### *Documents*

### **VARIATIONS OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ESTIMATES AND APPROPRIATIONS 2017-18**

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** In accordance with section 26 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, I table the Variations of the Receipts and Payments Estimates and Appropriations for 2017-18 arising from the provision by the Commonwealth of Specific Purpose Payments in excess of the amounts included in the State's receipts and payments estimates—Department of Justice, dated 22 August 2017.

### **CHILDREN'S GUARDIAN**

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with section 81P of the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912, I announce receipt from the Children's Guardian of the result of the audit of the Child-Related Conduct Declarations made by the member for Gosford, the member for Manly and the member for North Shore, received out of session on 7 September 2017.

**Ordered to be printed.**

#### *Committees*

### **COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

#### **Report: 2017 Review of the Annual Reports of the Advocate for Children and Young People and the Children's Guardian**

**The CLERK:** In accordance with clause 5 of schedule 2 of the Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014, I announce receipt of the report of the Committee on Children and Young People entitled, "2017 Review of the Annual Reports of the Advocate for Children and Young People and the Children's Guardian", Report No. 3/56, dated August 2017, received out of session on 14 August 2017 and authorised to be printed.

#### *Documents*

### **SYDNEY CRICKET AND SPORTS GROUND TRUST**

#### **Reports**

**The CLERK:** In accordance with section 11 of the Annual Reports (Statutory Bodies) Act 1984, I announce receipt of the report of the Sydney Cricket and Sports Ground Trust for the year ended 28 February 2017, received out of session on 16 August 2017 and authorised to be printed.

### **AUDIT OFFICE**

#### **Reports**

**The CLERK:** In accordance with section 12A of the Annual Reports (Statutory Bodies) Act 1984, I announce receipt of the report of the Audit Office for the year ended 30 June 2017, received out of session on 11 September 2017 and authorised to be printed.

### **AUDITOR-GENERAL**

#### **Reports**

**The CLERK:** In accordance with section 63C of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, I announce receipt of a Performance Audit Report of the Auditor-General entitled, "Planning and Evaluating Palliative Care Services in NSW: NSW Health", dated August 2017, received out of session on 17 August 2017 and authorised to be printed.

*Committees***COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE****Government Response: Procurement of Government Infrastructure Projects**

**The CLERK:** I announce receipt of the Government Response to Report No. 2/56 of the Legislative Assembly Committee on Transport and Infrastructure, entitled "Procurement of Government Infrastructure Projects", received out of session on 22 August 2017 and authorised to be printed.

*Documents***NATIONAL RAIL SAFETY REGULATOR****Reports**

**The CLERK:** In accordance with section 46D of the Passenger Transport Act 1990, I announce receipt of the report of the National Rail Safety Regulator entitled, "Implementation of the NSW Government's response to the Final Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Waterfall Rail Accident Reporting period: April 2016—March 2017", received out of session on 5 September 2017 and authorised to be printed.

*Committees***PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE (PAC)****Government Response: Examination of Auditor-General's Performance Audit Reports December 2014 - June 2015**

**The CLERK:** I announce receipt of the Government Response to Report 4/56 of the Public Accounts Committee entitled "Examination of Auditor-General's Performance Audit Reports December 2014—June 2015", received out of session on 7 September 2017 and authorised to be printed.

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE (PAC)****Report: Examination of Auditor-General's Performance Audit Reports July 2015 – January 2016**

**Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH:** As Chair, I table the report of the Public Accounts Committee entitled, "Examination of Auditor-General's Performance Audit Reports July 2015—January 2016", dated September 2017. I move:

That the report be printed.

**Motion agreed to.**

**LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE****Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 42/56**

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN:** As Chair, I table report No. 42 of the Legislation Review Committee, entitled "Legislation Review Digest No. 42/56", dated 12 September 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. 41/56, dated 8 August 2017.

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS****Reference**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (15:38):** On behalf of the Chair and in accordance with Standing Order 299 (1), I inform the House that the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters has resolved to conduct an inquiry into preference counting in local government elections in New South Wales, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

*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**.

**Pig-dog Hunting Ban**

Petition requesting the banning of pig-dog hunting in New South Wales, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

**Slaughterhouse Monitoring**

Petition requesting mandatory closed-circuit television for all New South Wales slaughterhouses, 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**.

**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. Brad Hazzard—Nurse-to-patient Ratios—lodged 1 August 2017 (Mr Troy Grant)

The Hon. Troy Grant—Narrandera Shire Policing—lodged 1 August 2017 (Ms Katrina Hodgkinson)

The Hon. Niall Blair—Pig-dog Hunting Ban—lodged 1 August 2017 (Mr Alex Greenwich)

The Hon. Niall Blair—Slaughterhouse Monitoring—lodged 1 August 2017 (Mr Alex Greenwich)

The Hon. Andrew Constance—Bus Services Privatisation—lodged 2 August 2017 (Mr Luke Foley)

The Hon. Brad Hazzard—Iluka Ambulance Station—lodged 2 August 2017 (Mr Christopher Gulaptis)

The Hon. Andrew Constance—Inner West Bus Services—lodged 2 August 2017 (Ms Jo Haylen)

The Hon. Brad Hazzard—Campbelltown Hospital—lodged 2 August 2017 (Mr Greg Warren)

The Hon. Pru Goward—Inner City Social Housing—lodged 2 August 2017 (Mr Alex Greenwich).

The Hon. Niall Blair—Pig-dog Hunting Ban—lodged 10 August 2017 (Mr Alex Greenwich).

**BUSINESS LAPSED**

**The SPEAKER:** I advise the House that, in accordance with Standing Order 105 (3), General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) Nos 1651 to 1680, 1682 to 1738, 1740 to 1794 and 1796 to 1815 have lapsed.

I further advise the House that, in view of the resignation of the member for Cootamundra and in accordance with past practice, I order the removal from the *Business Paper* of General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) Nos 2037, 2043, 2133 and 2141 standing in the former member's name.

*Motions Accorded Priority***COST OF LIVING****Consideration**

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (15:41):** If my motion is accorded priority I intend to move:

That this House notes that:

- (1) The Opposition introduced 11 new taxes and increased taxes at least 21 times when it was in government.
- (2) The Opposition took New South Wales from the lowest electricity bills in the nation to higher than the national average.

- (3) In contrast, the Government is addressing the cost-of-living concerns by: increasing energy rebates for families and seniors, cutting green slip prices, and reducing the cost of hospital parking.

The motion of which I have given notice deserves priority because the people of New South Wales are concerned about the cost of living. They are concerned that their State Government is taking their livelihood seriously and doing everything possible to protect them from increases in the cost of living. There is only one government in this country that has the wherewithal to protect its citizens from increases in the cost of living because only one government in this country has done the budgeting hard yards to look after its finances.

I remind the House of some of the tax increases that occurred under the former Labor Government. Some of them may have slipped peoples' minds but a couple of them stand out as real beauties. My favourite is the vendor tax introduced in 2004. In one fell swoop, the Labor Party took a baseball bat to the property market. It ended the capacity of business to develop housing for the people of New South Wales, created the housing affordability problem that has dogged the State ever since, and slugged people's primary asset. Those opposite introduced that tax because they could not manage the State's finances and could find no other way to balance their books. The former Labor Government had to prop up its budget by raiding the household budgets of ordinary mums and dads. It made the mums and dads pay for its mismanagement.

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

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY:** I cite another example to show what Labor would do to ordinary citizens if it were ever returned to government. Labor would reintroduce the pension booking tax, which was originally introduced in March 2006. Prior to that date, senior citizens were able to use free pension travel vouchers. However, to fill the hole left by Labor's fiscal mismanagement, the former Labor Government introduced a \$10 fee or a fee equal to 15 per cent of the full adult fare for the journey, whichever was the highest amount. It slugged pensioners. That is why the people of New South Wales can never afford to have Labor back in power. A Labor government will hit pensioners, home owners and household budgets to make up for its own fiscal mismanagement. By contrast, the Liberal-Nationals Government has increased the rebate on power supply to ensure that people can afford to pay their bills. This Government will increase the support it gives to people because we are in a position to be able to do so.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

### Consideration

**Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (15:44):** The motion of which I have given notice deserves priority. Yesterday the Premier came out of hiding. She was nowhere to be seen on the weekend. She said, "I don't like to see party politics in local government." I bet she doesn't, because after Saturday we do not see much of the Liberal Party in local government. Let me inform the House what happened on the weekend. In Ryde, the Labor candidate for the State seat got a 23 per cent swing—so the member for Ryde will be gone. For the information of the member for East Hills, in the Revesby ward there was a 14 per cent swing against the Liberals. I say to the member for East Hills, "Stranger danger! You're gone, mate." The swing in the Waverley Council area alone means that the member for Coogee is gone.

The member for Oatley is my favourite. At least he tried to hold back the tide by covering all the booths with his own corflutes. What was the result of his great efforts of throwing himself between the Liberals and the Labor Party? It was a 20 per cent swing to Labor. Bring more corflutes, mate. This comes hot on the heels of the swings last September: in the Sutherland shire—the member for Heathcote is gone; in Liverpool—the member for Holsworthy is gone; in Blacktown—the member for Riverstone is gone; and the member for Seven Hills is gone. The swings in Penrith mean the member for Penrith, our favourite, is gone. He can go and get a job with the Sydney Cricket Ground Trust. The member for Mulgoa is gone. Despite the member for Parramatta rigging the boundaries in Parramatta, they still cannot control the council. As to Newcastle, I say to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, "Keep turning up and standing with the local Liberals because it was a landslide to the Labor Party on Saturday."

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister for Transport and Infrastructure will resume his seat.

**Mr LUKE FOLEY:** What about Shellharbour? Who was responsible for the collapse in Liberal Party support in Shellharbour? Not the member for Kiama! This will not end happily for the member for Kiama. All of last Saturday's local government election results can be summarised in just three words, the words of the State's most authoritative newspaper the *Auburn Review*: "Libs cop thumping." Premier, keep doing what you are doing.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Canterbury and the member for Keira to remove themselves from the Chamber for a period of three hours.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Canterbury and the member for Keira left the Chamber at 15:48.]*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Maroubra to remove himself from the Chamber for a period of two hours.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Maroubra left the Chamber at 15:49.]*

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....48  
Noes .....31  
Majority..... 17

#### AYES

Anderson, Mr K  
Barilaro, Mr J  
Brookes, Mr G  
Coure, Mr M  
Elliott, Mr D  
Gibbons, Ms M  
Gulaptis, Mr C  
Humphries, Mr K  
Lee, Dr G  
Notley-Smith, Mr B  
Pavey, Mrs M  
Piccoli, Mr A  
Rowell, Mr J  
Stokes, Mr R  
Tudehope, Mr D  
Williams, Mr R

Aplin, Mr G  
Berejiklian, Ms G  
Conolly, Mr K  
Crouch, Mr A  
Evans, Mr L  
Goward, Ms P  
Hazzard, Mr B  
Johnsen, Mr M  
Maguire, Mr D  
O'Dea, Mr J  
Perrottet, Mr D  
Provest, Mr G  
Sidoti, Mr J  
Taylor, Mr M  
Upton, Ms G  
Williams, Mrs L

Ayres, Mr S  
Bromhead, Mr S (teller)  
Constance, Mr A  
Davies, Ms T  
Fraser, Mr A  
Griffin, Mr J  
Henskens, Mr A  
Kean, Mr M  
Marshall, Mr A  
Patterson, Mr C (teller)  
Petinos, Ms E  
Roberts, Mr A  
Speakman, Mr M  
Toole, Mr P  
Ward, Mr G  
Wilson, Ms F

#### NOES

Atalla, Mr E  
Catley, Ms Y  
Dib, Mr J  
Finn, Ms J  
Harris, Mr D  
Hoenig, Mr R  
Lalich, Mr N (teller)  
McKay, Ms J  
Parker, Mr J  
Smith, Ms T F  
Zangari, Mr G

Barr, Mr C  
Chanthivong, Mr A  
Donato, Mr P  
Foley, Mr L  
Harrison, Ms J  
Hornery, Ms S  
Lynch, Mr P  
Mehan, Mr D  
Piper, Mr G  
Warren, Mr G

Car, Ms P  
Crakanthorp, Mr T  
Doyle, Ms T  
Greenwich, Mr A  
Haylen, Ms J  
Kamper, Mr S  
McDermott, Dr H  
Minns, Mr C  
Scully, Mr P  
Watson, Ms A (teller)

**Motion agreed to.**

### COST OF LIVING

#### Priority

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (15:54):** I move:

That this House notes that:

- (1) The Opposition introduced 11 new taxes and increased taxes at least 21 times when it was in government.
- (2) The Opposition took New South Wales from the lowest electricity bills in the nation to higher than the national average.
- (3) In contrast, the Government is addressing the cost-of-living concerns by: increasing energy rebates for families and seniors; cutting green slip prices; and reducing the cost of hospital parking.

When Labor was in government, it slugged the ordinary people of New South Wales to make up for the hole in its budget as a result of not being able to manage its money. The Labor Government left the people of New South

Wales with a legacy of increased prices and huge cost-of-living pressures. Due to Labor's policies, in the five-year period to 2013 the electricity network prices—which relate to the poles and wires—rose by 158 per cent for a typical Sydney household. That figure is hard to believe. In the following five-year period to date, network prices have fallen by 15 per cent—representing \$119 for a typical Sydney household—as a result of the policies of the Liberal-Nationals Government. This Government is doing everything it can to ease the cost-of-living burden on the people of New South Wales.

One does not often hear of prices falling, but network power prices as well as water prices are falling in New South Wales. In 2011, water and sewerage bills in Sydney were the second highest in the country. Water bills in Sydney are now the lowest in the country, closely followed by Newcastle. In 2016-17, typical annual household bills for Sydney Water customers decreased by an average of \$100. The cost of water in New South Wales went down, just as the cost of network power went down. If this Government continued the policies of the Opposition, these bills would cost every household in New South Wales hundreds of dollars more. That is why the people of New South Wales cannot afford to have that side of the House back in government. The Opposition cannot manage its own budget, so it takes the money out of the budgets of the people of New South Wales.

The Government has introduced measures for first home buyers to help people with cost-of-living pressures. The New South Wales budget contained up to \$34,360 in potential savings for individual first home buyers. The Government abolished all stamp duties for first home buyers for existing and new homes worth up to \$650,000 and introduced stamp duty discounts on homes worth up to \$800,000. We also abolished stamp duty on lenders mortgage insurance, which banks often require when lending to first home buyers with limited deposits. This saves purchasers up to \$2,900. A \$10,000 first home buyer grant is available to builders of new properties worth up to \$750,000 and purchasers of new properties worth up to \$600,000. These measures are paying off for the people of New South Wales. As we have heard from the Treasurer, the ratio of first home owners buying into the market in July is the highest it has been in five years. These results show that our policies are helping the people of New South Wales to deal with the cost-of-living pressures.

In Labor's last five years in government, rents were increasing at a rate of 5.8 per cent per annum. Thanks to a greater supply in the market, that rate has slowed to just 2.8 per cent per annum in the last five-year period. If we had left Labor's policies in place, people would also be priced out of the rental market. Given these figures, I predict that we will not see the Opposition back in power during our lifetime. It would be foolish for the people of New South Wales to put those opposite in power. The Government's taxation cuts in the budget included the abolition of crop and livestock insurance duty from 1 January 2018. We also abolished insurance duties for small businesses with turnovers of less than \$2 million; commercial vehicle insurance, including for aircrafts; professional indemnity insurance; and insurance for product and public liability. Small businesses are also benefitting from the policies of this Liberal-Nationals Government that are aimed at reducing the cost of doing business. Our policies enable small businesses to make a living, which benefits everyone in New South Wales.

Households will benefit from the Active Kids Rebate program. From 1 January next year, parents will be able to claim up to \$100 per schoolchild per calendar year to go towards the cost of sports registration or membership fees for after-school or weekend sport or active recreational activities, including Scouts and dance lessons. This rebate will not only help kids to be healthier but also help household budgets. This Government looks after its own finances so that it can help the families of New South Wales, unlike those on that side who cannot manage their finances and, as a result, punish the people of New South Wales. In the past five years, public transport fares have been capped to an increase of just 1.7 per cent a year—almost half the annual increase under Labor during its last five years in office, when the average increase was 3.1 per cent. This Government is being responsible and doing what we can to help with the household budgets of the people of New South Wales.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (15:59):** I thought I was watching an episode of *On the Buses* until I realised that it was more like *Seinfeld*. I listened to the fiction of the member for Riverstone. This Tories' notice of motion contains fiction that would receive greater ratings than even *Game of Thrones*. That means those opposite have to be hiding something. This has to be a red herring. I am not sure but it might have something to do with someone passing water. However, this motion enables me to put before the House some factual material that might help this incompetent Government to understand some factual scenarios.

Mr Deputy Speaker, do you know that this is the highest taxing government in Australia? The Tories have the audacity to reach back into history and pull up the actions of a former government, probably as far back as Jack Lang or Sir Henry Parkes, in their complaint about taxes. However, in 2015-16, per capita taxes in New South Wales surged to \$4,417 from \$4,013 in 2014-15, an increase of \$404 or more than 10 per cent. The second highest taxing State is Western Australia, where per capita taxes are \$145 lower at \$4,272. This is the highest taxing State, and those opposite talk about being concerned about the cost of living for ordinary people in New South Wales. Then they beat their chests about electricity prices, although people are bleeding from the effects of the increase in electricity prices. People have stopped buying Meals on Wheels to pay for their electricity



bills. This mob has allowed this situation to occur, through its ideological zealotry in the selling off of base load power stations and allowing the private sector to manipulate the market.

The Liberal Prime Minister is on his hands and knees begging electricity supplier AGL to retain a power station when those opposite sold off Mount Piper and Wallerawang power stations and allowed the new owners to close Wallerawang power station without replacing the 1,000 megawatts of electricity it produced. At the same time, those opposite in 2014 sold the Bayswater and Liddell power stations to AGL, even though the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission warned that this would reduce competition in the retail market. As we all know, it is the lack of competition in the National Energy Market that has forced up the price of electricity. I cannot understand why media commentary on electricity prices to this point has not focused on the ideological stupidity of offloading to the private sector the ownership of essential services like power, and then not controlling the market.

I told this House in 2014 when those opposite deregulated electricity prices and got rid of the ceiling regulated rate that it would cause unconstrained increases in power prices. That is exactly what is happening. Those opposite have been warned on the record and yet their fingerprints are all over allowing the private sector to distort the market. Now the Prime Minister is on his hands and knees grovelling to AGL to keep open an ageing power plant because those opposite have sold the retail side as well as the generation side of electricity generation. Those opposite have allowed electricity suppliers to manipulate the market, and businesses and desperate households in New South Wales are the ones paying the price for the ideological stupidity of those opposite. Quite frankly, I have had enough of essential services being sold to the private sector. The people of New South Wales demonstrated on Saturday that they had enough of those opposite. It is time for those opposite to go. They have gone downhill in every conceivable by-election and election. The member for Oatley has made a goose of himself on Georges River Council. It is time for those opposite to go, because the people of New South Wales want them gone.

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

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (16:05):** I will bring some sense back to the debate on this motion accorded priority, in contrast to the ravings from Opposition members. The cost of living is biting the people of New South Wales. However, it is made up of a number of components, not just electricity prices or compulsory third party slips. In 2011 water and sewerage bills in Sydney were the second highest in the country. Water bills in Sydney are now the lowest in the country, closely followed by Newcastle.

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

**Mr LEE EVANS:** In 2016-17, annual household bills for Sydney Water customers decreased by an average of \$100. In the five years to 2018, water prices will have fallen by 6 per cent, or \$68, for a typical Sydney household. Our green slip reforms have saved motorists around \$120 in green slip insurance. In contrast, Labor introduced 11 new taxes and increased taxes 21 times. The Opposition waxed lyrical about tolls. In 1995, the Carr Government won the election by promising to abolish tolls on the M4 and M5 for everyone, then changed its mind straight after the election due to "unforeseen taxation issues". Labor locked in the longest contract, which expires in 2048, with escalation rates at 4 per cent on the Eastern Distributor. I return to what the member for Riverstone said about the pensioner booking fee tax, which was introduced in March 2006 by the New South Wales Labor Party. Labor's booking tax was charged when senior citizens used what was supposed to be free pensioner travel vouchers on CountryLink services.

The booking tax was either \$10 or 15 per cent of the full adult fare. Labor only axed the tax in 2009 after a concerted campaign by the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals. The New South Wales Government is committed to reducing the burden of energy costs for New South Wales customers. We are providing a wide range of assistance to vulnerable customers to help with their energy costs. The Premier made an announcement to this effect on 3 September 2017. She announced a bill relief package that includes a 20 per cent increase to all energy rebates. This has taken the budget for energy rebates to around \$310 million in this year alone. That is around \$1.2 billion over four years. I am pleased to say that no eligible customer in New South Wales who wants a rebate or assistance with an energy bill will miss out. The Government is aware that some customers who are eligible for rebates have not been asking for them. [*Time expired*]

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (16:08):** I feel guilty about doing this to the poor old member for Riverstone. What have they done to him? They have found the biggest donkey to walk across the minefield of energy prices and the cost of living. Off he trots and loses a couple of legs, and then he is backed up by the member for Heathcote. They are not bad blokes, but they stitch them up every time. Those opposite reckon that we are the enemy. But with friends like that, they do not need us. They are doing us a favour. We do not even have to run a campaign; we will leave it to their own mob to continually stand up and embarrass them. Even combined, the contributions of the two members are about as convincing as the New York memoir of the member for Kiama. It

is farcical. In terms of energy, the Liberal-Nationals Government sold Liddell power station for zero dollars and the sale was opposed by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission—I emphasise that point. Someone else does not necessarily agree with that sale. There is a big bloke down in Canberra who is having a rough trot, just like the members opposite.

**Mr Chris Minns:** What is his name?

**Mr GREG WARREN:** Malcolm Turnbull. He wants to buy it back and spend hundreds of millions of dollars to try to fix a mistake that the Coalition Government cannot manage. There is no better display of why people in this State are so frustrated. The Government is delusional; its motion says it all. Paragraph (2) claims that "Labor took New South Wales from the lowest electricity bills in the nation to higher than the national average." What a lot of rubbish. Everything has been flogged off; it has gone private. There is an unregulated market and prices are going through the roof. That is affecting the most isolated in our communities—our seniors, single parents, those with disabilities and those on low incomes who can barely afford to feed their families, let alone pay their electricity bills. I will give one example. I talked to a family in my electorate who put all their children in one room because they cannot afford to heat their home.

That is before we get onto the road tolls. The good people of Campbelltown, Camden, Wollondilly and everywhere else in south-west Sydney along the M5 were looking forward to the toll being removed in a few years time. But not under this Government. It will go for another 40 years—tack it on. It is absolutely outrageous. When will the mob opposite learn? They should introduce legislation to help people, not congratulate themselves on their every move. All they are doing is damaging themselves and hurting the hardworking families of this State.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (16:11):** In reply: It is just as well the member for Campbelltown has a day job because stand-up comedy will not work for him judging from that performance. The facts speak for themselves. The network element of the cost of electricity in New South Wales is the only thing putting downward pressure on electricity costs for the residents of New South Wales because of the arrangements put in place by this Liberal-Nationals Government. We are sparing the people of New South Wales the worst effects of the electricity cost increases that the Opposition's Labor mates interstate have imposed on us via the network grid. It is important to point out that because of the good management of this Liberal-Nationals Government we are in a position to cushion the cost of impact burden on the most vulnerable people in our community.

The Energy Affordability Package that was announced by the Premier recently increases the Low Income Household Rebate from \$235 to \$285 and the Family Energy Rebate from \$150 to \$180 to help around 900,000 customers struggling with their bills—I repeat it is 900,000 people. We are in a position to help because we have managed our budgets and we can provide that assistance to the people of New South Wales, rather than pinch from them via a pensioner booking tax or a vendor tax or any of the other methods the Opposition had to resort to because it could not manage its budget. The package contains discounts and equipment upgrades for small businesses to save each business up to \$1,900 on its yearly bill. Discounts for energy-efficient lighting and air-conditioning upgrades for all households could lead to bill savings of up to \$500 per household per year.

There are discounts for up to 23,000 concession card holders to save up to 50 per cent on the cost of upgrading old fridges and televisions to energy-saving models, saving each household an average of around \$200 a year. There is an end to unnecessary charges by retailers, such as fees for paper bills, and penalties for retailers who do not move rebate recipients to a better deal. There are energy saving upgrades for up to 16,500 public housing clients to assist the State's most vulnerable, with participating households to save an average of around \$360 per year on their bills.

All these measures in our energy rebate package are designed to help the people of New South Wales struggling with the cost of living—things those opposite could never do and would never do because they cannot control their spending. They just shift their costs onto the households of New South Wales. That is what Labor did in office and that is what it will do if it ever gets the chance again. I remind the House about the savings in compulsory third party costs that the Minister for Finance and Services outlined during question time. They average \$100, \$150 or \$160 for some, and \$112 to \$128 for others across various regions of the city, and \$58 to \$60 in country New South Wales. All those people will save because of the work of this Government. [*Time expired.*]

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....	47
Noes .....	29
Majority .....	18

## AYES

Anderson, Mr K  
Berejiklian, Ms G  
Conolly, Mr K  
Crouch, Mr A  
Elliott, Mr D  
Gibbons, Ms M  
Gulaptis, Mr C  
Johnsen, Mr M  
Maguire, Mr D  
O'Dea, Mr J  
Perrottet, Mr D  
Provest, Mr G  
Sidoti, Mr J  
Taylor, Mr M  
Upton, Ms G  
Williams, Mrs L

Aplin, Mr G  
Bromhead, Mr S (teller)  
Constance, Mr A  
Davies, Ms T  
Evans, Mr L  
Goward, Ms P  
Hazzard, Mr B  
Kean, Mr M  
Marshall, Mr A  
Patterson, Mr C (teller)  
Petinos, Ms E  
Roberts, Mr A  
Speakman, Mr M  
Toole, Mr P  
Ward, Mr G  
Wilson, Ms F

Ayres, Mr S  
Brookes, Mr G  
Coure, Mr M  
Dominello, Mr V  
Fraser, Mr A  
Griffin, Mr J  
Henskens, Mr A  
Lee, Dr G  
Notley-Smith, Mr B  
Pavey, Mrs M  
Piccoli, Mr A  
Rowell, Mr J  
Stokes, Mr R  
Tudehope, Mr D  
Williams, Mr R

## NOES

Atalla, Mr E  
Catley, Ms Y  
Dib, Mr J  
Foley, Mr L  
Haylen, Ms J  
Kamper, Mr S  
McDermott, Dr H  
Minns, Mr C  
Scully, Mr P  
Watson, Ms A (teller)

Barr, Mr C  
Chanthivong, Mr A  
Doyle, Ms T  
Harris, Mr D  
Hoenig, Mr R  
Lalich, Mr N (teller)  
McKay, Ms J  
Parker, Mr J  
Smith, Ms T F  
Zangari, Mr G

Car, Ms P  
Crakanthorp, Mr T  
Finn, Ms J  
Harrison, Ms J  
Hornery, Ms S  
Lynch, Mr P  
Mehan, Mr D  
Piper, Mr G  
Warren, Mr G

**Motion agreed to.**

*Bills***ROAD TRANSPORT AMENDMENT (DRIVER LICENCE DISQUALIFICATION) BILL 2017****First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Mark Speakman, read a first time and printed.**

**Second Reading**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General) (16:23):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Road Transport Amendment (Driver Licence Disqualification) Bill 2017. This bill will change the penalties for driver licence disqualification to ensure that they are fairer and more effective in reducing unauthorised driving and repeat offending. First, the current driver licence disqualification framework increases the risk of reoffending, with evidence showing long disqualifications are not a deterrent to unauthorised driving, and yet some people have disqualification periods of more than 10 years in addition to fines and imprisonment terms. Secondly, it has a serious adverse social impact, particularly on vulnerable people and people in regional and rural areas, as long disqualifications affect the ability to travel for education and employment purposes. Thirdly, it contributes to the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system, with more than 14 per cent of those sentenced and almost a third of those imprisoned for unauthorised driving identifying as Aboriginal. Fourthly, it is harsher by comparison with other jurisdictions. Fifthly, it imposes a significant burden on the criminal justice system, with about 12 per cent of people sentenced in New South Wales being sentenced for unauthorised driving offences, increasing pressure on the court and prison systems.

The measures detailed in the bill will make the community safer by giving roadside police greater powers to impose vehicle sanctions, such as confiscating numberplates and impounding the vehicles of those who

continue to drive while unauthorised or disqualified drivers who commit certain dangerous driving offences. These measures will allow police to take swift action in appropriate cases. The reforms will also provide disqualified drivers a clear way to return to lawful driving if they have remained compliant with their disqualification period for a minimum period. The Government has committed \$13 million to implement this scheme. In contrast, operating the current regime costs the justice system around \$70 million per year. These reforms will ensure the penalties for driver licence disqualification are more effective in reducing unauthorised driving and repeat offending.

The Legislative Assembly's Law and Safety Committee's 2013 report on driver licence disqualification reform identified a number of problems with the current disqualification laws. First, long disqualification periods have a serious adverse impact on a person's mobility, access to education, and access to essential goods and services. Secondly, disqualification from driving can also have a significant negative effect on a person's employment prospects by removing a person's transport to work or their ability to gain work-related skills. This is particularly the case in remote and regional areas of the State. Thirdly, disproportionate effects of unauthorised driving sanctions in regional parts of New South Wales are particularly acute for Aboriginal communities. The committee came across examples of how the system results in people being subject to significant periods of disqualification.

For example, take a young person who has no public transport in their area and who continues to drive while disqualified to maintain their apprenticeship. If this driver were caught driving disqualified four times then, in addition to facing jail time, their disqualification would be extended for a mandatory period. In this case, even though this driver has not been charged with any other driving offences, if the offences occurred within a certain period the disqualification would then automatically be extended for an additional period on top of the existing qualifications and jail time due to the operation of the habitual traffic offender scheme. This would mean that this young person would effectively be disqualified until 2034. This young person would suffer significant long-term hardship because they were trying to maintain employment and provide for themselves and their family.

This is not an isolated example. There are a number of people who find themselves disqualified for issues entirely unrelated to their ability to drive on our roads. For example, Revenue NSW—formerly the State Debt Recovery Office—can direct Roads and Maritime Services to suspend a driver licence if an individual has an outstanding fine. The fine may not necessarily be related to a traffic offence; the fine may have been imposed because the individual failed to vote, did not pay for a fishing licence, failed to wear a helmet or travelled on the train without a ticket. If those suspended drivers then drive while suspended they could have their licence disqualified. Further, some sectors of the community—particularly Aboriginal people—can find it difficult to obtain a licence, which can lead to unauthorised driving becoming more prevalent in those communities. Obstacles include limited access to cars and licensed drivers to supervise learners and difficulties in obtaining identity documents such as birth certificates.

Those living in remote areas of New South Wales may encounter hurdles when trying to apply for a birth certificate, including the costs associated with registering their birth and obtaining a birth certificate and the long distance between remote communities and the nearest registry office. The process of registering and applying for a birth certificate itself can also be overwhelming or overly complex for those who may have low literacy levels and who are unfamiliar with Government procedures. Additional barriers that many people face include literacy problems, difficulties passing the driver knowledge test and costs associated with obtaining a licence. It is important that our driver disqualification framework does not unfairly disadvantage these people. Before the current system was introduced in 1998 by the now Opposition, a driver whose licence was suspended for failing to pay a fine and who was then caught driving unlawfully on four subsequent occasions would have incurred a total disqualification period of two years. Once the now Opposition introduced their reforms the same driver would be disqualified for a total of 17 years with no incentive to return to lawful driving.

In 2013 the Committee on Law and Safety tabled a report recommending reform to address these and other issues with New South Wales' disqualification framework. The Government responded in 2014 and largely agreed to the recommendations. This bill will implement the Government response to the committee's report through six key reforms. First, the bill will allow drivers who do the right thing and remained compliant with their disqualification period to apply to the Local Court to have their remaining disqualification period lifted. Applicants will need to remain compliant with their disqualification period for two years or four years depending on the seriousness of the offence. Drivers who have had their disqualification lifted will still need to apply to Roads and Maritime Services and complete the required road safety and knowledge tests to get their licence back. To protect community safety, disqualified drivers who have been convicted of serious driving offences involving death or grievous bodily harm will never be eligible to have their disqualifications lifted early.

Secondly, the bill abolishes the habitual traffic offender scheme. No other Australian jurisdiction has such a scheme and the evidence suggests that lengthy disqualification does not have a deterrent effect on

unauthorised driving. Thirdly, the bill will provide minimum automatic disqualification periods, as per other traffic offences, and courts will have more flexibility to consider the circumstances of each case. Fourthly, penalties for unauthorised driving will be made fairer and more proportionate with other driving offences. Currently, repeat unauthorised driving penalties in New South Wales are similar to the State's maximum penalties for very serious offences, such as high range drink-driving. Fifthly, the bill will provide for multiple disqualifications for unauthorised driving offences to operate concurrently, like for other driving offences and similar to other jurisdictions, unless otherwise ordered by the court. Finally, the bill provides for police to impose vehicle sanctions, such as confiscation of numberplates and the ability to impound vehicles of those who continue to drive whilst unauthorised and disqualified drivers who commit certain serious driving offences.

I now turn to the detail of the bill. Item [15] will enable a disqualified driver to apply to the Local Court to have their remaining disqualification period removed or reduced after they have been compliant with their disqualification period for a minimum period. I make it very clear that offenders who have been convicted of the most serious category of driving offences causing death or injury will never be eligible to apply to have their disqualification periods removed under the reform measures. This includes offences causing death or grievous bodily harm by driving, hit-and-runs, predatory or menacing driving, and certain other serious driving offences. The court will only lift an order or reduce a driver disqualification period if the person has not been convicted of any driving offence for the duration of the relevant offence-free period. This will be four years for any disqualification arising from serious offences and two years in other cases—for example, where the applicant has been convicted of driving while disqualified, unlicensed driving or low level speeding offences.

Similar schemes enabling the removal of a disqualification period operate in Queensland, Western Australia and the United Kingdom. Unlike schemes operating in those jurisdictions, the New South Wales scheme will require an applicant to remain compliant with their licence disqualification for a set period before they can apply. Disqualified drivers who are serving lengthy disqualification periods but who can demonstrate they have reformed their behaviour by complying with their disqualification will be able to apply to have their disqualification period lifted. This will create an incentive and put individuals on the path to return to lawful driving. They will still need to apply for a driving licence before they can get back on the road. Before lifting a disqualification period, the Local Court must take into account a number of considerations, including public safety, the applicant's driving record and the nature of offences leading to disqualification.

Item [14] abolishes the habitual traffic offender scheme. Under the scheme, people who are convicted of three relevant serious driving offences in a five-year period are disqualified for five years unless a court rules otherwise. The court may order a person be disqualified for longer periods, including disqualification for life. These disqualification periods apply on top of existing disqualification periods. Disqualification periods are also cumulative, which means that they do not start until all other disqualification periods have expired. The result of this is lengthy, automatic and excessive hardship on drivers, sometimes for more than 10 years. No other Australian jurisdiction has an equivalent scheme. The current scheme entrenches disadvantage among vulnerable people in the community. It disproportionately affects young people, the unemployed and people living in rural, regional and remote areas by severely limiting their ability to gain employment, care for their families and, more broadly, contribute to and participate in our communities.

The Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research has found that longer licence disqualification periods have little or no deterrent effect, and in some cases may increase the risk of reoffending. Beyond a certain point, additional punishments on top of a disqualified driver's initial disqualification period reduce their motivation to turn their life around. Sanctions become meaningless when people are disqualified for very lengthy periods. It effectively results in a double penalty for the same crime. This results in crushing periods of disqualification, severely limiting a person's employment prospects. It is important to emphasise that magistrates will continue to have the discretion to impose lengthy disqualification periods in appropriate cases. The amendments will remove disproportionate penalties while ensuring the framework retains safeguards so that drink and drug drivers who pose a threat to community safety are kept off the road.

Items [1], [3] and [4] revise the maximum penalties for unauthorised driving offences. It is an offence for a person to drive a motor vehicle while unlicensed, or to employ or permit an unlicensed driver to drive a motor vehicle. It is also an offence for a person to drive a motor vehicle or apply for a driver licence while disqualified or if the person's driver licence has been cancelled or suspended. At present, the maximum prison sentence for driving while disqualified, suspended or cancelled is 18 months for the first offence and two years for a second or subsequent offence. Penalties for unauthorised driving will also be made fairer and more proportionate. Currently, repeat unauthorised driving penalties in New South Wales are similar to the State's maximum penalties for very serious offences such as high range drink-driving. The bill will ensure the maximum penalties are proportionate to the seriousness of driving offences and will clearly distinguish between driving while unlicensed or disqualified, and more serious offences such as drink and drug driving.

Items [1], [3] and [4] will decrease the maximum periods of imprisonment that may be imposed on people who drive without a licence. The amendments will reduce the current maximum imprisonment term for a first offence of driving while licence disqualified, cancelled or suspended from 18 months to six months and reduce maximum imprisonment terms for second or subsequent offences for driving while licence disqualified, cancelled or suspended, which is currently up to two years in some cases, to 12 months. In the case of the cancellation or suspension of a licence for non-payment of a fine, a period of imprisonment of six months will only apply for a second or subsequent offence. This regime will still be tougher than the penalties that apply to low range drink-driving offences. Item [10] will insert a new section 205A, which will provide for automatic and minimum disqualification periods rather than mandatory disqualification periods. Most driving offences, such as drink-driving, carry an automatic disqualification period that the court has discretion to either reduce to a set minimum level or increase at the time of conviction. Unauthorised driving offences, however, currently carry mandatory disqualification periods that cannot be altered in any way by the court.

The proposed reform will amend the framework so that unauthorised driving offences carry automatic and minimum disqualification periods, which the court can reduce or increase like other driving offences. Under the amendments, an automatic disqualification period will apply to a driver, unless the court considers a shorter or longer period should apply. This will allow a court to consider the individual circumstances of each case when deciding the outcome. A system of automatic and minimum periods involves a default period of disqualification applying on conviction, which can be revised up or down at the court's discretion. Courts will not be able to reduce the disqualification any less than the specified minimum period of disqualification. Consistent with the Law and Safety Committee's recommendations, driving while disqualified will be treated more harshly than driving while suspended for fine default.

New section 205A will provide for six months automatic disqualification for people driving while their licence is disqualified, cancelled or suspended—and not less than three months; an automatic 12-month disqualification for a second or subsequent offence, which cannot be reduced to any less than six months; three months automatic disqualification for driving with a licence cancelled or suspended for a fine default, which cannot be reduced to any less than one month, with additional automatic 12-month disqualification for a second or subsequent offence, which cannot be reduced to any less than three months; and automatic 12-month disqualification if a person drives who has never been licensed, which cannot be reduced to any less than three months. Other penalties, such as fines, bonds and supervised orders, will continue to apply to unauthorised driving offences in addition to disqualification periods.

The existing licence disqualification period for an offence of unauthorised driving is cumulative, and not concurrent. This means that the disqualification period does not start until any existing disqualifications have expired. For example, if an offender is serving a two-year disqualification and is convicted of a subsequent offence which carries a further two-year disqualification, the second disqualification period will not commence until after the first period has been served. This is inconsistent with other road transport offences, which are generally served concurrently rather than cumulatively. This approach for disqualified drivers is not supported by the evidence. Evidence shows long disqualifications can operate as a perverse incentive for people to drive before their disqualification ends, resulting in their breaking the law. The concurrent approach presented in this bill will align with how disqualification periods work for all other driving offences in New South Wales, including drink-driving offences, which run from the date of conviction and are not cumulative.

Item [12] will introduce amendments to provide that disqualification periods will commence on the date of conviction unless the court orders a later date. This will ensure that a disqualification period for a number of offences is not cumulative, unless the court so orders. Item [17] amends section 225, which covers immediate licence suspension notices. One issue faced under the current framework is that it is unclear whether drivers who are already suspended may be issued with an immediate suspension notice. For example, if a driver is already suspended for fine default, and is then pulled over for a high range drink-driving offence, it is unclear whether New South Wales police can issue an immediate roadside suspension notice for the new offence. It is important that this is addressed because under the current system the driver may pay the fines for the original suspension the next day and be able to drive straightaway. Item [17] clarifies that the period of an immediate driver licence suspension, imposed by a police officer when a driver is charged with certain serious driving offences, has effect despite any other suspension to which the licence is subject or the lifting of that other suspension. This will ensure dangerous drivers can be issued immediate suspension notices in appropriate cases and be kept off the road.

Items [18] to [20] extend the current three-month vehicle sanctions to apply where a disqualified driver is caught exceeding the speed limit by more than 30 kilometres per hour. Vehicle sanctions will also apply if a person is charged with driving while disqualified or driving while unlicensed three times in a five-year period. Police will be able to impose longer vehicle sanctions of six months where a disqualified driver commits a sanctionable offence. Essentially, driving while disqualified would be an aggravating factor. As is currently the case, these amendments will apply only to a disqualified driver who is also the registered operator of the vehicle.

In cases where the offender is driving another person's vehicle, police will notify Roads and Maritime Services in writing of the incident. Roads and Maritime Services will then send the registered operator a suspension warning letter advising them that suspension action may be taken against the vehicle if a further offence is committed in that vehicle. This existing process ensures that registered operators are not punished for the crimes of others but are put on notice that failure to properly exercise control over the vehicle's use will not be tolerated.

This bill will reduce unauthorised driving and repeat offending. Certain disqualified drivers who have been compliant with their disqualification for a minimum period will be able to apply to the Local Court to have their disqualifications lifted early, providing a clear way to return to lawful driving. Disqualified drivers who have ever been convicted of driving offences involving death or grievous bodily harm will never be eligible to have their disqualifications lifted early. Rather than the current system, which results in lengthy disqualification periods that are not an effective deterrent, penalties will be more effective in reducing unauthorised driving and repeat offending. Police will also have stronger powers to impose sanctions on disqualified drivers. Further, courts will still have strong powers to impose disqualifications for serious driving offences, like drink- and drug-driving. Ultimately, we are reforming the driver disqualification regime to create an incentive to return to lawful driving, and punish serious driving offenders, in order to achieve a fairer, more balanced system in New South Wales.

In closing, I thank government agencies involved in the drafting of the bill and external stakeholders consulted and involved in the drafting of this bill. These include New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the Aboriginal Legal Service (New South Wales/ACT), the Chief Magistrate, the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Law Council of Australia, Legal Aid New South Wales, the New South Wales Bar Association, the Law Society of New South Wales, the NSW Police Force, the Office for Police, the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, Salvos Legal, Shopfront Youth Legal Centre, the Office of State Revenue, Transport for NSW, Roads and Maritime Services and the Department of Justice.

I thank the Hon. Melinda Pavey, MP, Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight and the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, MLC, Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education, for their support of this bill and their involvement in announcing this reform last month. I also thank the former Attorney General the Hon. Gabrielle Upton, MP, and the former Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, the Hon. Duncan Gay, for their work in developing this important reform. Finally, I thank the members of the committee, who consulted and put together a detailed report which formed the foundation for this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **RETAIL TRADING AMENDMENT (BOXING DAY) BILL 2017**

### **First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Dominic Perrottet, read a first time and printed.**

### **Second Reading**

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Hawkesbury—Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations)**

**(16:46):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

In 2015, the Government committed to reform retail trading laws to provide more certainty and choice for consumers, retailers and employees. The reforms were necessary because of the constraints and disadvantages built into the legislation at that time, which discriminated against businesses, consumers and workers, depending on their location. While shops in the central business district, Bondi and on Broadway could open, shops in Western Sydney could not. Shops in Wyong could trade, but not those in Newcastle. Shops in Narromine were open, but 30 minutes drive away in Dubbo, the shops were shut. Shellharbour was open for business, but 20 minutes down the road, Wollongong mall was closed. Local businesses were missing out on local dollars, and local workers were missing out on extra income.

Through the support of this Parliament, the Retail Trading Amendment Act 2015 amended the Retail Trading Act to permit statewide Boxing Day trading for 2015 and 2016. The 2015 amendments allowed all shops and bank branches to open on Boxing Day on the condition that staff freely elected to work without being coerced, harassed, threatened or intimidated. Those reforms gave all parties more choice. They gave retailers greater choice to open on Boxing Day and take advantage of one of the busiest trading days of the year if they wished. They gave consumers more choice to visit their local shops on Boxing Day and they gave retail employees more choice to earn extra income at higher rates of pay if they freely elected to work on Boxing Day. The 2015 legislation also introduced fines of up to \$11,000 for any retailer or bank that coerced any employee to work on a restricted trading day, including Boxing Day.

The legislation also introduced fines of up to \$22,000 for any landlord who forced a retailer to open on Boxing Day or any other restricted trading day. In this way, the 2015 amendments not only gave consumers, retailers and employees more choice but strengthened protections for employees and retailers as well. The 2015 legislation included a review mechanism to determine whether the policy objectives remained valid and whether the terms of the legislation remained appropriate for securing those objectives. The legislation required the review to take place after 1 February 2017. Professor Percy Allan, AM, the former secretary of the Treasury from 1986 to 1994, was appointed to conduct the review in February this year. Professor Allan has broad expertise in public policy, economics and finance, and is a visiting professor at the Macquarie Graduate School of Management.

As part of his review, Professor Allan consulted with and received submissions from major retailers and their representative organisations, unions and other industry stakeholders. Surveys of both retailers and workers were undertaken to gauge their experience of Boxing Day trading in 2015 and 2016. I again congratulate Professor Allan on producing an excellent report, and I was very pleased to be able to meet with him and discuss the findings of the report. I am pleased to advise members that Professor Allan found the extension of Boxing Day trading in 2015 and 2016 was a success. Professor Allan's key findings included: Boxing Day in 2015 and 2016 was one of the most popular shopping days of the Christmas-New Year period; Boxing Day trading did not detract from retailing activity on other trading days following Christmas; more than half of retail employees want trading on Boxing Day to continue—outnumbering those who were against it by two to one; only a small number of retail workers formally complained to NSW Industrial Relations [NSWIR] of being coerced or pressured to work on Boxing Day; and of all employees surveyed, only 2 per cent experienced negative repercussions after indicating a preference not to work.

Professor Allan's primary recommendation was to retain the amendments made in 2015 to permit trading on Boxing Day, provided that staff freely elected to work. The Government also has agreed to Professor Allan's recommendation that NSW Industrial Relations use print, broadcast and social media to widely publicise that: no-one is obliged to open or work in a shop or bank branch on Boxing Day and that pressuring someone to do so is subject to heavy penalties, and it is an offence to interfere with the free will of someone to choose whether to work or not work on Boxing Day. This will include the department assisting businesses to prepare for Boxing Day by prominently displaying on its website a high-level best practice process for planning, notifying and rostering staff without resorting to coercion. The department also will seek to convene a meeting with unions and retail organisations to review how best to inform retail owners and managers of their obligations under the legislation and meet again after Boxing Day to review the extent of compliance with both the letter and the spirit of the law.

Professor Allan also recommended the introduction of minimum penalties for the offences of coercing an employee to work or coercing a retailer to open. While the Government remains committed to ensuring employees are protected, the Government has declined to implement minimum penalties on the basis that mandatory minimum penalties are reserved for very serious offences, such as the murder of a police officer, and mandatory minimum penalties restrict the courts' discretion to tailor penalties to particular circumstances. Professor Allan also recommended that the Government give NSWIR authority to fine offenders without having to mount prosecutions in court. The Government has determined that while such a scheme may be appropriate for strict liability offences, such as speeding, it would not be appropriate for the offences set out in the retail trading legislation.

I now turn to the details of the bill. The object of this bill is to amend the Retail Trading Act 2008 to permanently allow shops and banks to be open on Boxing Day and to allow banks to be open on the Bank Holiday and certain public holidays aside from restricted trading days, provided that staff freely have elected to work. The bill would give effect to this object by repealing the sunset provisions at section 27, which would have ended statewide Boxing Day trading, from 1 December 2017.

The bill also removes a redundant provision at section 26 that required a review of the Retail Trading Amendment Act 2015 to be undertaken because that review has now been completed. This bill will allow the continuation of extended Boxing Day trading in New South Wales following a successful two-year trial. The Shopping Centre Council submitted to the review that more than 1.25 million people visited their sample set of Sydney shopping centres on Boxing Day in both 2015 and 2016, making that day one of the most popular shopping days of December. The Shopping Centre Council also submitted that upwards of 78 per cent of the retail shops chose to open for those customers.

The independent research commissioned by Professor Allan also found that more than half of retail workers are in favour of shops opening on Boxing Day while only a quarter are against it. The bill protects the freedom of choice for workers because retailers face substantial fines if they open their shop with staff that have not freely chosen to work. This bill protects freedom of choice for retail business owners because shopping centre



landlords face substantial fines if they make their tenants open on Boxing Day. The New South Wales Government was re-elected in 2015 with a commitment to liberalise Boxing Day trade. When we introduced our reforms to make Boxing Day trade available to all retailers in New South Wales, we did it on the premise of providing opportunity and choice. Business owners can now choose to open and reap the benefits of their trade, or they can choose to keep their store closed and spend Boxing Day with family and friends. The onus is now on the Parliament to continue these Boxing Day trading arrangements into the future. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **LOCAL LAND SERVICES AMENDMENT 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) (16:56):**

I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill has two key purposes: firstly, it will strengthen the governance of Local Land Services to ensure effective service delivery for regional and rural communities, both now and into the future; and, secondly, it will improve pest management outcomes by ensuring funds can be targeted to regional pest priorities. When Local Land Services was formed in 2014, it represented the most fundamental change to regional service delivery since the 1940s. For the first time we had one organisation that provided biosecurity, natural resources management, emergency response and agricultural advisory services across the State.

Local Land Services is a customer-focused organisation. It provides a range of services and advice to farmers, landholders and communities across rural and regional New South Wales to improve primary production within healthy landscapes. The organisation is made up of 11 regions covering each corner of the State. Each region is overseen by a local board to ensure that services are delivered regionally and tailored to suit the needs of each community, industry and landscape. The central board, currently named the Board of Chairs, comprises the chairs of each of the local boards and its own chair. The Board of Chairs is responsible for the delivery of statewide priorities in accordance with the Local Land Services State Strategic Plan. The Local Land Services model means we have people on the ground in every region of this State, providing face-to-face assistance to help rural and regional communities be profitable and sustainable into the future. I have seen firsthand the on-ground successes that already have been delivered out of this model for customers, communities and ratepayers.

My electorate sits in the Central Tablelands region of Local Land Services. This region makes up about 4.2 per cent of New South Wales's annual value of agricultural production and almost 10 per cent of our agricultural businesses are based there. Needless to say, Central Tableland's Local Land Services plays a critical role in supporting those agricultural businesses. Local Land Services has only been operational for a relatively short time frame. Its establishment involved combining three legacy organisations with very different organisational cultures into a single entity, implementing an evolved organisation model, and establishing recognition of the new agency in the community. As such, it is reasonable to expect that some aspects of its governance arrangements are still maturing.

The Government has been testing and reviewing the operating model for Local Land Services to ensure it can effectively meet the needs and expectations of the communities it supports. Over the past two years, Local Land Services has undergone audits and reviews across a broad range of areas. This includes an independent audit of governance arrangements, which was conducted by the Natural Resources Commission at the request of the Government. The audit identified areas in which Local Land Services is doing well, such as the use of systems to promote ethical behaviour and to manage conflicts of interest. It is also recognised that Local Land Services is an organisation where staff are respected and the diversity of their skills is valued. The audit also identified opportunities for Local Land Services to make improvements, for example through clarifying roles and responsibilities across the organisation and improving strategic planning processes. The Government has carefully considered the audit recommendations about how Local Land Services' governance processes can be strengthened. The Government published its response to the audit in December 2016.

The bill before the House is a direct response to the governance recommendations in the Natural Resources Commission's audit. The bill amends the Local Land Services Act 2013 to implement best practice governance and to enhance strategic direction setting across the central board and local boards. These changes will increase the focus of the central board on key issues relating to strategy, corporate governance, risk and financial management, and community engagement. These changes will improve accountability and will allow

the local boards to concentrate on regional priorities. Importantly, the changes will also provide greater clarity for staff so the organisation is in a better position to deliver State priorities and Government reforms. In addition to this bill, late last year Minister Blair announced a comprehensive list of priorities for Local Land Services over the next three years. These priorities will implement the recommendations from the audits and reviews and will set Local Land Services up to meet the expectations and needs of local communities that it services.

These priorities include strengthening Local Land Services' governance through: an improved strategic focus; tighter board processes; improved communications about roles, responsibilities, and decisions; developing consistent approaches to branding, communications, and stakeholder engagement across Local Land Services; modernising customer service through a new delivery model; implementing a range of strategies to improve financial sustainability, including new sources of revenue, more efficient ways of operating and delivering services, and attracting funding; and partnering with the Department of Primary Industries to design and deliver new and improved programs and services across biodiversity, biosecurity, and agricultural production. These priorities have been well received by key stakeholders and local communities and I am confident that this bill, in conjunction with the actions that I have just outlined, will strengthen the Local Land Services model and will position the organisation to effectively meet the expectations of local stakeholders and government.

In addition to strengthening the governance of Local Land Services, this bill will also deliver improvements to the funding framework for managing pest animals in our regions. Importantly, these improvements will be made while maintaining the current rate levels. Ratepayers will see a greater return on their rates as more money is invested into managing regional pest priorities. Under the Local Land Services Act 2013 a special purpose pest insect rate is collected from all ratepayers across the State and is used exclusively for locust management activities. The pest interest rate funds the purchase of insecticide for locust control, aerial surveillance, and treatment, as well as operational expenses. It also funds the contribution by New South Wales to the Australian Plague Locust Commission, which plays a critical role in the delivery of a coordinated response to locust plagues across State boundaries.

Locust plagues can have a devastating impact on primary producers and rural communities. Controlling large locust plagues is expensive but the evidence shows that this investment is money well spent. In 2004 the Government spent \$23 million controlling a locust plague. The locusts consumed 1.4 million tonnes of vegetation, but without the Government's intervention more than 23 million tonnes would have been consumed. Furthermore, a cost-benefit analysis of control campaigns has shown that for every \$1 spent on controlling locusts, \$20 in production is saved. Improvements in early detection and responses to locust outbreaks, coupled with the careful management of locust management funds, means that the Government currently has adequate resources to respond to future plague events. From this strong position, the Government is now able to put forward improvements to the pest management framework to ensure that resources can continue to be used efficiently. This bill will maintain the existing rate level, but for the first time will make funds available for the management of other priority pest animals in addition to locusts.

This change was a key recommendation of the Natural Resources Commission's State-wide Review of Pest Animal Management. This was also identified as a key issue in the Review of Funding Framework for Local Land Services, conducted by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART]. The work done by Local Land Services to manage pests is vitally important. It provides the products and services that enable the community to prevent, respond, and recover from pest incursions. Last year in the Central Tablelands, Local Land Services managed almost one million hectares of land for pest control. Officers ran 23 training workshops, bringing together 580 landholders to control wild dogs, foxes, pigs, plague locusts and other pests. The range of pest challenges faced in my region underscores the importance of the changes proposed by this bill. Regions will now have access to more funds to help them manage other local pest animals.

In some Local Land Services regions, including my own, wild dogs have a significant financial and emotional impact on sheep and cattle producers. In some cases, even best practice management by landholders, including coordinated baiting under local wild dog management plans, is not enough to manage problem wild dogs that learn to avoid the baits. For situations like these, this additional funding could be used to engage the services of professional trappers to provide much-needed assistance to landholders. Importantly, to ensure that our ability to respond to plague locust events is not compromised, Minister Blair has asked the Plague Locust Management Group to oversee the expenditure of pest management funds. Pest management rates are expected to raise \$6.2 million for the 2018-19 year. The Plague Locust Management Group, which comprises representatives from Local Land Services, the Department of Primary Industries and the New South Wales Farmers Association, will determine each year how much funding is required for locust management. Based on this determination, residual funds will be available to fund regional pest priorities.

This approach reflects the Government's position that locust management should remain the highest priority. Minister Blair has also asked the Plague Locust Management Group to develop a framework for

allocating pest management funds to Local Land Services regions, and looks forward to receiving their recommendations. The State Pest Animal Committee will also play an important role in this framework. The committee includes representatives from Local Land Services, Local Government, the Department of Primary Industries, and the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Importantly, it also includes key non-government stakeholders from NSW Farmers, Landcare, the RSPCA, and the Nature Conservation Council. One of the committee's roles will be to oversee the development of regional pest animal management plans, which will identify the pest priorities for each of the Local Land Services regions. These plans will in turn be used to direct pest management funds to where they are most needed.

I now turn to the detail of the bill. The Local Land Services Amendment Bill 2017 will deliver a more effective governance structure by changing the Act in a number of key ways. First, the bill separates the strategic functions of the central board and local boards from the operational responsibilities of Local Land Services. Under the current framework of the Local Land Services Act, the chair of the central board is responsible for both setting strategic direction and managing day-to-day operations of Local Land Services. These dual roles impose competing demands and impede the chair's ability to effectively deliver these responsibilities. It is also not considered to be best practice governance. The bill will address this by introducing changes that will provide adequate separation between the strategic role of the central board and local boards and the operational role of the Local Land Services executive and staff.

The amendments make it clear that the operational management is not the role of the central or local boards. Instead, this will now be the responsibility of the newly created Chief Executive Officer role. The Chief Executive Officer [CEO] will be appointed by the Secretary of the Department of Industry. The Chief Executive Officer will be responsible for the day-to-day management of Local Land Services, in accordance with the central board's policies and directives. This arrangement reflects a more orthodox corporate structure. Assigning these responsibilities to a CEO will allow the chair and the central board to have a greater focus on critical statewide issues.

The key responsibilities of the chair of the central board are unique to this role and involve building and maintaining effective relationships with the 11 regional chairs and their board members. The chair is responsible for ensuring that Local Land Services is authentically grounded in local decision-making in its priorities and services. At the same time, the chair must ensure that Local Land Services is efficient and effective in meeting statewide standards and targets for service delivery across the 11 regions. The bill provides for the Minister to appoint someone with the necessary skills and experience to this role. The bill also extends the maximum term of the chair and of all local board members from three years to four years, which will provide continuity and help Local Land Services to retain important corporate knowledge.

The second main area of amendments in this bill relates to specifying the responsibilities of the central board, which is to be renamed the Local Land Services Board. The bill specifically enshrines the strategic responsibilities of the Local Land Services Board in the Act to enhance clarity around its role and increase its accountability. While the Act currently sets out a prescriptive list of functions vested in Local Land Services, it does not clearly articulate the role of the central board, which is currently made up of the chairs of all 11 local boards and its own chair. The bill ensures that the strategic roles and responsibilities of the Local Land Services Board are clearly defined in the Act.

Specifically, the bill sets out that the functions of the central board of Local Land Services are to determine the general policies and strategic direction of Local Land Services, and to determine the policies, procedures and directions that will apply to local board functions. Examples of the policies for which the central board will be responsible include organisational, governance and strategy, risk management, services delivery provisions and community engagement. These amendments provide clarity and improve accountability around the central board's role. They also address the recommendation of the Natural Resources Commission's governance audit that the central Local Land Services Board has a strategic focus on critical statewide issues.

Importantly, the changes allow local boards to concentrate on regional priorities. This strong regional focus was a key factor in the design of Local Land Services, and the Government remains committed to this decentralised model. The third key area of amendments relate to the pest management funding framework and amend an existing provision of the Local Land Services Act 2013. The key change is that funds will now be available for managing all priority pest animals, and not just restricted to locusts. This will mean that resources are more efficiently allocated across the State to address regional pest priorities. Despite these changes, the management and eradication of locusts will remain the first priority. This means that the level of funding available for managing other pests will be less in years where there is a locust plague event.

Importantly, the changes to the funding framework will not apply retrospectively. This means that the current balance of funds collected under the Special Purpose Pest Insect Rate—approximately \$24 million—will remain dedicated to locust management activities. The amount of funds dedicated to locust management will be

maintained at a level that is sufficient to respond to a large locust plague event. The Government has undertaken targeted consultation with a number of key stakeholders on the amendments proposed in this bill, including the Natural Resources Commission, the Public Service Commission and NSW Farmers. Discussions have been held with these parties and other members of the original establishment reference panel, including Landcare NSW and Local Government NSW, to ensure that the changes proposed support the original intent of Local Land Services when it was set up more than 3½ years ago. In addition, the Local Land Services Board has also been consulted and is supportive of the changes to the Local Land Services Act 2013.

These changes will provide the clarity and direction the local chairs need now that the new boards are in place after the recent board member election process. This bill amends the Local Land Services Act 2013 to establish an effective functional structure for New South Wales Local Land Services and to deliver a more effective pest management funding framework. These amendments will strengthen the critical role that Local Land Services plays in delivering its core functions of agricultural advice, biosecurity and natural resource management, and emergency assessment and response.

This bill demonstrates the Government's strong and ongoing commitment to Local Land Services and to supporting our primary industries sector and regional communities. It will enable Local Land Services to build on the successes of the past 3½ years and will continue to deliver critical services that are valued by customers, ratepayers and communities. These changes will ensure that Local Land Services is able to better function as one cohesive organisation, delivering regional priorities under the umbrella of one statewide Local Land Services Board. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **APPRENTICESHIP AND TRAINEESHIP AMENDMENT BILL 2017**

### **Second Reading**

**Debate resumed from 9 August 2017.**

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (17:17):** I lead for the Opposition on the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Amendment Bill 2017. Before I make my substantive contribution, let me make a few points crystal clear. The Opposition believes in TAFE; the Government does not. The Opposition believes that apprentices should have affordable access to world-class training; the Government does not. The Opposition believes that waging a war on public vocational education is the opposite of what any government should be doing to create a skilled workforce that is ready to meet the challenges of the changing nature of work in this State; the Government does not. The Opposition will move an amendment to this bill, which I will elaborate on later in my contribution. If this amendment is not accepted, the Opposition will oppose this bill.

For generations, working people in New South Wales have followed the trusted path into decent work through an apprenticeship. For years, apprenticeships have provided our young people especially with an opportunity to build prosperous working lives for themselves and their families. But Australia now has 130,000 fewer apprentices and trainees than it did in 2013. In New South Wales alone the decline of apprentices and trainees commencing training has now reached 63,000 since this Government came to office in 2011. Put that on top of this Government's war on TAFE and it is a sorry, sorry story.

Leaked internal TAFE documents presented at the recent budget estimates hearing show that enrolments in our TAFE colleges have now plummeted a staggering 175,000 since 2012. In that time this Government has sacked 5,700 teachers and support staff, closed TAFE campuses, and driven fees through the roof. Everywhere in this State there is a story of how the Government's attack on skills is hurting our communities. In many cases, these are communities struggling with youth unemployment and economic inequality. This Government simply does not believe in TAFE, and this bill is yet another example of this. This bill is the Government's attempt to remove levels of regulation over the training and employment of apprentices and trainees in New South Wales. One of the most significant parts of this legislation is the abolition of the Vocational Training Review Panel [VTRP].

The Vocational Training Review Panel is a body established by the Carr Government under the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Act 2001. The panel comprises industry representatives and is chaired by the Commissioner for Vocational Training, or his or her representative. Importantly to the Opposition, TAFE representatives are included on the panel. The review panel has an obligation to attempt to reach an agreed settlement of any complaints. If it is unable to do so, it may make a determination that is binding on the parties. The review panel has wideranging powers to require people to attend a hearing, provide evidence, answer questions asked by review panel members and produce relevant documents. People who fail to comply with these requests or who make false or misleading statements may commit an offence under the Act.

Under this bill, both the complaints and dispute resolution functions and the panel's responsibility for trade recognition processes will be moved to the Commissioner for Vocational Training. The Opposition is most concerned with the role of the current panel in trade recognition and the transfer of this responsibility solely to the commissioner. This trade recognition provides a pathway to a trade qualification for technically unqualified but skilled people working in a particular trade—most commonly people who qualified elsewhere or overseas, and generally people who have not accessed the apprenticeship system in this State. The removal of the panel from this important process is of significant concern to many stakeholders. In essence, it means the decision as to whether someone can work in a trade is left up to a government-appointed bureaucrat who under the legislation will seek "independent expert advice wherever necessary".

Detailed mechanisms around what this independent advice may look like and when it is accessed is not included, which we believe should be cause for considerable concern. The bill includes a specific schedule relating to cases where a certificate of proficiency is a prerequisite for a trades licence, such as an electrician or plumber. The Opposition welcomes this, but of course if the Vocational Training Review Panel were to stay this would not be necessary. This schedule requires the commissioner to nominate representatives of the employees and employers—at least one of each—in order to recognise the qualifications or experience of the individual. Importantly, the commissioner will only determine the individual is sufficiently trained if the panel comes to a unanimous recommendation. It is, in effect, a VTRP without TAFE. I acknowledge, of course, that this specific schedule has been included in the bill after particular advocacy from the Electrical Trades Union.

The abolition of the VTRP from the trade recognition process for apprentices and people working in trades deliberately divorces TAFE from this process. As the shadow Minister, having travelled the State many times visiting TAFE campuses, talking to students and teachers, I cannot in good conscience support this. I foreshadow that the Opposition will move an amendment to retain the VTRP so that what is proposed for licensed trades should apply to everyone but with the world-class contribution of TAFE. The Opposition believes in the expertise of TAFE and it must have a seat at the table. This bill is simply unacceptable otherwise.

Let me now turn briefly to other aspects of the bill. The bill gives the commissioner the ability to engage an "independent training provider" to assess and report on the competence of an apprentice. While this is of course a step in the right direction, there is no description in the bill as to how this provider will be chosen. I am not shy in coming forward to say I am concerned about who these providers would be in practice, given the proliferation of unscrupulous private providers in the market. Additionally, penalties for non-compliance will be increased, and this should be welcomed. Maximum penalties will be increased and will be applicable to training organisations, Australian Apprenticeship Support Network (AASN) providers and employers. Parts of the bill will also require more accountability by agents, such as the AASN providers, for the accuracy of information and documentation of applications, including training plans. That is another positive and overdue step.

The proposal to allow the cancellation of a contract without consent or knowledge of either of the parties to that contract also causes us some concern. While we all agree that the existence of a significant number of contracts in the system with defunct or uncontactable parties attached creates an administrative nightmare for the department, the cancellation, particularly the retrospective cancellation of these contracts has the potential to disadvantage apprentices regarding their workplace entitlements and should be treated with great caution. We believe contracts of this kind could instead be rendered "inactive" in some fashion without affecting the liabilities of the parties to each other, particularly in regards to workplace entitlements. If cancellation is the preferred mechanism, particularly where the employer is at fault—such as when they become a prohibited employer or where a training contract is established using false or misleading information—the legislation may need to be modified to allow apprentices to explicitly make a claim for compensation against that employer for damages arising from the cancellation of the contract.

Let me summarise in this way. This bill may go some way in addressing some of the regulatory concerns of some stakeholders in the struggling apprenticeship system in New South Wales. But at its heart it exposes the Government's belief that TAFE is just another registered training organisation [RTO] in the training market. The view of those sitting on my side of the Chamber could not be more opposite. We believe that TAFE should be restored as the great public vocational education provider in this State. TAFE should receive at least 70 per cent of New South Wales vocational education and training [VET] funding, and private providers should be made to compete for a maximum of 30 per cent of taxpayers' money instead of being let to run rampant and trade on the hopes and dreams of young jobseekers.

We believe that there should be a stronger system of investigation into private providers, and that the billions of dollars being spent on infrastructure projects in this State should be used to create a skills legacy for our children. The truth is that what this Government is doing to our TAFE system in this State will leave a legacy, a shameful one. It is nothing short of generational theft. Any attack on TAFE, any devaluing of TAFE, any watering down of TAFE's leading role in the VET system, be it big or small, will never be tolerated by this

Opposition. The difference is that for us this is a marker in the ground. TAFE is just too important for our future. I condemn the bill in its current form and look forward to this debate.

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (17:28):** I support the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Amendment Bill 2017. The Apprenticeship and Traineeship Act 2001 regulates the employment and training of apprentices and trainees in New South Wales. The Act was last substantively amended in 2011. Given the constant pace of change in the economy and training, the suite of proposed amendments in the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Amendment Bill are timely to ensure that the system remains effective as the cornerstone of skills development in this State. As at 11 June 2017 there were 85,597 apprentices and trainees in training across New South Wales and I am proud to say a solid amount of them were from the Manly electorate .

Vocational training covers a broad range of skills. I can personally attest to the craftsmanship, skill and passion of our tradespeople as I have many friends who have studied a trade. For example, Kai Alagich has completed a three-year apprenticeship in carpentry and joinery. He does phenomenal work and he is building a strong business across the northern beaches. Mr Glen Moore of Curl Curl is a former Manly firefighter and leader at Manly Fire Station. Through his business, Trade Up, he uses social media to link builders with junior amateur sportsmen, sportswomen and others who need a career in the trades.

The Apprenticeship and Traineeship Act regulates the employment and training of apprentices and trainees in New South Wales. It allows the Government to define which qualifications are recognised as apprenticeships or traineeships and under what conditions those qualifications are delivered. The Act provides a safety net for employers, apprentices and trainees through a training contract. It provides New South Wales with a system that supports a variety of apprenticeship and traineeship models designed to meet the collective and individual needs of employers, industries, apprentices and trainees. However, progress in the way businesses operate and changes in the way training is delivered mean that the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Act must be brought into line with current employment and training practices if it is to continue to be effective in supporting the skills base of this State.

The reforms introduced in this bill will ensure that the New South Wales apprenticeship and traineeship system is fit for the current economy and into the future. The changes will reinforce a system that is built on integrity and is high-quality, flexible in its approach, responsive to industry needs and streamlined in administration. The bill builds on the 2015 compact, a commitment by this Government and peak industry bodies to encourage more businesses to take on apprentices and trainees and continue to create more job opportunities, especially for young people, in New South Wales. The bill will create new career pathways for those who want to upgrade their skills and make the most of the employment opportunities that this Government has provided via a strong economy.

This bill will improve communication between all stakeholders: employers, registered training organisations, apprentices and trainees. Communication will be improved around the progress of the apprentice or trainee so that they are rewarded for competency-based progression and competency-based completion. This bill will legislate the use of the approved training plan, which not only will increase accountability across all registered training organisations but will provide clarity around how, when and by whom the training and assessment will be conducted. Under the current legislation, only employers have a binding obligation to comply with the requirements of the Act. With the proposed amendments, penalties for non-compliance will now also apply to registered training organisations, Australian Apprenticeship Services Network providers and employers, ensuring that they honour their obligations to apprentices, trainees and other parties. The proposed amendments complement the work by this Government and will ensure a quality training system in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (17:33):** The Government's primary aim with the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Amendment Bill 2017 is to cut costs and remove levels of regulation over the training and deployment of apprentices and trainees in New South Wales. The bill will abolish the Vocational Training Review Panel [VTRP] and transfer its powers to the Commissioner for Vocational Training. The Vocational Training Review Panel was established by the former Carr Government under the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Act 2001.

The VTRP is comprised of industry representatives and is chaired by the Commissioner for Vocation Training, or his or her representative. TAFE representatives are included on the Vocational Training Review Panel, however this will change following the introduction of this legislation. The abolition of the VTRP will remove any input from TAFE with regard to apprentices and traineeships. TAFE is becoming less and less recognisable as the Government continues to hack and slash away at everything that made it great. We all know how those opposite feel about TAFE. In his second reading speech, the Deputy Premier and Minister for Skills, the Hon. John Barilaro, said:

... this bill will ensure that the New South Wales apprenticeship and traineeship system is fit for the current economy and into the future.

It would appear that an apprenticeship and traineeship system that is fit for the current economy and into the future does not include TAFE. We on this side of the House are committed to making TAFE affordable and accessible for everyone in New South Wales. We want to ensure that TAFE is a world-leading institution that can equip people with the necessary skills to respond to the changing economy. Those opposite clearly have a different idea in mind. Both the complaint and dispute resolution functions and the VTRP's responsibility for trade recognition and process will be moved to the Commissioner for Vocational Training.

Under the proposed regime, a complaint would be referred to a conciliator in the first instance in an attempt to bring the parties to an acceptable settlement. If a complaint remains unresolved, the commissioner will then hear and decide the matter and seek industry expertise when necessary. However, the commissioner will determine the definition of "necessary". Any appeals against the commissioner's decision will be sent to the incredibly overworked and under-resourced NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. Under the proposed regime, trade recognition for individuals will be conducted by a government-appointed bureaucrat who will seek independent expert advice wherever necessary.

The role is presently carried out by the VTRP to determine recognition for those who are either technically unqualified but skilled or have qualifications from elsewhere, or those who have not accessed apprenticeships in New South Wales. Stakeholders have expressed concern about the changes to trade recognition under the proposed regime. Penalties for non-compliance will be increased and agents will have more accountability for the accuracy of information and the documentation of applications, including training plans. These changes are welcomed by all.

Generations of people in this State have followed the path of apprenticeships to enter into a specialised field and have received top-notch, on-the-job training while earning their qualifications. The system is changing. It has been changed forever as a result of those opposite decimating our beloved TAFE system. The number of apprentices and trainees declined rapidly since the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Coalition Government took office in 2011 and the Government has offered no substantive policy to address this trend. NSW Labor strongly believes in investing in apprentices and trainees as they are the skilled workers of tomorrow and the future of New South Wales. That is why we speak in this House today to fight for the retention of the Vocational Training Review Panel and highlight the importance of investing in apprentices and trainees in New South Wales. Those opposite will not stand up for TAFE but NSW Labor will.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Disability Services) (17:38):** I am always inspired to speak on behalf of apprentices and traineeships, given that I have no less than six individual trade qualifications. I will note some aspects of this bill which I think are particularly interesting and which may help inspire young people who might be looking for a career or perhaps are at the commencement of a career. Perhaps that is the best way to put it. These days, with the way we are heading and our economy is evolving, when a person starts a career it is not the end; it is one of the first steps on the ladder. For me, it was a very important step on the ladder. I note that there are currently more than 85,500 apprentices and trainees in New South Wales, which is an extraordinary number. But if I think back to the late 1970s—Mr Assistant Speaker, you will only just remember that as you are a young person—it was incredibly difficult to secure an apprenticeship. My father was a blacksmith by trade; he worked with steel. He also shod horses as a farrier. Blacksmiths moved from that role into boilermaking. Ultimately, I was very lucky to secure an apprenticeship as a welder and boilermaker in the late 1970s. That enabled me to gain skills and qualifications.

Someone once said to me, "If you are a qualified person with a skill in a trade, you can probably apply yourself to many different areas." That was certainly accurate in my case. I had a lot of friends who were panelbeaters and spray painters. They detested welding out rust on their cars. I was quite proficient at welding and I became very proficient in welding out rust on my mates' cars. I gained additional skills because I loved motor vehicles and had great friends in the panelbeating and spray-painting industries. As I continued through my trade, I also gained other skills in a backyard kind of way. But ultimately those skills equipped me to gain a position later in managing heavy vehicle repairs, initially for Glenorie Bus Company—which morphed into Hillsbus sometime later. I undertook to educate and train dozens of apprentices in those skills while I was in that role over 22 years. It was incredibly satisfying to see those young people gain skills as an important step on the ladder in their lives.

Even though it is great to get qualifications, it is not the end of a person's career in any way, shape or form. In 1976, as I commenced my welding and boilermaking trade, I never would have thought I would end up in this place advocating for the opportunity for young people to be educated in trades through our wonderful TAFE system. My TAFE qualifications, as I have said, include four full-time trades—including one in panelbeating and one in spray painting, which I completed while I worked managing and looking after buses in

the heavy vehicle repair industry. We did a range of things—not only repairs of frames, chassis work and steel but also ultimately fibreglass work and work with windows, as well as the upholstery and stainless steel inside buses. I gratefully learnt and gained a range of qualifications and then passed that information on to other younger people who came through and helped them to build their skills and qualifications.

One of my first apprentices eventually took over my role running the shop. It was a very busy and productive shop, with many employees. At one stage we did the repair work for approximately 350 vehicles in the Western Sydney bus network. The bill builds on the 2015 Apprenticeship Compact—a commitment by the New South Wales Government and peak industry bodies to encourage more businesses to take on apprentices and trainees, thereby creating more job opportunities. We know we have a skills shortage at this time, which is very broad. There is a skills shortage because there is an abundance of work and low unemployment in New South Wales, thanks to the great work of this Government in building the important infrastructure that the previous Labor Government failed to provide. This has created great opportunities for many people in the building industry—chippies, sparkies, carpet layers and other tradies. More importantly, there is also a skills shortage in other trades, such as the motor vehicle trade.

I point out to employers, school principals and even parents that young people should take the opportunity to do some work experience in those trades. At present many businesses would be more than willing to give people the opportunity to have a look at what their trade entails. Sometimes people are reluctant to take the initial step into an apprenticeship if they are unaware of exactly what is involved. Many employers may also be reluctant to take on somebody with no background in the field. Students should take the opportunity to "try before they buy" while they are at high school and get that important work experience. A couple of disability providers in the Blue Mountains area are encouraging young people to do exactly that. We expect that there will be up to 30,000 new job opportunities in New South Wales following the implementation of the full National Disability Insurance Scheme after July 2018.

People may not be interested in a job in the disabilities area, but doing work experience with some of our wonderful providers—and there are many incredible providers not only in the Blue Mountains but throughout New South Wales—will open up their eyes to the possibilities. If someone starts in a training position with a disability provider it could lead to other opportunities, such as in therapy or nursing involving a large range of skills. It is about taking that first step. The bill acknowledges the necessity to remain flexible and dynamic in an evolving economy. Our economy is vibrant; it is leading this nation and providing endless employment opportunities throughout New South Wales. We want to upskill people. One incredible organisation that I have been part of for many years is the Dural Men's Shed. They have 100 senior guys from a large range of trades who actively encourage disadvantaged youth from Western Sydney to embrace woodworking skills and lathe work. They even have a car repair section.

One hundred young people aged between 15 and 18 years have completed the program, and the many jobs, apprenticeships and traineeships they have attained subsequently is inspiring. The opportunity to "try before you buy" exists in many areas through work experience or programs such as that at the Dural Men's Shed, the Intergenerational Mentoring Program, for youth across Western Sydney. Parents must be encouraged to look more closely at trades so that their children can get onto the first step of the ladder. TAFE will provide them with all the wonderful qualifications they need, as it is currently doing for more than 85,000 apprentices and trainees who are getting the benefits of technical and further education in New South Wales.

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (17:48):** I contribute to debate on the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Amendment Bill 2017 on behalf of The Greens. The member for Castle Hill is obviously very passionate and has a great deal of experience as an employer and as someone who came through the TAFE system, but his contribution was a little confusing because the bill has nothing to do with that. The bill is all about bureaucracy. The Greens' position is that the bill requires significant amendment—we support Labor's foreshadowed amendments; we also have some of our own—and the Minister should go back to the drawing board. I am afraid that most members on this side of the House, and certainly most people in the community, have lost confidence in the Government and its tampering with our public provider.

It appears that the Minister and the Assistant Minister for Skills have also lost confidence. This was evident during the budget estimates hearing when the subject of Dapto TAFE was raised. In response to questioning from The Greens at the budget estimates hearing last Monday, the Government admitted that Dapto TAFE is not at an acceptable standard due to a lack of basic amenities such as toilets. This is an appalling reflection of the Liberal-Nationals Government's poorly thought-out and chaotic TAFE agenda. The Assistant Minister for Skills further admitted that he has not even visited the Dapto TAFE shopfront, despite its being the first of a model that the Liberal-Nationals Government plans to roll out across New South Wales. It appears that the Government has no idea about the disgraceful situation that has left local students without access to basic amenities, no library and no practical trade courses at Dapto.



It is also plain bizarre that the Government is suddenly saying that the Dapto TAFE shopfront is not a connected learning centre despite its being branded as a connected learning centre—in fact, it says that on the front of the building. When the Greens TAFE spokesperson, Ms Dawn Walker, visited Dapto TAFE in June she was stunned to see a small shopfront with no students. The New South Wales Government has decided to replace a vibrant TAFE campus which had 650 students and more than 100 staff with this substandard shopfront facility that holds approximately 22 students and has no toilets. If the New South Wales Government and the Assistant Minister for Skills want this to be a lighthouse showing what Smart and Skilled can offer, they need to take urgent action and lift their game. We need to listen to teachers and students. Bureaucrats are clearly not well placed in this space.

I now refer to the bill specifically. The bill will affect the regulation and accreditation of apprenticeships and traineeships in a number of ways. Broadly, it will dissolve the Vocational Training Review Panel, confer more powers on the Commissioner for Vocational Training with regard to conflict resolution, assessment and accreditation, and increase penalty units. Stakeholders have a number of concerns about those changes, and how they will affect the ability of apprentices and trainees and the unions that represent them to resolve disputes and advocate. Abolishing the Vocational Training Review Panel will result in less clarity and accountability with regard to decisions about dispute resolutions.

The commissioner will have the discretion to seek independent advice on a case-by-case basis, but the transparency will be lost. It is my understanding that the requirements for training plans and reporting to employers have already been put in place. These requirements have been difficult for registered training operators to comply with because of a lack of resources. In the private sector that is not such an issue but in the public sector there is no resourcing. We heard during budget estimates that there will be no extra resources for the training plans.

I turn now to the abolition of the Vocational Training Review Panel. As I mentioned, apprentices have traditionally been successful when it comes to conflicts because there was a partnership or nexus between the industry, employers and unions and the apprentice and training provider. There is concern that getting rid of the review panel will mean that unions and industry will be marginalised and less able to advocate on behalf of trainees. Further, the review panel provided transparency, and decisions were made by a group. Shifting this decision-making to the commissioner is a weird, top-down approach. There is also concern because the review panel provided advice and resources, and this will be lost when it is abolished. I have referred to the training plans. There will also be changes to applications to establish apprenticeships and traineeships, and regulations around the sign-up process by employer agents.

There is concern about a lack of clarity regarding the independent assessment, when it will be used and who will administer it. The bill seeks to address the consistency of training by different providers by giving the commissioner the power to engage an independent training provider to assess and report on the competence of an apprentice or trainee. The commissioner will also have the power to report any findings to the Australian Skills Quality Authority. There is little clarity as to why this provision is being added to the bill as it references licensed trades that already require an additional assessment at the end of an apprenticeship.

It is also unclear what input industry will have in these assessments, if any. There needs to be greater clarity over when, and in what circumstances, this extra testing can be used, and whether it has the power to override existing licensing procedures. In a nutshell, The Greens think the Government has made an absolute mess of this sector. It is time to go back to the drawing board. It is time to listen to teachers and students. The shopfronts are not cutting it. I have lost all confidence, and my party has lost all confidence, with respect to how this matter is being handled. This bill reads like gobbledegook.

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (17:55):** In speaking to the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Amendment Bill 2017, I concur with the fantastic shadow Minister for Skills, the member for Londonderry. We will try to amend this bill. If we cannot amend the bill, the Opposition will not support it. I will give an overview of the demolition of TAFE in the Hunter, and in New South Wales more generally. If we look at the enrolment figures from 2012 we can see that TAFE has been gutted in the Hunter. Enrolments were around 65,000 in 2012 and by April 2016 they had gone down to around 25,000. That is a catastrophic decline in enrolments.

I would also like the House to note the further 9.3 per cent reduction in enrolments in the north region in the year to 16 July 2017. Unfortunately, things just seem to be going down further and further. The Opposition was hoping that there would be a plateauing, or even a rise in enrolments, but that does not seem to be happening. Funding cuts and increased course fees are having a huge impact on TAFE enrolments, and the Government should be condemned for its funding cuts to important courses that businesses rely upon to provide employees with world-class training. On the other hand, the Opposition is committed to making TAFE affordable and accessible for everyone in the State.

Labor will not sell off campuses. A Labor Government will make TAFE a world leader again. Youth unemployment is higher under this Government than it was under Labor, which means that we need TAFE to be accessible to young people; we should not be locking them out with higher fees. We have an ageing population so the Government has a responsibility to give people a chance to find new careers. We need to equip people with the skills they need to respond to a changing economy. To do this, we need an affordable and accessible TAFE system. Thousands of students and potential students are being impacted by the crisis facing our TAFE system. They are not statistics; they are real people—and I meet with them week after week in Newcastle and in the Hunter. People are just trying to create better lives for themselves, their families and their communities.

The disappointing statistics—a reduction from 65,000 enrolments in 2012 to just below 25,000 in 2016—show that this Government has gutted TAFE. In fact, since 2011 the Government has cut \$1.7 billion from education and training, sacked TAFE teachers and support staff, cut TAFE courses, slashed class contact times and drastically increased student fees, which are up by thousands of dollars. The Opposition has introduced a bill to guarantee 70 per cent of all vocational education and training funding to TAFE NSW. The Opposition has announced that a Labor Government will introduce a private providers investigation unit to crack down on shonky operators in the sector. We have announced that 15 per cent of work on New South Wales Government construction projects worth over half a million dollars will be allocated for apprentices, trainees, Indigenous Australians and the long-term unemployed.

Seeing yearly enrolments down by more than 175,000 compared with 2012 is really worrying. There were 14,567 fewer students with disability enrolled in TAFE in 2016. It is deeply concerning for disabled people and for our society as a whole that so many fewer students with a disability are being trained. With respect to job cuts, 5,700 teachers and support staff have been sacked since 2012, and there has been a 22 per cent jump in course fees paid by students. To learn from one of the new private providers offering workplace training, students have to pay fees of up to \$4,000 for very basic certificates.

The Government botched the introduction of its \$573 million TAFE computer system, thereby adversely affecting thousands of students from 2014 who are unable to graduate. The Auditor-General's report found that the financial health of TAFE is an unknown. The bungled software has meant that the Auditor-General was unable to verify whether TAFE received \$923 million in current or future revenues. In June last year the then Baird Government finally ditched its \$60 million online enrolment system at huge cost while thousands of lost enrolments and the wasted hours of teachers will never ever be recovered.

A replacement system will not be in place until 2018, thereby forcing frustrated teachers and students to cope with an old system for another year. A leaked Cabinet document shows that the Government is planning a fire sale of \$63 million worth of TAFE campuses across the State. Sites that are earmarked for full sale include Chullora, Epping, Belrose, Scone, Dapto, Vincentia, Maclean, Murwillumbah, Corowa, Narrandera and Granville. It is an absolute disgrace. In a briefing to teachers in 2016, the Minister flagged a move away from bricks and mortar and raised the prospect that more TAFE campuses will be sold to pay for the Electronic Business Systems [EBS] debacle that this Government introduced. As I flagged initially, the most concerning part of this legislation is that the Government intends to abolish the Vocational Training Review Panel [VTRP] that was established under the Carr Government by the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Act 2001.

The panel comprises industry representatives and is chaired by the Commissioner for Vocational Training and/or his representative. What is really important about this is that TAFE representatives are included on the panel. The panel has an obligation to attempt to reach an agreed settlement of any complaints. If it is unable to do so, it may make a determination that is binding on all parties. It has closed hearings. Information and evidence submitted to the review panel is accepted in confidence. The panel has wideranging powers to require people to attend a hearing, provide evidence, answer questions asked by the review panel members, and produce relevant documents. People who do not comply with those requests or who make false or misleading statements may commit an offence under that Act. One of the most significant parts of the legislation before the House is the removal of the panel.

In his second reading speech the Deputy Premier unsurprisingly cited removal of the administrative burden associated with maintaining the panel as the primary benefit. Both the complaints and dispute resolution functions and the panel's responsibility for trade recognition processes will be moved over to the Commissioner for Vocational Training. Another and perhaps more significant role of the current VTRP is its role in trade recognition, which provides a pathway to a trade qualification for technically unqualified but skilful people working in a particular trade. People who have qualified elsewhere, such as overseas, will generally not have accessed the apprenticeship system in New South Wales.

The removal of the panel from that important process is a significant concern to many stakeholders. In essence, it means that a decision on whether someone can proceed with an apprenticeship is left up to a Government-appointed bureaucrat who, under the legislation, will seek independent and expert advice wherever

necessary. That is deeply concerning. The abolition of the VTRP from the trade recognition process for apprentices deliberately divorces TAFE from the process. Labor cannot support anything that does that. Labor members believe in the expertise of TAFE and that it should have a seat at the table. In conclusion, I reiterate that unless Labor's amendments are accepted the Opposition will not support the bill.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (18:03):** Education is at the heart of making a more equal and fair society. It is one of the most powerful agents of social change that we have ever known, which is why we need strong preschools, primary schools, high schools and further education institutions. New South Wales needs Labor to deliver this vital investment in education. Despite the erosion of TAFE by the current New South Wales Government, TAFE as we know and love it is the proud backbone of tertiary skill development in this State. Generations of tradies and skilled workers across New South Wales can thank TAFE for their solid vocational education. I congratulate them on their skills and thank them all for their contribution to New South Wales, but I am very concerned by the current Government's erosion of TAFE.

The people of New South Wales are horrified by the new fees being charged to students, the cuts in staff and the cuts in qualification hours as TAFE teachers are forced to contract their courses while supposedly achieving the same skills outcomes. Tradesmen and tradeswomen alike do not want to see this solid New South Wales institution and associated qualifications downgraded by the withdrawal of funds and compacting of face-to-face teaching hours. Furthermore, the people of New South Wales seek assurance that all people moving into this State with skills to offer our community are assessed and accredited with professional integrity. As consumers of professional tradespeople, the people of New South Wales want an absolute assurance that the skills provided by our tertiary training organisations are of utmost integrity and that those offering licensed trades to the public are adequately skilled, whether trained in New South Wales or beyond.

The Government now wants TAFE teachers and representatives—the qualified experts who have continued to train people in the skills they are assessing—to be removed from the Vocational Training Review Panel [VTRP]. The Government plans to completely abolish the panel. Under the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Amendment Bill 2017, the power of the VTRP will be replaced by the Commissioner for Vocational Training. As a consumer, I want absolute certainty that the licensed tradesperson who comes into my home or my workplace, whether they have been trained in New South Wales or not, has been assessed with the full integrity of a qualified New South Wales TAFE teacher or representative.

Under the current Act, the VTRP reviews the applications for trade skills recognition in accordance with the provisions of the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Act 2001, but the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Amendment Bill 2017 will result in both the complaints and dispute resolution functions as well as the panel's responsibility for trade recognition processes moved to the Commissioner for Vocational Training. In addition, any further appeals will be heard by the already overworked and under-resourced NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. During the parliamentary break a plumbing issue arose in our home. This morning I spoke with the plumber called to do the job, Mitchell Booth, about his views on the importance of the integrity of TAFE and TAFE qualifications. Mitch states that TAFE is especially important when it comes to the significance of licensed trades.

The institution of TAFE teaches the skills, keeps the integrity of the trade and creates a workforce that customers know and trust. Mitch spoke of his concerns about the qualifications passed on by private institutions that are now operating in New South Wales. As a plumber, he feels that these private training providers are very focused on funding, with an emphasis not on the quality and integrity of training but on the pass rate received by their students. Mitch was horrified by the thought of TAFE teachers being removed from the VTRP and said, "TAFE teachers need to be on the panel to ensure that the standards are enforced—perhaps even two TAFE teachers, and definitely not none!" As a professional in the plumbing field, Mitch found it inconceivable that the New South Wales Government could even be considering removing the TAFE teacher from the Vocational Training Review Panel.

The New South Wales Government cannot continue to undermine the values added to New South Wales by TAFE. We need to hold onto and respect the skills provided to our State rather than erode capacities and disrespect the skills provided to the people of New South Wales by TAFE teachers. As a consumer, I want a guarantee that the VTRP has a professional skills component that is accredited within the New South Wales vocational education and training and TAFE institution and that a panel member is qualified to teach and evaluate the skills that are under review. The Apprenticeship and Traineeship Amendment Bill 2017 is the Government's attempt to cut costs and remove levels of regulation over the training and employment of apprentices and trainees in New South Wales. It is not legislation that will attempt to improve the experience or usability of the further education sector. A Labor Government will halt the demise and privatisation of vocational education in New South Wales.

We commit to 70 per cent of all vocational education and training [VET] funds going to TAFE. We commit to strengthening and increasing TAFE teaching staff and to working to improve the number of enrolments in TAFE, rather than continuing to privatise TAFE and slashing the education budget. We know the importance of TAFE as a training institution, especially on the beautiful Central Coast, where current youth unemployment is at a staggering 17.3 per cent. That is very disappointing. Although employment has increased from 5.1 per cent to 6 per cent, youth unemployment has increased from 11.6 per cent to 17.3 per cent in the six years since the Government came to power. That is an almost 40 per cent increase in youth unemployment in the past six years.

We should be funnelling all the money we can into our local TAFEs to ensure improved skills for our local young people and improved employability. During the same period, the Liberal-Nationals Government has cut \$41.7 billion from education and training, has sacked 165 TAFE teachers and support staff in the Hunter and Central Coast TAFE, and has sacked a further 5,700 staff across the State. Gosford TAFE has already lost three permanent teachers and Wyong has had several courses cut, including the Higher School Certificate [HSC] course.

It is not just the cuts that are hurting our TAFEs, but also the jacking-up of fees, which is making courses inaccessible for so many young people. Students have faced fee hikes of thousands of dollars, with 40 per cent of students paying between \$500 and \$1,500 for extra courses and apprentices paying \$2,000 a course, up from \$500 a year. The cost of a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care has increased from \$838 to \$1,930; a Certificate III in Individual Support (Aged Care) has increased from \$838 to \$1,750; and a Certificate III in Bricklaying/Blocklaying from \$838 to \$3,580. That is right. It is \$3,500 for a certificate in bricklaying. No young person looking for a career start has \$3,500 lying around. It is appalling.

We need more skills and more jobs on the coast, not further TAFE cuts and an erosion of qualifications and the integrity of TAFE teachers and their role in assessing TAFE-based skills. NSW Labor has a strong policy on direct investment in apprentices that requires all Government construction projects over the value of \$500,000 to employ 15 per cent apprentices and trainees. This is in stark contrast to the Government, which has employed a target on only two pilot projects, without a plan to roll it out. Unlike the Coalition Government, Labor would use the billions of dollars being spent on New South Wales Government infrastructure projects to create thousands of new jobs for trainees and apprentices, leaving the skills legacy for the next generation that this Government will not leave. Instead, the Government channels millions of dollars into Sydney central road projects. I do not think it will be long before we see a toll imposed on our skilled workers to use the motorways to get to their Sydney Basin jobs from the coast.

While I have the opportunity to talk about TAFE, I draw attention to the fact that enrolments of people with disabilities have decreased since this Government has been in power. We have seen 14,567 fewer students with disabilities enrolled. Yet today in question time the Minister for Disability Services failed to agree to continue the funding of disability advocacy after June 2018. If the number of people with disabilities enrolled in TAFE has decreased, how can we expect employers in New South Wales to become disability confident employers if we are not providing education and training to people with disabilities? Who will advocate for increased enrolments for people with disabilities under a Liberal Government? Like youth unemployment on the Central Coast and New South Wales TAFE cuts, this Government's disappointing commitment to key disadvantaged groups in our communities is appalling.

It is not time for the Liberal Government to erode the creditability of TAFE as the institution that is the backbone of skills development across New South Wales, but it is time to invest in TAFE, in the integrity of our TAFE representatives and teachers, and in appropriate skill qualification development and recognition in New South Wales. Consumers across New South Wales expect an appropriate standard of skill, integrity, and quality of work by New South Wales TAFE graduates. Transferring the powers of the Vocational Training Review Panel to the Commissioner for Vocational Training leaves potential recognition of technically unqualified but skilled people working in particular trades or people who have qualified overseas up to a bureaucrat who, under the legislation, will seek independent expert advice where necessary. *[Extension of time]*

If only we could go back to the good old days of Adrian Piccoli, who once defended TAFE by saying that cuts to TAFE were short-sighted and would cost New South Wales in the long term. Failure to invest in education and training in New South Wales is a failure to invest in our future. Studies show that every dollar spent on TAFE returns \$6.40 to the economy. It makes perfect economic sense to invest in vocational training.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (18:14):** I contribute to debate on the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Amendment Bill 2017. Tonight I draw the attention of the House to something that we should all be concerned about, which is the undermining of quality in the training sector. One of the key concerns, apart from myriad issues that have been raised by people on this side in terms of cuts to teaching staff and courses and the increases in fees, which have all become deterrents to young people taking up training courses in New South Wales, is the attack on quality. Instead of lifting the standard of private providers to match TAFE, the opposite has occurred and the system that has been set up in this State seems to be lowering the standard and quality of TAFE to match

the private providers. Many of the private providers that have come into the system have served young people and people retraining in this State badly, and TAFE's mission of providing quality education has been undermined.

All members of this place will be aware of the shonky private providers that came into the system because there was easy money to be made. This happened because fees were deregulated. People whose first commitment was not to education realised very quickly that if they signed up enough students to their courses, they could literally make millions of dollars from government subsidies. This has fundamentally failed young people across the State who have started courses, taken on a debt, and have been unable to finish that course. Instead of the Government holding up TAFE as the standard that other organisations should aspire to, we are unfortunately seeing a process where TAFE is being asked to lower its standards in order to compete with these organisations. I discussed this with the shadow Minister a few weeks ago, but I was absolutely appalled when I was going through the local shopping centre at Erina, which is in the member for Terrigal's electorate, and a gentleman stopped me and said "You're a politician, aren't you?" I said yes—

**Mr Geoff Provost:** Are you recognised in his electorate?

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** I am very well known, even in the member for Terrigal's electorate. I am there all the time. The gentleman concerned is a local plumber and runs a successful business. Because he has gone through the TAFE system, he decided that he wanted to go back part time and train young apprentices in plumbing and gasfitting. He told me he did not do it for the money, because he was doing well for himself and his business was successful. He indicated that he was not someone who would normally support our side of politics, but he was absolutely in despair. I will relate the story that he told me. He said that he was called into the TAFE office—

**Mr David Elliott:** What is his name?

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** I will not name him because—

**Mr David Elliott:** Because he does not exist.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** He does exist. We know these people are persecuted. He said that he was called into the office and told to pass several students who had not reached the necessary standards because they had paid their fees and therefore they needed to be passed. He was told that he was a part-time teacher and if he was not prepared to do what was required then he would not be asked back. He said, "You do not have to fire me, because I do not want to be part of a system that does this sort of thing."

**Mr David Elliott:** He has resigned so tell us his name.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** He is so concerned that he stopped me in the street to tell me his story. We will follow up his story, do not worry about that.

**Mr David Elliott:** Do it now.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** We will refer this matter to the proper people. Many TAFE teachers have told us similar stories, and the shadow Minister would agree with me on this.

**Mr David Elliott:** Name them.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** They are being asked to pass students although they have not reached the set standards. This is the by-product of this Government's policy. If those opposite spoke to teachers in the system, they would find out that what I am saying is true because they would hear the same stories that we are hearing. This is the problem with what is happening in the vocational education system. Private colleges are ripping off students and going out of business, while at the same time TAFE is being told to lower standards to pass students, because people are paying their fees.

**Mr David Elliott:** When you were in government, didn't you introduce private providers?

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** Will you stop interrupting?

**Mr David Elliott:** You are a hypocrite.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** I find you objectionable and offensive most of the time.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch):** Order! The member for Wyong will address his comments through the Chair.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** This is another bill that seeks to remove, through one of its provisions, TAFE representation on an accreditation organisation. This undermines and lowers the standards of our TAFE system. If those opposite have not realised that their training system is falling apart then they need to think carefully about the amendment that the Opposition will move that seeks to maintain or even raise TAFE's standards and make the

training organisations come up to those standards. We want training organisations not to lower themselves to the standards of shonky colleges.

I will give an example of how private institutions do accreditation, as reported recently in the media. Get Qualified Australia is a company that assesses and certifies qualifications or prior experience. Get Qualified Australia was ordered to pay a penalty of \$8 million, the biggest fine in history, for consumer law breaches in misleading students. The sole director, Adam Wadi, was ordered to pay an additional penalty of \$500,000. This is what happens when private providers are allowed to provide such services. We have heard stories from apprentices who have watched a 40-minute video on how to be an electrician and then were ticked off as having the skills because they have watched the video. That is what this State is heading for, an undermining of qualifications and a downgrading of the system because the open market has been allowed in. In future, every person will suffer as a result of this. We have heard stories about young plumbers who have not been taught properly and therefore had gas fittings et cetera blow up and injure them.

**Mr David Elliott:** Who? Name them.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** It is on the record. This is a result of their not being trained properly to do the tasks that they are doing. Through our contacts in organisations such as Ausgrid, we have heard about young people who are certified to do heavy voltage work but who are being stopped from doing such work by other workers because it is obvious that they have no idea of how to undertake such work and so potentially could kill themselves. This Government is fiddling around with the system, and these are the outcomes that we are hearing about. The story I related about the plumber who lectured at TAFE is very concerning, because this practice seems to be more and more widespread. This Government should raise the standards of training in the State, not lower them so that shonky private colleges can rip off people across the board.

Minister Elliott obviously does not want to listen to me talking about what is happening in the real world. Those opposite have the perception that everything is great in the world. But this Government will suffer in the next election, because the community understands that when it comes to training this Government is not supporting TAFE. This Government is pulling down TAFE, as is evident in this bill, unless Government members pass the amendments to this bill that the Opposition will move.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong) (18:24):** It is always good to follow contributions from members of electorates in the Central Coast, and I appreciated the contribution of the member for Wyong. Regional communities, such as those on the Central Coast and the Illawarra, often give a different perspective on issues debated in this Parliament, such as the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Amendment Bill 2017. The Minister's second reading speech on the introduction of this bill was full of public relations buzzwords and slogans about the future of apprenticeships and traineeships. The Minister said:

The changes will reinforce a system that is built on integrity and high quality, flexible in approach, responsive to industry needs, and streamlined in administration.

His comments are almost straight from the script of *Yes Minister*. But the facts in vocational education and training do not support his contention. Since 2012, when this Government started mucking around with vocational education and training, all we have seen is the fundamental undermining of the entire system. Smart and Skilled has been an excuse for the Government to gut the TAFE system. It is a simple and stupid objective. We have seen the Government cut nearly \$2 billion from education and training. TAFE teachers and support staff have been sacked. TAFE courses have been cut. Class contact times have been slashed.

Student fees to obtain a qualification have drastically increased. Campuses, like Dapto, have been closed and more are likely to be up for sale soon. Yearly enrolments in the TAFE system have declined by more than 175,000 compared to 2012. Last week, someone in the bureaucracy helpfully leaked an interesting document dated 10-16 July 2017, which confirms that new enrolments are down by 14.6 per cent in the year to date. You know the Government is in trouble when the bureaucracy takes it upon itself to undermine the optimistic spin of the Ministers responsible for the training portfolios.

This bill seeks to abolish the Vocational Training Review Panel, and transfer its powers to the Commissioner for Vocational Training. The Vocational Training Review Panel was established by the Carr Government under the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Act 2001. The panel comprises industry representatives and is chaired by the Commissioner for Vocational Training, or his or her representative. The panel included a representative of TAFE. Under this bill, that will be no more. The Vocational Training Review Panel heard 15 disputes in 2016. Under the new regime, a complaint will be referred to a conciliator in the first instance in an attempt to bring the parties to an acceptable settlement. If a complaint remains unresolved, the commissioner will then hear and decide the matter, and seek industry expertise "when necessary". The commissioner will determine when it is necessary. Appeals against the commissioner's decision can be made to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT], which is notoriously overworked and under-resourced.

Perhaps the more significant role of the current Vocational Training Review Panel is in trade recognition. Trade recognition provides a pathway to a trade qualification for technically unqualified but skilled people working in a particular trade, people who have qualified elsewhere or overseas—generally people who have not accessed the apprenticeship system in New South Wales. The removal of the panel from this important process is of significant concern to many stakeholders. Essentially, it means the decision on whether someone can proceed with an apprenticeship is left up to a government-appointed bureaucrat, who under this bill will seek "independent expert advice wherever necessary". The purpose of this bill is a little perplexing, because the Minister conceded in his second reading speech that:

We have consulted widely with industry representatives, individual employers, apprentices and training providers about their views on the current system and their visions for its future. They told us that the Act is generally operating well ... It is something in the vocational education and training system that is working well, but this Government decides that the State cannot have that and it had better get in and change it for the worse. As I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks, the real agenda of this Government when it comes to vocational education and training is to strip away any TAFE involvement in the trade recognition process. The Government can use all its powers of spin to talk of integrity, high quality, flexibility, industry needs and cutting red tape, but it is determined to undermine the TAFE system. This objective simply cannot be supported. The Government must be made to understand that you cannot prepare the skills and training of the future by undermining the foundation of the vocational training system at every turn.

For generations young people and working people looked to TAFE to become qualified in a trade. The Government cannot drastically increase the fees nor drastically reduce course availability to help people gain a qualification. The Government cannot close campuses and expect people to be able to gain a qualification. This Government has placed drastic financial burdens on those who want to learn and train for their chosen career, and students have voted with their feet. They have left the training system. Enrolments have crashed and the leaked document I referred to earlier indicates that in the south region, which covers the Illawarra, valid commencement enrolments are down by nearly 17 per cent over the last 12 months. Valid continuing enrolments are down a massive 23.3 per cent, almost a quarter, over the year to date. Incomplete enrolments are down by nearly 40 per cent. Total enrolments are down, as the leaked document confirms, by nearly 22 per cent.

Quite simply, the Government cannot spin its way out of this crisis in vocational educational training—a crisis of its own creation. It has closed our TAFE campuses across the State, including the formerly bustling and active campus at Dapto. I was out the front of Dapto TAFE recently and it had a sign on the door that said, "Please knock to gain entry". You used to be able to walk onto Dapto TAFE campus and get some training, but it has been closed down. The Government has replaced other campuses with so-called Connected Learning Centres. They are not TAFE campuses; they are glorified shopfronts with a few chairs and a desk with a computer on top.

In fact, last week during budget estimates hearing the Minister conceded that the so-called Connected Learning Centre at Dapto, which has been renamed Dapto Access Point because it is not even good enough to be a Connected Learning Centre, was "unacceptable" and did not even include basic toilet facilities. In the *Illawarra Mercury* the other day the TAFE chief executive officer, Jon Black, indicated he will email 10,000 Illawarra students to clarify which services are available at the Dapto Access Point. Importantly, he will provide the information that they will graciously allow students to use the toilet at the Access Point rather than sending them down the street to Dapto station or Dapto Mall.

The Government seeks to justify its decision by claiming commercial-in-confidence status is why it no longer publishes statistics on individual TAFE campus enrolments, but the real reason is that it would be embarrassed by the falling enrolments. I retain deep concerns about the future of West Wollongong TAFE campus in my electorate. During the Wollongong by-election last November, the shadow Minister and I brought to public attention the fact that the West Wollongong facility, which accommodates butchery courses, could not even fund the purchase of meat for students to practise fine cuts on. I asked a series of supplementary questions on this matter during the budget estimates process. This was not an issue cooked up by me; the only thing being filleted at West Wollongong TAFE is the Government's credibility.

There is an alternative to the Government's agenda in vocational education and training. The NSW Labor Party will introduce a bill to guarantee 70 per cent of all vocational education and training funding to TAFE NSW. Under us, TAFE will no longer be the poor cousin in the provision of skills and training. The NSW Labor Party will crack down on the shonks and lurk merchants who have exploited the Federal and New South Wales Government's policy frameworks to enrich themselves at the expense of struggling students. We will introduce a private providers investigation unit to hunt down the shonks and drive them out of vocational education and training. The NSW Labor Party has also announced a policy that 15 per cent of New South Wales Government construction projects valued over \$500,000 will be reserved for apprentices, trainees, Indigenous Australians and the long-term unemployed. The Illawarra will benefit from these NSW Labor policies. Unlike the Government, the NSW Labor Party has outlined a \$225 million program of infrastructure investments in the Illawarra region.

The Illawarra Jobs Action Plan announced in the Wollongong by-election specifically states strong support for TAFE. Every single one of the projects identified will have apprentices and traineeships associated with it: upgrading Appin Road; building the Maldon-Dombarton rail link; upgrading Mt Keira Summit Park; building the iMake Maker Space; upgrading the WIN Entertainment Centre; constructing a new interchange at Masters and Springhill Roads; and finally building the lifts at Unanderra station. We have a plan as we head to the next election. After the drubbing of the Liberal Party on the weekend in Wollongong and Shellharbour, we know that NSW Labor stands for TAFE NSW. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (18:35):** Like my colleagues I am delighted to contribute in debate on the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Amendment Bill 2017. At the outset I commend the member for Londonderry and shadow Minister for Skills for her strong position to provide the people of New South Wales with alternative means. We oppose this bill in its current form and will move appropriate amendments to the Act for a number of purposes but most notably to abolish the Vocational Training Review Panel [VTRP] and transfer all of the panel's powers to the Commissioner for Vocational Training.

To fully understand the proposed amendment bill and the Government's motivation in seeking to amend the Act, in this way it is important to consider and reflect on the Government's approach to vocational and training more broadly. No matter which way you look at it the vocational education and training sector under this Government is in complete disarray. It is a shambles. Since the introduction of the Smart and Skilled changes in the last term of this Government, vocational education—and TAFE in particular—has been in a downward spiral that can be described as nothing less than a crisis. The statistics speak for themselves with 175,000 fewer enrolments, 5,700 teachers and support staff sacked and course fees up by 22 per cent. I am not talking about energy bills that are up more than 20 per cent; I am talking about fees for people to get the skills they need to get a good job to prosper throughout their life and drive their local economy. This is very important to members on this side of the House; however, it has been missed on the other side.

I refer to TAFE, our public provider. But when we look at the private training providers, which have profited and will continue to profit from this Government's destruction of TAFE, we see that the situation only gets bleaker. More than 8,500 students have been left high and dry with thousands of dollars worth of debt and no qualification to show for it as a result of their provider being suspended, terminated or going broke. These statistics are not just numbers on a spreadsheet: They represent real people who are unable to get the skills they need to get a good, stable job. This is particularly marked for young people who make up the overwhelming majority of Vocational Education and Training [VET] students in New South Wales. In my electorate of Campbelltown the devastating effects of the O'Farrell, Baird and Berejiklian government attacks on TAFE are clear.

When this Government came into office in 2011 youth unemployment, as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in the outer south-west Sydney region—which covers my electorate as well as the electorates of Macquarie Fields and Camden and parts of Wollondilly and Liverpool—was 7.8 per cent. Fast forward to now, when there have been a few years for the full, devastating effects of Smart and Skilled so-called reforms to be felt, and that figure has shot up to 13.6 per cent. There are more than a thousand young people without work compared to when this Government took office. That is simply unacceptable. It says volumes about a Government that lacks the capacity to manage an economy and provide the skills young people need to prosper in our communities, and this is not surprising. When the world-leading public VET provider of TAFE is carved up, thousands of staff sacked and course costs increased, people are not able to get the proper skills and training they need to get a job.

Against that disappointing backdrop, it is not surprising to see a bill from this Government that is out of touch and lacks the capacity to deliver. On the surface, the bill would appear to be innocent enough, with increased penalties for breaches of the Act and greater transparency in the industry. These are worthwhile pursuits, but they are not what is wrong with the bill. The clause in this bill which seeks to abolish the VTRP and transfer its powers to the Commissioner for Vocational Training is the latest instalment in this Government's regime of death by a thousand cuts for TAFE. Currently, the Vocational Training Review Panel [VTRP] has representatives from across the vocational education industry, including representatives from TAFE. One of the panel's primary functions is to resolve disputes between vocational education training providers and students, as well as providing trade recognition to people who have extensive experience working in a particular field but lack formal qualifications. This process was put in place to recognise and acknowledge that experience.

The Government's intent in this bill is clear. It wants to strip TAFE of its representation on the panel and transfer all the power of those representatives to a government-appointed bureaucrat. It is another step in the privatisation agenda of this Government. It is hell-bent on flogging everything off. This Government wants to privatise everything. The message to those opposite is: Just because Government members are hopeless at their job, it does not mean that everyone else is. The Coalition will not be there for much longer and Labor will once again fix it when it is in government. This side of the House will not stand for this Government's relentless and



continued attacks on TAFE. We know that TAFE is important not only for the skills it provides young people but also for its broader economic significance in our State.

Skills are critical to economic growth and social wellbeing. Although initial vocational training during a student's high school years provides useful skills in many jobs where demand is fast growing, including healthcare workers, technicians, administration staff, junior managers, and industrial trades, such basic vocational training is no longer enough and higher level professional, managerial and technical skills are increasingly required in other global economies. For example, in the United States it is estimated that one-third of all job vacancies by 2018 will call for a post-secondary qualification but not necessarily the completion of a bachelor degree. Based on a series of 20 country studies, the Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] synthesis report of "Skills beyond school" looks at how countries are responding to this growing demand for skills and the further steps they need to succeed.

The report underlines many challenges, including that some countries have thriving post-secondary vocational sectors while others have found it difficult to find a place for shorter, one- or two-year programs in competition with university level academic qualifications. The engagement of social partners, employers and trade unions is as vital as it is elusive. Vocational training qualifications are sometimes outdated or lack currency in the labour market. This is world's best practice and other countries are motivated to make amendments that ensure students have every opportunity to achieve the skills that they need. That is not what this Government or this bill provide. We know the truth. We know that TAFE is important and that the Government should be investing in public vocational educational training [VET]. Instead, it continues with its agenda of cuts and the destruction of an institution that has provided so much to so many for so long.

The contrast between this side of the House and those opposite could not be demonstrated more clearly than with TAFE. On that side, there are funding cuts, privatisation, campus sell-offs, fee hikes and staff sackings, with plummeting enrolments as a consequence. We only need to refer to the figures regarding youth unemployment to know it is true. Labor has committed at least 70 per cent of all government VET funding to TAFE. That will end the race to the bottom which has come about from the contestable funding model under Smart and Skilled. Labor has committed to boosting the number of apprentices in New South Wales by mandating that all New South Wales government contracts worth more than \$500,000 will require at least 15 per cent of workers to be apprentices and trainees. That is government for the people, not for an expanding unemployment rate. The Labor Party leader and the shadow Minister and member for Londonderry are 100 per cent committed to restoring TAFE to its rightful place as a world-respected public vocational education provider.

My colleagues and I will not take a step backwards. We want to ensure that TAFE provides amazing opportunities for young people from disadvantaged or low-income backgrounds to undertake further education and provides them with the skills they need to gain long-term employment. TAFE also provides opportunities for older people to learn new skills, particularly in situations of forced redundancy. Let us not overlook them. Only this side of the House has a comprehensive plan to rescue TAFE for the people of Campbelltown and indeed the good people of this great State. TAFE is in crisis. The Government does not recognise it but we do, and the people of New South Wales are living it. The only way we can change the Government's priorities in TAFE is to change the government.

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (18:45):** I join my parliamentary colleagues to speak to the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Amendment Bill 2017. At the outset, I point out that the Opposition will be moving amendments to the bill. This bill is important to us because the Labor Party has a track record of caring about vocational education and we will protect TAFE as a critical part of our platform and policy agenda. Sadly, the Government has a track record of taking a hatchet to TAFE, with a resulting negative impact on students and the broader health of our vocational education sector.

The Government's program of reform may have been called Smart and Skilled, but the quality of its implementation and impact has been anything but that. The numbers speak for themselves; many of my colleagues have already referred to them. Since 2011, the Liberal-Nationals Government has cut more than \$1.7 billion from education and training, sacked thousands of TAFE teachers and support staff, cut TAFE courses, slashed class contact times, and drastically increased student fees by thousands of dollars. We have all heard of the ridiculous fees, sometimes for qualifications as low as a certificate II. Yearly enrolment in TAFE is down and there are now at least 175,000 fewer enrolled students compared to enrolments in 2012. These figures came from an internal document, so they cannot be questioned, no matter what the Minister may say. This Government has more spin than Shane Warne on the fifth day at the Sydney Cricket Ground Test match when he took three wickets against India.

As my good friend the member for Gosford alluded to earlier, there are now 14,500 fewer students with disabilities attending TAFE. This Government often speaks about looking after the most vulnerable, but who are the most vulnerable? Would they not want to care for these people? The Government should do whatever it can

to ensure that people who may be excluded are given opportunities. As the shadow Minister for Education, and having worked closely with my excellent and highly competent colleague the member for Londonderry and shadow Minister for Skills, I have a special interest in vocational education. It is a trusted pathway for a great many students who seek an alternative to university education. They seek that alternative as a way to harness their natural skills and eventually find themselves in highly skilled and highly paid jobs. The New South Wales Government currently has a policy of linking year 9 National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy [NAPLAN] results with eligibility to receive a Higher School Certificate [HSC]. Besides the fact that this is causing general anxiety to students and parents, there is an added worry.

**Mr Kevin Conolly:** Would you explain the policy?

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** Sorry, is that the member for Riverstone for another year and a half? If I were you, I would sit there and be quiet.

**Mr Kevin Conolly:** I will be here longer than you.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** Good luck to you, mate. I know that this is a little bit above your level but try to understand. Listen and you might learn something. Besides the general anxiety that this policy is causing to students and parents, there is an added worry that has been noted to me often—that is, that the decimation of TAFE and the growth of shonky private providers has made the traditional pathways much harder to access. Our children who are doing their NAPLAN are being told that they cannot get their HSC, TAFE is being cut as an option, and they are falling victim to shonky tertiary education providers.

Where is the protection for these people? We talk in this House about the most vulnerable. I would say that these are some of the most vulnerable people. I understand that this bill is an attempt by the Government to cut costs and to remove levels of regulation over the training and employment of apprentices and trainees in New South Wales. Given the track record of this Government on any kind of reform—whether it is in local government, the introduction of TAFE's ill-fated new information technology system, or the Learning Management and Business Reform program—if I were a stakeholder in the vocational education sector I would be very afraid.

This Government and its reform agenda has so often been given the kiss of death. The bill contains many changes, but I want to focus on the changes about which the Labor Opposition is most concerned. The first is the proposed abolition of the vocational training review panel [VTRP]. The panel was established in 2001 and has a long history. Currently the panel comprises industry representatives and is chaired by the Commissioner for Vocational Training and his or her representatives. Most significantly and importantly, it also has TAFE representatives. As it is currently constructed, the panel has a range of important powers and responsibilities.

For example, the review panel has an obligation to attempt to reach an agreed settlement of any complaints. If it is unable to do so, it may make a determination that is binding. It can conduct closed hearings, and information and evidence submitted to the review panel is accepted in confidence. It has wideranging powers to require people to attend a hearing, provide evidence and answer questions. In other words, it is a strong, effective and well-functioning panel. The Government may want to make improvements, but why lower the standard when it is not required? This point was mentioned also by the member for Wyong.

The bill proposes to abolish the panel and some of its functions will be taken over by various other bodies. As with many government reforms, I ask: What is wrong with the current system? What is the problem that the Government is trying to fix? What is this obsession with constantly wanting to fix things that do not need fixing? An unintended consequence is that we end up destroying things that are good. The Government says it will make administrative changes and reduce red tape. This is a catch phrase out of the bureaucratic handbook to which it often refers. Given how poor this Government is at delivering change, I have to ask whether it has been fully considered.

Under this bill, both the complaints and dispute resolution functions and the panel's responsibility will fall under the Commissioner for Vocational Training. Another perhaps more significant role of the current VTRP is its role in trade recognition. The removal of the panel from this important process is a significant concern to many of the stakeholders. In essence, it means that a decision on whether someone can proceed with an apprenticeship is left to a government-appointed bureaucrat who, under the legislation, will seek independent expert advice wherever necessary. The words "independent" and "wherever necessary" are ambiguous. That function should occur all the time. We do not need the words "wherever necessary". We would not get to that point if the current panel remained in place.

All members come to this Chamber with different experiences in life. My life experience was that of a teacher. As a former teacher, I can tell members countless stories about students accessing TAFE because they had an opportunity to move in a more positive direction. As a local member, I can only express my deep concern that Chullora TAFE in my electorate is on the chopping block. What was once a mighty TAFE will now be sold

off. That tells us everything we need to know about this Government. Everything is for sale, but we lose the important value of building a better society.

I hear members opposite talk about those who are most vulnerable. They are the ones who do not have the same opportunities. TAFE gives opportunities to everyone. When TAFE becomes an unachievable goal for people, we are cutting them off at the knees. This Government wants to sell everything and dismantle well-respected TAFE public infrastructure. Many successful stories exist about people in all communities who have accessed TAFE. They could be people who took up an apprenticeship, or single mums who learned a new skill to get back into the workforce, or people with a disability who needed an alternative education environment in which to thrive.

I return to teaching. The apprenticeship readiness program, which was run in conjunction with local TAFEs, be they at Bankstown or Chullora, was for kids who struggled to sit in a chair in a classroom for six hours. When they were sent to TAFE they discovered that they were brilliant with their hands—we received outstanding results. If they did work experience they received glowing reports. Many of the boys would do a 20-week TAFE course while still at school. They would then transition from that into an apprenticeship. We gave them an opportunity to get ahead in life. At school they were getting themselves into trouble, but with the combination of TAFE, school and work experience, they were able to transition to apprenticeships.

Nothing makes a principal or a teacher more proud than seeing their students making that journey. I am amazed at the number of boys I bump into around my electorate who were students of mine who have been to TAFE either to this course or to another one and who have made good in their lives. That is why we will continue to fight for TAFE. A fight for TAFE is a fight for the community—a fight for the underdog and a fight for the kid who does not have the chance that other kids might have. It is also a recognition that TAFE is not a lesser option—it is another option—an important point to make. TAFE is not an institution to which students go if they do not get into something else; it is an institution to which they go because they are interested in TAFE. [*Extension of time*]

As legislators and as people who have been entrusted by communities to look after them and do the right thing by them, we need to ask ourselves what decisions we are making to ensure that everyone has the best opportunity to succeed in life. As I said earlier, we cannot keep taking a hatchet to TAFE. TAFE is an incredible, historic institution that has achieved outstanding results. Some aspects of this bill make sense but the Labor Party and I cannot support the abolishment of the VTRP. As usual the Government has failed to make a compelling case for change. TAFE should not be changed just for the sake of changing it. Unless this body, with its significant expertise, history and organisational knowledge is retained, in line with Labor's proposed amendments, we will oppose the bill.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (18:56):** Alongside my Labor colleagues—including the fabulous member for Londonderry and shadow Minister for Skills, Prue Car—I denounce this latest attack on TAFE by the Berejiklian-Barilaro Government through the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Amendment Bill 2017. Like many legislative changes brought by this Government, this bill attempts to disguise one egregious development with a handful of benign or unremarkable legislative reforms. This Government is hell-bent on destroying the publicly funded training sector and breaking the back of TAFE NSW—a public skills institution. It is bewildering to members of the Labor Party why the Liberals and Nationals are so devoted to undermining and diminishing TAFE.

TAFE is an institution that has always had a stellar reputation among students, teachers and industry. That reputation was well deserved. Students knew that TAFE was the best place for a quality education; teachers knew it was an employer that would respect their expertise and support their long-term career goals; and employers knew that an apprentice or an employee with a TAFE qualification would bring with them skills and knowledge in their field that were among the best in the world. Not only is such a reputation good for students, teachers and businesses; it is also good for New South Wales. A skilled workforce underpinned by quality public education puts us in the best position to attract investment from across Australia and overseas. But do the Liberals and Nationals join the dots? They do not. They would rather pursue an ideological crusade against public education than recognise the crucial role that only TAFE can play in futureproofing our workforce and preparing people for careers in emerging or changing industries.

The bill before the Parliament today is yet another example of the wolf in sheep's clothing approach of the Berejiklian Government. There are increased penalties for noncompliance and improved accountability measures, and these would be a good thing on their own. However, we see this bill for what it really is when we look at the proposed abolition of the Vocational Training Review Panel. The current panel provisions are very strong. The panel is made up of industry representatives and the Commissioner for Vocational Training. Crucially, it includes TAFE representatives on the panel. In my experience, TAFE teacher representatives have two key

interests at heart: the quality of education that they and their colleagues can provide to their students and the protection of the institute of TAFE.

These are noble and worthwhile interests and outcomes for students, and New South Wales can only be improved whilesoever our TAFE teacher representatives are given a seat at the table. The only reasons a government would seek to remove TAFE teachers from an advisory or review panel would be to reduce accountability or if it otherwise sought to further diminish the status of TAFE and give private training providers a greater influence over the vocational education and skills training sector. Look at how well that has worked. In the view of Labor members, these are very damaging outcomes and the Minister for Skills should be ashamed of himself. But he is not ashamed; he has no shame whatsoever. Sadly, he lacks the capacity for it. This is a Minister so guilty of doublespeak to the point of outright dishonesty on these issues in the past, so doggedly committed to undermining public education and so completely indifferent to the impacts of his decisions that he would express no shame whatsoever. Indeed, when pressed, he has said that these changes represent "red tape reduction".

If making sure that students receive quality education, that industry, students and teachers can work together to ensure that qualifications remain relevant and useful for future workforces and that TAFE and public education is supported and improved is red tape, then so be it. That sort of red tape is necessary, beneficial and worthwhile—and only a very foolish person would seek to remove it. Before voting on this bill we should remind ourselves of what this foolish Minister has so far presided over. Yearly enrolments are down by more than 175,000 compared with 2012. Is that red tape reduction? There are 14,567 fewer students with a disability enrolled in TAFE compared with 2012, some 5,700 teachers and support staff have been sacked since 2012 and \$1.7 billion has been cut from education and training since 2011. Is that red tape reduction? At this rate the only red tape left by the time of the 2019 election will be the foolish Minister for Skills himself. He could do us all a favour and reduce himself out of a job. That would be the most beneficial reform for TAFE right now.

Tonight my Labor colleagues and I reiterate our party's commitment to TAFE. Let the 2019 election be a referendum on the future of TAFE in New South Wales. Labor is committed to making TAFE affordable and accessible for everyone. We will not sell campus after campus out from underneath students. We will not allow any attack on TAFE to go through this Parliament without the strongest possible opposition. That is why we will seek to amend the bill to protect the Vocational Training Review Panel. If the amendments are not agreed to in this House, we will vote against the bill and refer the amendments to the upper House. The Berejiklian-Barilaro Government will soon learn the lesson of the Napthine Government in Victoria. If it attacks TAFE and public education it is taking on the electorate in a battle it cannot win. Minister Barilaro and Premier Berejiklian will not win this war on TAFE, and at the rate they are going they will not win the next election. Save TAFE. Bring on 2019.

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (19:03):** The Apprenticeship and Traineeship Amendment Bill 2017 is an important bill. I acknowledge the presence of two great teachers in the Chamber: the member for Gosford and the member for Blue Mountains. It is always important to have more chalkies than lawyers in a political party. That is a starting point. I also acknowledge the member for Londonderry, who has travelled the length and breadth of New South Wales and engaged with the TAFE sector like no other Minister or shadow Minister before her. She has developed a sustainable, clear and articulate policy that will save TAFE. I will go through that policy in a moment.

I point out to those in the public gallery that in 2011 the Library Amendment Bill was introduced in this House. Libraries are important. I love libraries and I love reading. I am one of the few people who still like to read. I know that reading is difficult for those on the opposite side of the Chamber. A total of 53 speakers from the Government spoke for days on end about that bill. Tonight, for debate on a key bill that affects a key education institution—an institution that has a presence in every single one of the Government members' electorates—there are only three Government representatives in the Chamber. The first is "Junior Jolly", the member for Manly, who is still wearing his L-plates. They still need to check his age when he comes into the building. He opened the batting for the Government.

**Mr Mark Coure:** Point of order: My point of order is with respect to relevance. The member for Keira is completely off topic.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Aplin):** Order! The member for Keira will return to the leave of the bill.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** I was talking about TAFE and the bill is largely about TAFE. Let me make this clear to the gallery: The shadow Minister for Skills has been arguing and fighting to keep a TAFE representative on the Vocational Training Review Panel to make sure that we have quality vocational education. I think that should be remotely interesting to one or two Government members. I had thought that every now and then, when members opposite got their speaking notes from Minister Barilaro's office—or from the other Minister's office;

I forget who that is—they would read those notes. They must be finding it difficult to speak because they cannot defend what is happening. I am sure people know that under this Government we have seen the destruction of TAFE—destruction the like of which has never been seen before.

The shadow Minister is standing up for TAFE. She is fighting for TAFE. She is fighting for the teachers, the students and the communities. Most importantly, she is fighting for the economic prosperity of New South Wales, because we need a strong TAFE system. The member for Shellharbour will remember that there were 53 speakers on a library bill, when Government members talked about the first book they read—despite the fact that half of The Nationals members cannot read! Forget all that; tonight we are talking about one of the most fundamental education institutions this country has ever produced, but only three Government members are prepared to defend the Government's legacy. The Government has sent out the member for Manly—the poor bugger. As a former chief of staff, I will let the member for Manly in on a secret—the member for Canterbury knows how this works. The Government is saying, "This is not a good bill for us. Who would be prepared to speak on it?"

**Mr Mark Coure:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order No. 76, relevance. I ask that the member be directed to return to the leave of the bill.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Aplin):** Order! Some latitude is extended to members during second reading debates, but the member for Keira will return to the leave of the bill.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** I am referring to this bill, which focuses on apprentices and traineeships. I suggest to the member for Manly that when he got a call to defend TAFE and no-one else was defending it, that was good enough reason for him to say, "I will pass and sit this one out." I am very proud to be a member of the shadow Cabinet with the member for Londonderry. She has fought hard not only for this bill but also she has engaged with stakeholders to make sure we have a TAFE representative in this group, which will ensure quality vocational education and training courses and a proper process. Proudly, the member for Londonderry has done more than that. She has developed a policy to ensure guaranteed funding for TAFE. She has developed a system to ensure that a 70 per cent minimum will go directly to TAFE.

Those in the public gallery will know more than most that, unfortunately, the most vulnerable in our gallery have been ripped off and attacked. The member for Londonderry has addressed that by committing to a private provider investigation unit. The community that I represent in the Illawarra has one of the highest rates of youth unemployment. But projects such as Appin Road, Picton Road or any road the member for Kiama has named after himself, including the Ward Way, will now be built and maintained by apprentices because the member for Londonderry has ensured that when the Government spends money we will get more than the project; we will get a skills legacy. I am very proud of those three things: guaranteed funding for TAFE, a private provider investigation unit to get rid of shonks, and ensuring that apprentices get a fair go. That is what Labor stands for.

What have those opposite done? They have introduced this bill to reduce the oversight and involvement of TAFE teachers in the vocational education and training system. That is not smart; it does not make sense. I want those people sitting in the public gallery to understand that a few years ago 55 government members spoke to a library bill; but tonight only three members spoke to this bill. If those people are still in doubt about who stands up for TAFE then they should look at my colleagues who are present in the Chamber—the members for the electorates of Canterbury, Gosford, Shellharbour and Londonderry. All of my colleagues believe in TAFE and we will defend it forever and a day. Tonight speaks volumes about the feelings of those opposite about TAFE and those of Labor.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (19:13):** In speaking to the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Amendment Bill 2017, I commend the hard work of the shadow Minister for Skills, the member for Londonderry who has not only travelled to regional and remote New South Wales but also listened to the concerns of many of my groups, including those from the disability sector. We have seen that fewer than 14,567 students with disability are enrolled in TAFE in 2016 compared with 2012. These figures are from the Government's own budget. The Minister for Disability spoke in this debate, which is quite rare—I have not heard him speak on disability policy—but he did not mention that under his Government more than 14,500 fewer students have been enrolled at TAFE. This Government has its third Premier in 6½ years, and yearly enrolments in TAFE are down by 175,000 compared with 2012. That is an absolute disgrace. Since 2012, 5,700 teachers and support staff have been sacked. The facts and figures are there. Clearly, the Government is on an ideological bent to completely cut out TAFE.

Many speakers on our side in this debate have told stories about people in their electorates who have gone to TAFE, which has provided them an important pathway to open up a small business or to re-enter the workforce for example. For many women escaping domestic violence, TAFE is their first port of call to get out into society and into work. TAFE is one of the most important institutions in Australia and in New South Wales.

It is not just about learning an important trade but it is about increasing our productivity and our economy. It is about ensuring that in areas such as plumbing, electrical trades, carpentry or welding where we have skills shortages we get the best-quality tradies.

A number of tradespeople in my constituency are very concerned. Many of the tradies I speak to learnt their trade at TAFE and got apprenticeships at one of the government departments, such as State Rail, the Water Board or Energy Australia. We now have the absolute decimation of TAFE. Since this Government came to power, many trade opportunities, apprenticeships and training programs in government departments have been abolished. The Government has been prepared to spend more than \$200 million on consultants when it could have used that money to invest in trades by ensuring that our young people have an apprenticeship and are able to go to TAFE.

What is even more astounding is that the Government is allowing these shonks to suck people in. The Government is not regulating the industry properly and people are getting ripped off by private providers. Back in June 2016, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission pursued more than \$460 million in taxpayer funding from five private colleges following allegations of unconscionable conduct in their recruitment and treatment of students. This should sound alarm bells for the Government and its abolition of the Vocational Training Review Panel. It is an abrogation of its responsibility. It is three days since the massive smashing of the Liberals and resounding losses in merged council areas that this Government gerrymandered.

The Liberals have had swings of 18 per cent to 22 per cent against them. When I was doing the rounds at polling stations on Saturday, people were coming up and telling me that they were concerned about the Government's privatisation agenda and the \$52 billion worth of assets that have been sold by this Government. Another concern is high unemployment and under-employment, particularly in parts of the south-west of Sydney, St George, and the inner west, where over 15 per cent of young people between 15 and 24 are unemployed. That is because the Government is not investing in TAFE. It is ripping the guts out of TAFE. It is not investing in jobs. All this Government is doing is over-developing and propping up its developer mates whom it has got into council. If members do an analysis of Liberal voters booth by booth and compare 2008, 2012 and—

**Mr Kevin Conolly:** Point of order: This has nothing whatsoever to do with the bill.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Aplin):** I uphold the point of order. The member for Canterbury has strayed considerably from the leave of the bill. She will address her remarks to the bill before the House.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** To abolish the Vocational Training Review Panel is an absolute disgrace.

**Mr Kevin Conolly:** What is the panel there for? You would not know.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** You would not know. A number of parents came up to me and were concerned about the future of their kids. Many parents talked to me about whether their kids are going to get a job, buy a house, or live close to them. They were concerned about what is going to happen to some of the courses at their local TAFEs, whether it was at Chullora, Bankstown, or St George, which are the closest TAFEs to my community. The fees have gone up for many of the courses. We are talking about working class people who are struggling. I stood there all day on Saturday and listened to what people were saying. These were Liberal voters. I stood at booths that were won by the Liberals at the last council elections and listened to small business people, entrepreneurs, and people from our multicultural communities who vote Liberal, and they were saying "Sophie, you guys have to do something about this. The Government is not listening." The Government and the Liberals copped 15 to 18 per cent swings against them in those traditional Liberal areas because people are sick and tired of this Government not listening.

There were parents who were very angry and concerned that they do not see a future for their kids. This is the third or fourth generation, and people are concerned that they are not going to have a future. The only future they see is if they pay for their kids to go to TAFE, if TAFE exists, or to attend a private college. I am disappointed in the Minister for Skills, who talks a lot about his own business background and his success and achievements. Sometimes, as a Minister, one has to make responsible decisions. He needs to bite the bullet and overturn some of the decisions that are made for him. He has to look at the statistics and at what is happening, particularly in parts of my area. The member for Oatley's electorate adjoins my electorate and the people we represent have the same concerns around high youth unemployment and the future of their kids. People are concerned about the kids who are leaving some of those high schools in year 11 or year 12 and cannot get into TAFE because of the Government's decisions.

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (19:23):** I speak on the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Amendment Bill 2017 and I start by saying that those opposite have waged war on the youth of New South Wales. As it stands, there is no way that I will support the bill. We see opposite the razor gang of New South Wales. The Government has privatised everything that is within its grasp and has not finished yet. Let us not kid ourselves.

Not only has this Government stripped funding and resources from TAFE campuses across the State, it is now trying to strip away any level of accountability from the private vocational education sector. Shame on those opposite. Each and every one of the members opposite will end up paying the price for this treachery.

This bill seeks to abolish the Vocational Training Review Panel, a body that plays a key role in gathering representatives with important industry experience to make determinations on complaints that have been lodged. The Minister may claim that the removal of the review panel is to alleviate an administrative burden, but this could not be further from the truth. This bill is more about shifting the core functions of the review panel to the Commissioner for Vocational Training. Under this amendment bill, the commissioner is not obliged to seek any industry experience in carrying out the complaint review function of the review panel. This means that the commissioner can make decisions about complaints lodged without consulting a single industry representative. This is a conscious move by the Government to exclude TAFE representatives from the complaint process. As if TAFE has not been devastated enough. I have seen, in my electorate, the gutting of Dapto TAFE. The Government has gutted it like a tuna. It is disgraceful.

How will the commissioner make a balanced and fair decision without the input of a variety of industry representatives with years of experience in the sector? This is just another example of the Government stripping the oversight and accountability mechanisms from the vocational education sector and excluding TAFE's expertise where it is needed. I recognise the hard work of the shadow Minister for Skills, Prue Car. She has been an amazing advocate in this place. I take my hat off to her. She has done and continues to do an exceptional job for all youth across New South Wales and for those people who want to access vocational training.

In my electorate of Shellharbour, the Government has unleashed a devastating wrecking ball on the vocational training sector. Dapto TAFE, of which I have already spoken, was once a central educational hub for one of the fastest growing regions in New South Wales. It has been almost completely abolished. What was once a vibrant, bustling campus that educated around 650 students and provided employment to around 100 staff, has been reduced to a shopfront. The shopfront can accommodate a mere 22 students and employs far fewer staff than previously. All that is left now is a service desk with limited services for students. In fact, these services are so limited that up until this week, students did not even have access to bathroom facilities in the shopfront. It does not get sadder or more pathetic than that.

That is the extent of the devastation that this Government has wrought upon the vocational education sector in my electorate. Former students of the Dapto TAFE now have to travel further to gain access to education. To add insult to injury, their TAFE fees are going up. Some TAFE students now face fees of up to \$4,000 for a basic certificate. I do not know too many families within any community across New South Wales that have a spare \$20,000, \$25,000 or \$30,000 lying around in a bank account for one of their children to enter the TAFE system. It just does not happen. What sort of set-up is this? As I have said, this is not only generational theft but a war on youth across New South Wales. Young people should not be penalised by this Government in trying to better their education. Ever since this Government was elected, it has waged ideological war against TAFE, to the detriment of our State's students and workers.

We must keep in mind that all of this is occurring at a time when the unemployment rate for the Illawarra continues to be above this State's average. Currently, 5.8 per cent of our region's population is unemployed, compared to the average rate in New South Wales of 5 per cent. And sadly, the youth of the Illawarra are even worse off, with 12.5 per cent of our young people unable to find work. I call on the member for Kiama and Parliamentary Secretary for Education to step in and start defending our TAFE. As I have said many times before, the people of the Shellharbour electorate deserve so much better. People wanting to further their education to better contribute to their communities should not be discouraged from doing so. Yet day in and day out this Government continues to hack away at the TAFE system and push people seeking vocational education into the hands of potentially dodgy private providers. What is this Government doing about the dodgy private providers? Absolutely nothing, nada, nil.

If this Government were serious about educational outcomes, it would not only invest in our TAFE system but also put the necessary safeguards in place to make sure that our young people do not get ripped off by shonky private providers. The member for Londonderry and shadow Minister for Skills has been calling for these dodgy private providers to be investigated from the minute she stepped into her portfolio. A Labor Government would introduce a private providers investigation unit to ensure that private providers do not engage in dodgy practices. I see no such safeguards in this bill—because they are not in the bill. There is already an obvious need for such an investigation unit. More than 8,500 students across the State have been thrown into uncertainty largely due to the suspension or termination of their vocational education providers. If this Government had not completely stripped TAFE of its funding, this would not be happening. This simply cannot continue.

This Government is nothing but bad news for TAFE students, and this is set to continue if this bill passes. We on this side of the House know with 100 per cent clarity that this bill will continue the bad news for TAFE

students. We are resolute about ensuring that TAFE under a Labor government will not only survive but thrive. Only Labor will make TAFE accessible and affordable for everyone in New South Wales. We know that in order to create a successful future, we need to invest in the TAFE system today. TAFE in New South Wales was something to be proud of before this Government diminished it to what it is now—a shopfront in my electorate with higher fees and falling enrolments. Labor will again make our TAFE system a world leader.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (19:32):** Like my colleagues before me, I speak in debate on the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Amendment Bill 2017. I begin by acknowledging and thanking the member for Londonderry and shadow Minister for Skills for her contribution to the debate and her commitment to TAFE NSW. It is clear that the member for Londonderry is committed to apprentices in New South Wales. Nobody knows more than the member for Londonderry about the importance of training new apprentices in Western Sydney and the importance of well-trained apprentices getting good jobs. This bill's proposed effects on the training and the employment of apprentices show that the Government has not learned that cutting costs and removing regulation do not always lead to the best outcomes. It is imperative that our apprentices and tradespeople are trained and examined at the highest possible standard. It will come as no surprise to members of this place that I believe that TAFE NSW is best placed to offer an excellent set of standards. According to the bill's overview:

The object of this Bill is to amend the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Act 2001 (the Act) as follows:

The very first object is:

... to abolish the Vocational Training Review Panel (the Review Panel) ... When I saw that I thought, "That must not do much" but on further examination of the bill, I saw that that review panel plays an incredibly important role in apprenticeships and training, currently examining settlement of complaints, conducting hearings and accepting evidence submitted in confidence. One would have thought that these things are fairly important. The review panel has wideranging powers: to require people to attend a hearing, provide evidence, answer questions asked by the review panel members and produce relevant documents. The review panel also deals with complaints and dispute resolution functions, which is highly important. The panel is also responsible for trade recognition processes.

The Vocational Training Review Panel has a very important role. That is why I am incredibly surprised and somewhat dismayed that the Government is intent on removing it. I believe that is an enormous mistake. The Government will be removing the TAFE representation—and that is extraordinary, given that that is the trained expert in the fields these people are being examined on. I find it ridiculous that a government would make a decision like this. To my mind, a TAFE representative must be at that table. This decision further demonstrates this Government's diminishing of the world-class TAFE system in New South Wales. The Government has sacked almost 6,000 teachers and support staff.

Yearly enrolments, as we found out during estimates, are down by more than 175,000 enrolled students since 2012. The Government has cut courses, and in my local TAFE at Belmont in the electorate of Swansea it has also forced students to attend other TAFEs. In many instances that can be two or three bus trips away. All I can say is that the Government is nothing but a bunch of wreckers. It wrecked the TAFE system in New South Wales. It wrecked local government by forcing amalgamations. It attempted to wreck the greyhound industry. It wrecks everything it touches. Returning to my concerns about the abolition of the Vocational Training Review Panel, I point out to the House what the Minister said in his second reading speech:

... and simplify processes by removing administrative red tape by abolishing the Vocational Training Review Panel—

—another thing it is going to wreck. When I read that, it rang significant alarm bells—it was actually a déjà vu moment. When the Labor Opposition sought, through the Freedom of Information Act, information on the building cladding product from NSW Fair Trading, one of the documents we received—which was between the Minister and the Minister's department—read:

The calls for any greater intervention need to be balanced against the regulatory burden and supply chain disruption that could result, as well as the potential stifling of positive innovation.

We all know where we ended up with that complacent attitude. Here we are again with a Government that is prepared to remove a system that ensures we have the finest tradespeople in this country, if not the world. In fact, I know we are world renowned because the shadow Minister stated that in her speech, and she is quite right.

**Mr Damien Tudehope:** It must be true.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** Are the members on the other side disputing that we have world-class tradespeople? If they are, they should stand up and say it.

**Mr Damien Tudehope:** It is just the authority you are relying on.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** The member can tell the people of his electorate that they are not good tradesmen. It is no surprise coming from the members opposite because they are class warriors. They do not care about tradies; they only care about bankers and developers. I know exactly what is going on there. This is a chipping away of the regulations that ensure the expertise required for safe buildings, so that people can go to



a movie theatre or a shopping centre and feel safe. Instead, all this Government wants to do is remove red tape and remove the regulations. It has led to disaster in the building industry, and the member opposite who has carriage of the bill will make it even worse. It is a slur on the member and his party. He will come to rue the day that he ever started to remove these regulations. I do not support this bill in its current form. A responsible government would keep in place the Vocational Training Review Panel.

The panel provides the checks and balances so that we can be confident that the sector is delivering the best trainers and the best apprentices. It provides the checks and balances so that the community can be confident that our buildings and infrastructure are being built by the best and those with the greatest amount of training. It makes no sense whatsoever for the Government to cut red tape where we need it. It is imperative that it stops. I sometimes wonder whether the Government is just filling up our day when it makes these changes. It has no legislative agenda; it just makes a bit of a tweak here and there. But it does not understand the damage it will do ultimately to the trades in this State. As I said earlier, it will be a slur on it forever. I ask the Government to accept the amendments put forward by the shadow Minister and incorporate them in this bill so that we have the necessary safeguards in New South Wales. TAFE NSW delivers the best apprentices in this State, and we want the Government to stop wrecking it.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (19:42):** I speak in debate on the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Amendment Bill 2017. I support the comments of the shadow Minister and her intention to move amendments. The New South Wales Labor Party will not agree to this legislation unless the amendments are agreed to. I start my contribution in debate today by referring to a report into a review of issues relating to unduly short training. The report was prepared by the Australian Skills Quality Authority in June 2017 under the name of the Federal Liberal member of Parliament the Hon. Karen Andrews, Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills. I draw the attention of members to the fourth key finding:

There is significant risk that in many cases learners are not gaining the competencies specified in VET qualifications, leading to loss of confidence in vocational education and training as well as long-term costs to industry, individuals, the community and governments. That is an important place to start my contribution in this debate because it is about the quality of the education and the outcomes. As the shadow Minister has said, our main objection is to the abolition of the Vocational Training Review Panel. The panel is about ensuring quality. When standards are not being met and results are not being achieved, it provides a safety net. The safety net will not be there to catch people and give them a gift of a certificate or trade. It will not be there to give people a second chance of assessment, a fresh set of eyes to determine whether or not they are entitled to a pass or a fail. That is entirely reasonable. Why anyone would want to do away with it is a question for the Government to answer.

At the moment, TAFE is experiencing change. There is change afoot to make a significant shift to a new curriculum provided by the Australian Skills Quality Authority [ASQA]. As part of that shift, there will be a change in course content. In some instances, there will be apprentices who at the end of their third year will not have covered all of the content required by the new curriculum. This change is due to occur within the next month or two. It is a strange time to introduce a new standard and curriculum. Unfortunately, that is what is going to happen. Industry is concerned that with the shifting of the goalposts there will be apprentices who are part way into their course who will not be approved. If the apprentices are not approved, they may need to complete additional study. Who will fund that? It will probably be the employer.

Under the Smart and Skilled standards, those who fail have to resume the course. But that will no longer be subsidised by the Government; it will be funded by the employer. Why is this being rolled out at the end of the year rather than at the beginning with a process of grandfathering? The Government will have to explain that to the Parliament and the people because it does not make sense. I have the good fortune of speaking frequently with industry, and I know that they are not fans of this new standard. They are particularly concerned that the new standard requires students to achieve a 100 per cent pass mark on all written questions. Some students are terrific apprentices on the tools but they are not so good on the books and they will fail time and again. That will have a significant impact on the employer.

The other part of the proposal to abolish the Vocational Training Review Panel is putting all of your eggs in one basket. The commissioner will have the ultimate ability to decide whether or not a person passes or fails and whether or not to seek industry expertise under the phrase "when necessary". The trouble with this is that, at times, there are bureaucrats who make decisions that they know will be favourably looked upon by the Government, despite the needs of the student. Last week I listened to the Ministers who are responsible for TAFE being questioned during budget estimates. I place on record my regard for the Assistant Minister for Skills, Mr Adam Marshall, who is present in the Chamber. He made the point during budget estimates that he has only had responsibility for the portfolio for six months. It is clear that Ministers do not always get the best information from their senior bureaucrats.

A senior bureaucrat's career and position is closely linked to their success and their success is measured by their ability to deliver the Government's agenda. A commissioner who is charged with the responsibility of vocational training under this bill will make more positive recommendations than negative ones. He or she will

realise that negative determinations are negative to their career and will make sure that they do not appear. If we are making sure that negatives do not appear, the obvious temptation after the abolition of the Vocational Training and Review Panel will be to make sure that there are very few failures and that there are a lot of successes. We need somebody who is independent, somebody who is at arms-length, somebody who does not have a vested interest in the outcome of this process. Everybody has a vested interest in this, whether they are Labor or Liberal, whether they are an employer, a businessperson or an apprentice. Who does not have a vested interest? That is the person we want in the room and that is the person who will guarantee quality. In this case, the person who has no vested interest is the educational institute and teachers known as TAFE teachers. Traditionally they have been at the core of the review panel and they have also been deliberately cut out under the proposed legislation.

Earlier I commented on how unusual, odd and unexplainable it is to change to a new system this late in the calendar year. It seems to me that there is every opportunity for a series of failures in the next couple of months—failure because the course has changed, because a 100 per cent success rate is now expected, because some of the students have not been exposed to the skills they will need to pass their exams, or because there is less flexibility in the delivery of the scheme. For example, why would a plant and a diesel mechanic who will work on Caterpillar trucks in a coalmine need to know about a fuel injection system for a tractor that will be used on a farm? They do not need to know this. Unfortunately, under the new scheme there will be no flexibility. Students will be required to learn completely useless skills. There is a large risk of failure across the board.

A government that is determined to have a yes instead of a no and success instead of failure might be tempted to put in place a scheme that it can control or at least impose upon in order to guarantee success. This is the model that has been put before the House today. It is contrary to the Australian Government's recent review of training; the beliefs, philosophy and history of the TAFE system; and the needs of employers, employees, apprentices, our community and our society. I look forward to seeing the Government support the amendments that have been foreshadowed by the shadow Minister.

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (19:52):** I speak in debate on the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Amendment Bill 2017 and join my colleagues in defending one of our great and valued institutions—our education and vocational training system. This bill is yet another example of this Liberal-Nationals Government's destruction of TAFE in New South Wales. Piece by piece, it is wearing down TAFE; its functions, its teaching staff and its campus sites, and courses have all been reduced. A number of my colleagues have outlined the facts and statistics on how TAFE has been diminished and devalued under this Liberal-Nationals Government. Compared to 2012 yearly enrolments are down by more than 175,000. There are now fewer than 5,700 teachers, and support staff have also been sacked. The so-called Smart and Skilled plan was neither smart nor skilled. This bill is another example of the Government's insidious intention of wearing down TAFE's valued reputation.

Luckily for the people of New South Wales, for students and families who want to skill up and have a better chance in the employment market, my good friend the member for Londonderry and shadow Minister for Skills is ready to defend TAFE at every point from the continued attack of this Liberal-Nationals Government. For many months she has travelled across New South Wales listening and talking to communities, teachers, students and families about the importance of TAFE and the need to defend it as an institution that our community greatly values—one that continues to give to people, especially young people, hope and an opportunity to skill up and enter the job market.

I commend her for her ongoing fight to save TAFE and create a vocational training system that is well resourced and, more importantly, valued by government. We went to Macquarie Fields TAFE last week and discussed the need to ensure that TAFE is not further diminished under this Liberal Government. It seems that \$1.7 billion worth of cuts since 2011 is not enough for this Government; it keeps coming back for more. At the rate it is dismantling TAFE, it will not be too long before TAFE becomes a relic in a museum of historic educational institutions. It was of great concern to us both that there are fewer enrolments in TAFE across the board. What is more concerning is the number of students with a disability enrolling in TAFE. Since 2012, 14,567 fewer students who are most disadvantaged or disabled enrolled in TAFE. That is a concerning statistic. The continuous attacks on TAFE are reducing the opportunities for people to obtain adequate training and skills to enter the workforce. We need those skills for a working environment in which automation is changing the skills that are required.

The bill aims to abolish the Vocational Training Review Panel [VTRP] and transfer it to a government-appointed bureaucrat, all in the name of cutting red tape. At the same time, it inserts more bureaucratic hurdles by allowing appeals to go to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. It appears that by cutting red tape, we are adding more red tape. It shows that the bill is not about improving administrative efficiency or streamlining processes. It is masquerading as doing so but it has the insidious intent of breaking down TAFE and privatising its entire function. We have seen how the privatisation of vocational training service providers has

worked out. Evocca College is a good example. Its students spent a lot of time and energy enrolling in the college, only for it to be closed, thereby leaving students and their families stranded. It has put unnecessary stress on their learning capabilities because they potentially have to start again.

It is fair to say that vocational training is often perceived as the second cousin to a university education. This view is wrong. Receiving vocational training and having a TAFE education is not a lesser qualification; it is different. They service different industries and the skills that are required. We must improve the perception of having a TAFE and vocational training education. We do not do that by attacking the institution of TAFE, its valued teachers and staff, and its reputation in the marketplace, which is what this Government has done since it came to office. The VTRP is an important element in the partnership between industry, employers, TAFE teachers and union representatives. Having a partnership with all the different stakeholders will no doubt produce a better outcome than solely transferring it to a single bureaucrat.

In Germany, TAFE and vocational training are extremely valued and well supported by all levels of government. In that system, there is a true partnership between industry, employers and students. They are well supported. There is no continuous ideological attack on TAFE as a public institution. TAFE provides jobs and its courses are often reviewed with the input of employers and its students. Under this Government, we have an incremental and insidious attempt to ensure that TAFE and public education are not supported with resources and, therefore, becomes worthless. If this Government is serious about defending TAFE and defending its reputation to make sure that vocational training is equivalent to any university education, then it needs to accept Labor's amendments on the VTRP and ensure that TAFE is not continually sliced, piece by piece, starting with staff cuts and ending up with nothing at all.

Labor's amendments are sensible amendments based on the principle of defending public education and vocational training with a view to creating better partnerships within the system. I hope that Labor's sensible amendments will be accepted, but I know the record of this Government. When it comes to defending public education, TAFE and vocational training, those opposite will never listen. They do not listen to the community, the teachers, the students or the parents, and they are certainly not going to listen to members on this side of the House even though our amendments are sensible and based on good, solid consultation with the stakeholders in our local areas. I commend my colleague the member for Londonderry, the shadow Minister, for her efforts and hard work to defend TAFE and the opportunities it provides to our local communities.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (20:00):** I contribute to debate on the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Amendment Bill 2017.

**Mr Damien Tudehope:** Here's the number one Tory in the Labor Party.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I hear the right-wing minority faction of the Coalition interjecting. It indicates their complete lack of concern about TAFE. Is it any wonder that the Liberal Party wets are steamrolling over the top of them, stacking their branches and putting little crosses on their foreheads? I endorse the remarks of the member for Londonderry, who has been vigorously pursuing this issue on behalf of TAFE.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** She went to the London School of Economics. She learnt a lot about vocational training.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** Maybe the member for Ku-ring-gai ought to return to the Bar Association's Continuing Professional Development program to attend the ethics and courtesy lectures. They might stand him in greater stead as a parliamentary secretary. The member for Londonderry has been pursuing this issue and holding the Government to account with considerable vigour. She has been right in all that she has asserted, because the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Amendment Bill 2017 is yet another example of this Government's litany of attacks on TAFE in New South Wales. I have much good to say about the former Minister for Education, Adrian Piccoli—as, I must confess, do most of the principals of schools in my electorate. But the destruction of TAFE in this State will hang as a millstone around his neck. Members opposite who were candidates at the 2011 election and who sought to form government signed written pledges to the people of New South Wales to guarantee TAFE funding. I have looked in my office but I cannot find the signed document. I wanted to take the opportunity of naming those who made that pledge.

**Mr Ryan Park:** I have the list.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I see. The member for Keira has the list. However, I do remember that the member for Kiama was one of the signatories to that list. The then Leader of the Nationals and former Deputy Premier was also a signatory to that list. The documents they signed told the people of New South Wales that every dollar invested in TAFE returns \$6.45—I cannot remember the exact figure—for the New South Wales economy. It was a promise made not only by the Liberal-Nationals in opposition but in individually signed documents by a number

of members of the then Opposition. They promised to increase permanent teaching positions and ensure that everybody in New South Wales would have access to an affordable TAFE education.

That was a contract signed not only by the Coalition but also by many individual members of The Nationals and the Liberal Party when in opposition. It is a promise fundamentally and systematically broken by the Coalition in government. I have not heard any public apology or explanation as to what caused them to sign the document and why there has been a change of position. I know privately that many of them are deeply concerned. In 2012 TAFE enrolments were down 126,000 on the 562,000 enrolments in 2011. The Government has sacked 5,200 teachers and support staff.

**Mr John Barilaro:** That is a lie. What a lie.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** Fees have skyrocketed, with course costs jumping by 22 per cent on average. Some course fees have jumped by almost 7,000 per cent.

**Mr John Barilaro:** Lies, lies, lies.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I hear the Deputy Premier interjecting. He can have pointed out to him his own budget papers from which those figures were extracted. This has serious, real-world effects for the economic competitiveness and productivity of our State. Since 2012 apprenticeships and traineeships in New South Wales have collapsed, falling from 94,000 in 2012 to 49,000 in 2016. This compares very unfavourably with their peak of 97,124 in 2010, under the former Labor Government. This has happened despite the fact that Australia, and especially New South Wales, faces a skills shortage, felt most acutely in the construction, manufacturing and hospitality industries—all sectors heavily reliant on apprenticeships. If members do not believe me they can ask the Housing Industry Association of Australia—good friends of those opposite—that has been warning for years that a shortage of skilled labour will increase the number of workers sourced from overseas through the former 457 visa class or otherwise result in a slowdown in economic growth. The Government's Smart and Skilled TAFE policy has left New South Wales anything but.

I turn now to the detail of the bill. Schedule 1, items [11] and [14] make some changes to the regulation of training contracts and training plans received during an apprenticeship or traineeship. A training organisation must, in commencing an apprenticeship or traineeship, devise a training plan that outlines a syllabus of competencies to be studied and attained by the apprentice or trainee. In his second reading speech the Minister made a passing reference to a provision to "guard against any training providers who may be focused on their profits rather than on the quality of their training assessments". If he was hoping to sneak that admission of guilt by the Opposition, he can think again.

The contestability of funding for vocational education has devastated TAFE and has led to an explosion in shonky, for-profit providers such as the Australian Vocational Training Academy or Careers Australia Education Institute. They have also been accused of cartel-like behaviour. Students are suckered in with promises of fabulous careers and free iPads, they are saddled with massive debts repayable to the Commonwealth Government and they have precious little to show for it by way of actual skills or a career. All of this—the collapse in student enrolments, the funding cuts, the massive fee rises, the loss of teaching staff, the closures of campuses, the dodgy vocational educators—is a consequence of the New South Wales Coalition Government's TAFE policy over the past 6½ years. Schedule 1 [35] enables the commissioner to require an apprentice or trainee to undergo a competency assessment before they issue them with a certificate of proficiency. Item [37] enables the commissioner to provide a copy of that report to the Australian Skills Quality Authority and item [43] enables the commissioner to apply for expert advice before determining that a candidate is suitably qualified to pursue that vocation.

The Government cannot simply insert into this bill a few clauses to make itself feel a little better about its destruction of TAFE and the rampant abuses in the vocational education industry. This bill is not a salve for the wounds of 6½ years of Tory government. Once upon a time we did not need elements of this bill such as items [35], [37], and [43] in schedule 1 because we had a world-class vocational training institute that was the pride of this State. Now, thanks to this high Tory ideology, we have a crippled institution that limps from crisis to crisis. It is my grave fear that TAFE cannot survive another four years of those opposite.

This provision in the bill dealing with introducing mandatory training plans is a tacit admission of failure by the Government that its policies of deregulation, funding contestability and budget cuts have led to the emergence of unscrupulous, profit-seeking private vocational education organisations that do not deliver a high quality of training, nor provide the skills that the labour market demands. Finally, the bill increases and updates penalties for breaches of the Act, which have not been increased since 2001. The Minister admits that enforcing obligations under the Act has been historically difficult. [*Extension of time*]

The Minister has not adequately explained how increasing penalties and introducing higher maximum penalties will assist with enforcing obligations under the Act. He does not indicate how many penalty notices have been issued against training providers for breaches of the Act. I will be very interested to hear from the Minister in reply about precisely how many penalty notices for breaches of the Act have been distributed over the lifetime of this O'Farrell-Baird-Berejiklian Coalition Government. I understand that the Opposition intends to move amendments to this bill to oppose the abolition of the Vocational Training Review Panel. If the amendments are defeated the Opposition will oppose this bill. Seeking to outsource the work of an existing body to an already overstretched and understaffed NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal is no solution. I cannot support the bill in this form.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional New South Wales, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business) (20:12):** In reply: I thank all members for their contributions and for their interest in debate on the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Amendment Bill 2017. I take this opportunity to thank the staff in my office plus the many staff in Training Services NSW: David Collins, Amil Tebone, Ellie Long, Sally Haycocks, Janine Lonergan and Marie Minslow and the many other Training NSW staff who probably have been watching this debate from their home or office for a bill that they worked on tirelessly over the past 12 months.

The Apprenticeship and Traineeship Amendment Bill 2017 introduces a package of significant reforms to the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Act. The bill provides a modern look at the industry, improved connectivity between all parties involved, and a more cohesive alignment of training and skills development that meet the needs of our rapidly developing economy. It will remove complex red tape for assessment and certificates, provide clarity for overly complex legislation and repeal outdated structures. These reforms will ensure that the New South Wales apprenticeship and traineeship system is fit for the current economy and into the future.

The changes will reinforce a system that is built on integrity and is high quality, flexible in approach, responsive to industry needs, and streamlined in administration. Importantly, this bill was shaped by many stakeholders' suggestions on the current system and what they would like to see in the future. The New South Wales Government listened to industry, community, student and employer concerns, and has worked to ensure that the apprenticeship and traineeship system in New South Wales has sufficient flexibility to meet the current and emerging needs of industry. The overwhelming message through the consultations and the submissions was support for the New South Wales apprenticeship and traineeship system, and for the Government to simplify and modernise the system and reduce bureaucratic administration.

In June the exposure draft of the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Amendment Bill 2017 was sent to 47 key stakeholders for consultation. Following a concern about the draft bill raised by the Electrical Trades Union regarding trade recognition for licensed trades to require a certificate of proficiency by NSW Fair Trading for a trade licence to be issued, an additional step was added. The bill provides additional protection for licensed trades that require a certificate of proficiency by NSW Fair Trading for a trade licence to be issued. For the trade recognition of these certified vocations, the bill requires industry representatives to be consulted and unanimously agree to recommend to the commissioner that the applicant is adequately trained to pursue the vocation. The commissioner will issue certificates of proficiency for licensed trades only following the agreement of industry representatives.

The Government will subsidise the provision of trade recognition processes by approved registered training organisations under Smart and Skilled to ensure that people are not disadvantaged. Training Services NSW will monitor these registered training organisations to ensure quality training and assessment, and adherence to quality standards and processes. We will also continue to work closely with NSW Fair Trading to ensure that the trade recognition processes for industries with licensing requirements meet quality standards. I will now address some of the concerns that have been raised in debate. I note the Opposition and The Greens amendments to maintain the Vocational Training Review Panel [VTRP]. Abolishing the VTRP will simplify the regulation of the trade recognition system and the investigation of complaints made under the Act. This effectively will remove an unnecessary administrative burden and place greater emphasis on conciliation in resolving complaints.

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

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** Under the proposed amendments, the Commissioner for Vocational Training will assume responsibility for the duties of the VTRP. The commissioner will hear unresolved complaints, importantly, still informed by industry expertise as required, including trade union representation and TAFE NSW. In practice, conciliators will be trained, and experienced Training Services NSW staff will be located in regional centres across New South Wales. They are well placed to undertake conciliation, complaints handling and dispute resolution in or around the area to which the complaint relates. I note that in 2016 only 15 disputes were referred to the review panel and so far this year there have been eight. All other disputes were settled at the

local level without the need for a hearing by the panel. In addition, in the past five years only two disputes have been appealed to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal and both were resolved before the hearing. The Opposition's amendments are contrary to TAFE NSW's publicly stated position on abolishing the VTRP.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! The member for Londonderry will come to order and cease interjecting.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** Those opposite talked about TAFE, but they misunderstood what this bill is about—namely, apprenticeships and traineeships. It is not just about TAFE or TAFE funding. TAFE NSW said, in its submission to the review of apprenticeships and traineeships in New South Wales:

TAFE NSW proposes that with the introduction of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal and the abolition of certifications, the Vocational Training Review Panel is no longer required.

The premise of the Opposition's argument against the removal of the VTRP is the result of a perceived lack of input from TAFE. However, TAFE NSW supports the abolition of the VTRP. The Opposition is moving amendments to keep the VTRP, yet Labor's policy contradicts this. On 7 August 2017, Labor released a policy statement stating that it would:

Ensure disputes and other issues regarding apprenticeships and vocational training which are regulated by State law can be heard in the Industrial Relations Commission. Ironically, this would take dispute resolution out of the New South Wales training system. It is a shame that the Opposition has spent this entire debate trying to score political points on TAFE rather than genuinely understanding the bill before the House. Again, we have heard Labor attack TAFE in this debate. As I have said, with its deliberate scare campaign, Labor is the greatest threat to TAFE in New South Wales. Labor claims that enrolments are declining. Again, that is misleading—although rather than "misleading" the right word to use would be "lies". Labor claims that thousands of teachers are being sacked: lies. Labor claims that TAFE is packing up and leaving town: further lies. Every lie that Labor tells to attack TAFE results in Labor scaring students and parents about the future of TAFE. Let us look at some of the TAFE data. Members do not have to trust me; they can look at the National Centre for Vocational Education Research [NCVER] data, which is independent and which audits all enrolments across the nation.

There is no question that TAFE, like all registered training organisations [RTOs] in the vocational education and training [VET] sector over the past five or six years, has seen some significant disruption, and the first part of that disruption is VET FEE-HELP. We know that VET FEE-HELP was a Gillard Labor Government program, which introduced contestability. Under the national partnership agreement with the New South Wales Government, which provided \$562 million over five years, contestability was one of the pillars, designed by the Gillard Labor Government, delivered by Labor. When those opposite talk about a decline in enrolments and apprenticeships, they forget to mention that in 2012 the Gillard Labor Government cut incentives to employers in relation to apprenticeships and traineeships. We saw a 25 per cent reduction in apprenticeships and a 50 per cent reduction in traineeships in one year, and that occurred under a Federal Labor Government.

Let us look at VET FEE-HELP. This evening we heard the member for Heffron speak about the debts of many students in the private RTO sector, again because of VET FEE-HELP. I have said publicly that under VET FEE-HELP tax dollars are put on the table and you see the cowboys rise to the top. That was designed by the Gillard Labor Government and resulted in a rort of the system by private providers. It was a rort of the system in that students in this State and across the nation either did not complete their training or received a certificate that was not worth anything because of the quality of the courses provided by those RTOs. Again, that was a Federal Labor program by the Gillard Government.

The federal Coalition Government continued with that scheme regardless of the noise made by New South Wales in relation to quality. Even though all this disruption occurred under VET FEE-HELP with the deregulation of the university sector, a low Australian Tertiary Admission Rank [ATAR] and the contestability arrangement, let us not forget that those opposite who oppose contestability in this State do not want to remind the people of New South Wales that pre-2011 they directly funded private RTOs in this State to the tune of between \$250 million and \$300 million. Under a contestability model here in New South Wales under Smart and Skilled we are yet to provide that sort of funding to private RTOs. Again, it shows the hypocrisy of those opposite when they speak in the debate in the Chamber tonight about an attack on TAFE. The reality is that those opposite gave more funding to private providers in New South Wales.

Despite the disruption under the Gillard Government VET FEE-HELP program along with the deregulation of the university sector and, through innovation and technology, the rise of many RTOs, in New South Wales NSW Fair Trading has provided a strong audit process that ensures that Smart and Skilled contracts only go to quality providers. At the same time, in Victoria, South Australia and other states we have seen the destruction of the VET system. In New South Wales Smart and Skilled has provided protections and

worked with quality private providers who have been delivering training in this State for years and, in some cases for decades. Those opposite want to talk about the destruction of TAFE. From a \$2.2 billion skills budget, TAFE gets more than \$1.7 billion. On top of that, there is \$131 million in capital expenditure for building new teaching and learning environments and connected learning centres, and for investment in TAFE infrastructure.

Those opposite talk about the sale of campuses across the State, but we have not seen that happen. Over its 125 years of existence, TAFE has acquired around 2,000 assets. In that time we have found that we own lots of vacant land, dog parks, and some residential homes. If we have the opportunity to recycle those assets and reinvest every single dollar in TAFE—and that is 100 per cent the case—and if we can invest in great teaching and in learning environments for the future, build the classrooms of the future, and invest in IT and in resources, then I make no apology. We have seen the shadow Minister out at Nepean College at Kingswood saying, "They are going to sell this campus." If she had looked over her shoulder she would have seen that there were over 300 workers on site spending \$20 million to build a new TAFE. There were cranes in the sky. She is misleading the public because those opposite have decided to start a campaign of mistruths on TAFE NSW.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! The Minister has the call and will be heard in silence. The next member who interjects will be removed from the Chamber.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** Let us look at enrolments. If we compare the 2015-16 financial year to the 2016-17 financial year, we see TAFE enrolments have gone up by 100,000 students. That is an increase of 25 per cent. Those opposite talked about a decline in enrolments during budget estimates. They need not trust me; they should trust the independent data of NCVER. NCVER is telling us that we are seeing growth in New South Wales. Victoria and Queensland are looking to New South Wales because of the TAFE reforms we have in place. The One TAFE model was created to stop the duplication in back offices and to see, of course, more resources, more teachers, and more frontline staff.

We want to cut the waste in TAFE, where 45¢ to 60¢ in every dollar was used for administration. That was just to turn on the lights. Before a teacher sat in the classroom or a student walked through the door, we were spending between 45¢ to 60¢ in every dollar. That does not sound like the best outcome for the training dollar. What we did was supported by the Teachers Federation, because it wants to see more money in frontline services and more money for resources.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! I direct the member for Balmain to remove himself from the Chamber until the Minister has concluded his speech in reply.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Balmain left the Chamber at 20:26.]*

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** We are seeing the increase. We have seen an increase in students with disabilities and we have seen an increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island students. We are not withdrawing services and support. That is another lie by those opposite on the campaign trail.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! I direct the member for Wollongong to remove himself from the Chamber until the Minister has concluded his speech in reply.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Wollongong left the Chamber at 20:27]*

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** We are seeing an overall increase of 100,000 students in TAFE NSW across the board. Yes, there are going to be some issues. The changes to the vocational loans scheme [VSL] are going to put pressure on those high-quality sub-degree courses, because we are now competing with the university sector, where students can put it all on their HECS card. That is where we are going to see the next impact of poor Federal Government policy—with a deregulated university sector. The university sector is now looking at VET as a cash cow and it is going to pull something like 50,000 students out of the VET system and set them up to fail. We still have a challenge ahead of us with VET and TAFE because of Federal Government policy. But we will have that fight. We will team up with our State colleagues and will make sure that we protect TAFE and VET in New South Wales.

Tonight I have had to endure listening to those opposite get up one by one and not talk about apprenticeships, traineeships, or the bill in front of them, but instead attack TAFE. That is what the Opposition has chosen to do. When it comes to the most vulnerable in this State, we now see more than 100,000 students in TAFE who have free access to vocational education training through our fee-free scholarships and through all our subsidies. Under the Opposition's pre-2011 policy it was around 40,000 students. The Opposition should not dare to say that we do not look after the most vulnerable in this State, because we do. The record sets out the truth for them to look at. Our system is one of co-contribution for those who can afford it. Let us talk about those who can afford it. A carpentry course for a chippy will cost TAFE about \$13,000 to deliver. The New South Wales taxpayer subsidises it to the tune of \$11,000.

We ask an apprentice to contribute \$2,000 to a three- or four-year apprenticeship. That is the cost of fewer than two cups of coffee a week to invest in their future career and set them up in a great job with a great lifestyle. Those at a disadvantage, the most vulnerable in this State, will still have access to free vocational education and training. The Government's record is clear. I will not listen to the hypocrites opposite, because under their system students paid more and did not have the access to training that the Government offers. I reiterate that the Government has provided a \$2.2 billion Skills budget, \$1.7 billion for TAFE NSW and \$131 million to build new TAFE colleges, campuses and Connected Learning Centres. The Government is making sure that we deliver the TAFE we know this State needs for the future. TAFE NSW is the largest provider of vocational training, not just in New South Wales but in the nation—one that other States look to. We are exporting TAFE to many other countries. It is an export product because TAFE stands for quality.

This bill is about making sure we underpin quality in the training system, and we make no apology for that. We are putting the student first. Under Smart and Skilled the money follows the student. If TAFE offers a superior quality product, which it does, it will attract students. That is why TAFE has more than 540,000 students in this State. The number of Smart and Skilled funded places in this State is rising, and those opposite refuse to accept that and continue to spread lies. The NSW Teachers Federation supports our reforms. It understands the Government's commitment to TAFE NSW. Under former Prime Minister Gillard, Labor set up the vocational education system with contestability and the VET FEE-HELP, which caused more pain to the sector than any other decision, plus the incentive withdrawals for employers.

While the Act as it stands has served up until now, everyone can agree that a change is needed, starting with training providers and their responsibilities. To ensure better communication between all parties, the bill will introduce the requirement for training providers to share information with the employer regarding the training plan. This transparency should strengthen the links between the training provider and the employer, serving as a deterrent to disputes and complaints. The bill will transfer the responsibility to make the vocational training guidelines from the Secretary to the commissioner.

The commissioner will also be responsible for the trade recognition process, which helps unqualified but highly skilled individuals and people with experience outside New South Wales. The commissioner will continue to seek independent expert advice to verify work experience in trades. Australian Apprenticeship Support Network providers, referred to as "agents" in the legislation, will also maintain their role of assisting employers to establish apprenticeships and traineeships, but under the bill the Commissioner for Vocational Training will be able to reject applications from Australian Apprenticeship Support Network providers who do not follow the requirements of the bill.

The commissioner's role also extends to independent assessment of the competence of apprentices and trainees. The bill provides strong compliance and enforcement provisions to ensure that we are monitoring registered training organisations, Australian Apprenticeship Support Network providers and employers, and to ensure the quality of training delivered to New South Wales apprentices, trainees and industry. The legislation clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities attributed to all stakeholders. However, until now, enforcing penalties has been difficult. The bill provides for penalty notices for offences, and maximum penalties will increase for the first time since the Act commenced, bringing the legislation in line with other New South Wales regulatory agencies. Penalties will now also be applicable to all stakeholders to ensure that they are honouring their obligations to apprentices, trainees and employers. This should deter unlawful practices and, in turn, strengthen the New South Wales apprentice and trainee system.

The bill will ensure that we have a robust and modern framework to effectively manage the new generation of apprentices and trainees both now and in the future. Supporting this group of individuals will go a long way to confirming their value and place in the growing economy of New South Wales. A complementary range of non-legislative initiatives for traditional trades is also being implemented to align with the amendments in the bill, such as pre-apprenticeship training. These initiatives will attract prospective trainees and apprentices and make these individuals more attractive to future employers. Through the pre-apprenticeship program that the Government brought in, we have seen completion rates increase from approximately 50 per cent to around 80 per cent. The mentoring and pastoral care framework that supports young people in their career choices, especially at the start of an apprenticeship, is delivering dividends.

There is a decision to be made today regarding a very important part of our training system. We can continue to work with out-of-date legislation that complicates the process for all stakeholders, or we can recognise the bill as a timely piece of legislation that will appropriately guide the delivery of apprenticeships and traineeships into the future as the world of work continues to evolve. We must remember that Labor had its sights on training in this State, and this legislation is in line with Labor's view. The opportunities contained within this bill are also in line with the view of TAFE NSW. I commend the bill to the House.



**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** The question is that this bill be now read a second time. I will permit the member for Balmain and the member for Wollongong to return to the Chamber.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....46  
 Noes .....36  
 Majority.....10

**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	Fraser, Mr A
Gibbons, Ms M	Goward, Ms P	Griffin, Mr J
Gulaptis, Mr C	Hancock, Mrs S	Henskens, Mr A
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
Speakman, Mr M	Stokes, Mr R	Taylor, Mr M
Toole, Mr P	Tudehope, Mr D	Upton, Ms G
Ward, Mr G	Williams, Mr R	Williams, Mrs L
Wilson, Ms F		

**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
Hoenig, Mr R	Hornery, Ms S	Kamper, Mr S
Lalich, Mr N (teller)	Lynch, Mr P	McKay, Ms J
Mehan, Mr D	Mihailuk, Ms T	Minns, Mr C
Park, Mr R	Parker, Mr J	Piper, Mr G
Scully, Mr P	Smith, Ms T F	Tesch, Ms L
Warren, Mr G	Watson, Ms A (teller)	Zangari, Mr G

**PAIRS**

Grant, Mr T

McDermott, Dr H

**Motion agreed to.**

**Consideration in detail requested by Ms Prue Car.**

**Consideration in Detail**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** By leave: I shall propose the bill in one group of clauses and one group of schedules. The question is that clauses 1 and 2 be agreed to.

**Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** The question is that schedules 1 and 2 be agreed to.

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (20:41):** By leave: I move Opposition amendments Nos 1 to 23 on sheet C2017-066B in globo:

- Page 5, Schedule 1 [15] and [16], lines 25-28. Omit all words on those lines.
- No. 2     **Review Panel**
- Page 5, Schedule 1 [18], lines 31 and 32. Omit all words on those lines.
- No. 3     **Review Panel**
- Page 6, Schedule 1 [21], lines 3 and 4. Omit all words on those lines.
- No. 4     **Review Panel**
- Page 8, Schedule 1 [31] and [32], lines 7-10. Omit all words on those lines.
- No. 5     **Review Panel**
- Page 9, Schedule 1 [41], lines 24-26. Omit all words on those lines.
- No. 6     **Review Panel**
- Pages 9-11, Schedule 1 [43], proposed sections 36 and 37, line 32 on page 9 to line 13 on page 11. Omit "Commissioner" wherever occurring. Insert instead "Review Panel".
- No. 7     **Review Panel**
- Page 11, Schedule 1 [44], lines 35-46. Omit all words on those lines.
- No. 8     **Review Panel**
- Page 12, Schedule 1 [46]—[49], lines 4-19. Omit all words on those lines.
- No. 9     **Review Panel**
- Page 12, Schedule 1 [51]-[52], lines 22-25. Omit all words on those lines.
- No. 10    **Review Panel**
- Page 12, Schedule 1 [54], lines 30 and 31. Omit all words on those lines.
- No. 11    **Review Panel**
- Page 13, Schedule 1 [57], lines 1 and 2. Omit all words on those lines.
- No. 12    **Review Panel**
- Page 13, Schedule 1 [58], proposed section 53 (2A), line 5. Omit "Commissioner". Insert instead "Review Panel",
- No. 13    **Review Panel**
- Page 13, Schedule 1 [60], lines 12-36. Omit all words on those lines.
- No. 14    **Review Panel**
- Page 14, Schedule 1 [62]—[64], lines 4-9. Omit all words on those lines.
- No. 15    **Review Panel**
- Page 14, Schedule 1 [67] and [68], lines 35-38. Omit all words on those lines.
- No. 16    **Review Panel**
- Page 15, Schedule 1 [72], lines 11 and 12. Omit all words on those lines.
- No. 17    **Review Panel**
- Page 15, Schedule 1 [73], proposed clause 28 (1) of Part 5 of Schedule 4, line 20. Omit all words on that line.
- No. 18    **Review Panel**
- Pages 15-17, Schedule 1 [73], proposed clauses 28-32 of Part 5 of Schedule 4, line 23 on page 15 to line 19 on page 17. Omit all words on those lines.
- No. 19    **Review Panel**
- Page 18, Schedule 1 [73], proposed clause 36 of Part 5 of Schedule 4, lines 15-17. Omit "However, on and from the repeal day, any reference in those sections to the Review Panel is to be read as a reference to the Commissioner".
- No. 20    **Review Panel**
- Page 18, Schedule 1 [74], lines 29-30. Omit ", public servant and Review Panel". Insert instead "and public servant".
- No. 21    **Review Panel**
- Page 18, Schedule 1 [77], lines 41 and 42. Omit all words on those lines.
- No. 22    **Review Panel**

Page 20, Schedule 2.1 [3], line 7. Omit "Clauses 5, 6, 9, 10 and 13". Insert instead "Clauses 5 and 6".

No. 23 **Review Panel**

Page 20, Schedule 2.2-2.4, lines 12-23. Omit all words on those lines.

I will speak briefly to the Opposition amendments on this important bill. I begin by saying that for anyone who was unfortunate enough to hear the ridiculous reply speech by the Deputy Premier, that is all they need to know about this Government's priorities when it comes to skills and, particularly, TAFE. How dare the Government suggest that this bill is not an attack on TAFE. It is. At its heart, it takes TAFE away from the tried and tested trade recognition process. The members of this Government are like a pack of ostriches on this issue: they have got their heads in the sand. The numbers do not lie. The numbers, which were leaked from the Government's own agency, show that since 2012 there have been 175,000 fewer students enrolled in our TAFE colleges. The Government has sacked 5,700 teachers and support staff. What has the Minister, the member for Bega, ever said about the TAFE in Bega? Nothing.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** Point of order: Whilst the Government is not really enjoying the Opposition's company this evening, the member for Londonderry should speak to the amendments. She is speaking well beyond the leave of the bill and the amendments before the House. I ask that she be drawn back to the amendments so that we can go home.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! The member for Londonderry must be relevant to the subject matter, which is the amendments that are under consideration.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I will say exactly how they are relevant. The Government's bill on this issue removes the world-class TAFE from the trade recognition process of the Vocational Training Review Panel [VTRP] and our amendments put it back.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** Point of order—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Sit down. Have you ever been to the TAFE in Bega?

**Mr Andrew Constance:** I again draw your attention, Mr Temporary Speaker, to the fact that the member must speak to the amendments. She is failing to do so. If she canvasses your ruling, she should be asked to resume her seat.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! The member for Londonderry will speak to the amendments that are under consideration.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The amendments that I am moving retain the Vocational Training and Review Panel, which includes TAFE representation. The Opposition will never support any attack, big or small, on TAFE. The community knows that the greatest threat to TAFE in this country is the Liberal-Nationals in New South Wales. The Deputy Premier and the Government will rue the day they started to attack TAFE in this State. Whatever the Government tries to take away from TAFE, we will oppose. This Government does not like to hear the truth.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** Point of order—

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! The member for Londonderry will resume her seat.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** I draw your attention, Mr Temporary Speaker, to the fact that the member for Londonderry is not speaking to the amendments before the House. I ask that she be directed to resume her seat.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! I will give the member for Londonderry one more chance. She will speak to the amendments or she will resume her seat.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I appreciate your generosity, Mr Temporary Speaker. I will say again, these amendments retain the VTRP, which includes a TAFE representative. I appreciate the Government is very touchy when it comes to TAFE because there are people in the community who are very concerned about this. Do not take my word for it, take the community's word for it. The Teachers Federation is very upset about the removal of the VTRP.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** Point of order—

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! The member for Londonderry will resume her seat.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** Mr Temporary Speaker, the member for Londonderry is again canvassing your ruling very deliberately by being a smart alec. I ask that she be directed to resume her seat because she is not speaking to the amendments.

**Mr Michael Daley:** To the point of order: The Minister has to do more than simply take points of order. It can be guaranteed that he has not read these amendments because they are not related to his portfolio. Twice he has taken a point of order for the shadow Minister to justify relevance and twice she has said how she is being relevant. The Minister is saying, "Trust me on this." He has to do more than that. He has to understand the substance of the amendments, and clearly he does not. If the shadow Minister is not allowed to introduce the concept of relevance and then speak to it, we are all lost in this place. If the Minister did not interrupt, the member for Londonderry would have concluded her speech by now.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! I did not call the member for Maroubra. The next time he speaks without receiving the call he will be removed from the Chamber. The member for Londonderry has the call.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** It is nothing but obstructionist rubbish from the member for Bega. At the heart of these amendments is the fact that on this side of the Chamber we believe in things. TAFE is one of the things we believe in and we will save it at all costs.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** The question is that Opposition amendments Nos 1 to 23 on sheet C2017-066B be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....36

Noes .....46

Majority..... 10

**AYES**

Aitchison, Ms J  
Car, Ms P  
Cotsis, Ms S  
Dib, Mr J  
Finn, Ms J  
Harris, Mr D  
Hoenig, Mr R  
Lalich, Mr N (teller)  
Mehan, Mr D  
Park, Mr R  
Scully, Mr P  
Warren, Mr G

Atalla, Mr E  
Catley, Ms Y  
Crakanthorp, Mr T  
Donato, Mr P  
Foley, Mr L  
Harrison, Ms J  
Hornery, Ms S  
Lynch, Mr P  
Mihailuk, Ms T  
Parker, Mr J  
Smith, Ms T F  
Watson, Ms A (teller)

Barr, Mr C  
Chanthivong, Mr A  
Daley, Mr M  
Doyle, Ms T  
Greenwich, Mr A  
Haylen, Ms J  
Kamper, Mr S  
McKay, Ms J  
Minns, Mr C  
Piper, Mr G  
Tesch, Ms L  
Zangari, Mr G

**NOES**

Anderson, Mr K  
Barilaro, Mr J  
Brookes, Mr G  
Coure, Mr M  
Dominello, Mr V  
Gibbons, Ms M  
Gulaptis, Mr C  
Johnsen, Mr M  
Maguire, Mr D  
O'Dea, Mr J  
Perrottet, Mr D  
Provest, Mr G  
Speakman, Mr M  
Toole, Mr P  
Ward, Mr G  
Wilson, Ms F

Aplin, Mr G  
Berejiklian, Ms G  
Conolly, Mr K  
Crouch, Mr A  
Elliott, Mr D  
Goward, Ms P  
Hancock, Mrs S  
Kean, Mr M  
Marshall, Mr A  
Patterson, Mr C (teller)  
Petinos, Ms E  
Roberts, Mr A  
Stokes, Mr R  
Tudehope, Mr D  
Williams, Mr R

Ayres, Mr S  
Bromhead, Mr S (teller)  
Constance, Mr A  
Davies, Ms T  
Fraser, Mr A  
Griffin, Mr J  
Henskens, Mr A  
Lee, Dr G  
Notley-Smith, Mr B  
Pavey, Mrs M  
Piccoli, Mr A  
Rowell, Mr J  
Taylor, Mr M  
Upton, Ms G  
Williams, Mrs L

**PAIRS**

McDermott, Dr H

Grant, Mr T

**Amendments negatived.****TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** The question is that schedules 1 and 2 be agreed to.**The House divided.**

Ayes .....46  
 Noes .....36  
 Majority..... 10

**AYES**

Anderson, Mr K  
 Barilaro, Mr J  
 Brookes, Mr G  
 Coure, Mr M  
 Dominello, Mr V  
 Gibbons, Ms M  
 Gulaptis, Mr C  
 Johnsen, Mr M  
 Maguire, Mr D  
 O'Dea, Mr J  
 Perrottet, Mr D  
 Provest, Mr G  
 Speakman, Mr M  
 Toole, Mr P  
 Ward, Mr G  
 Wilson, Ms F

Aplin, Mr G  
 Berejiklian, Ms G  
 Conolly, Mr K  
 Crouch, Mr A  
 Elliott, Mr D  
 Goward, Ms P  
 Hancock, Mrs S  
 Kean, Mr M  
 Marshall, Mr A  
 Patterson, Mr C (teller)  
 Petinos, Ms E  
 Roberts, Mr A  
 Stokes, Mr R  
 Tudehope, Mr D  
 Williams, Mr R

Ayres, Mr S  
 Bromhead, Mr S (teller)  
 Constance, Mr A  
 Davies, Ms T  
 Fraser, Mr A  
 Griffin, Mr J  
 Henskens, Mr A  
 Lee, Dr G  
 Notley-Smith, Mr B  
 Pavey, Mrs M  
 Piccoli, Mr A  
 Rowell, Mr J  
 Taylor, Mr M  
 Upton, Ms G  
 Williams, Mrs L

**NOES**

Aitchison, Ms J  
 Car, Ms P  
 Cotsis, Ms S  
 Dib, Mr J  
 Finn, Ms J  
 Harris, Mr D  
 Hoenig, Mr R  
 Lalich, Mr N (teller)  
 Mehan, Mr D  
 Park, Mr R  
 Scully, Mr P  
 Warren, Mr G

Atalla, Mr E  
 Catley, Ms Y  
 Crakanthorp, Mr T  
 Donato, Mr P  
 Foley, Mr L  
 Harrison, Ms J  
 Hornery, Ms S  
 Lynch, Mr P  
 Mihailuk, Ms T  
 Parker, Mr J  
 Smith, Ms T F  
 Watson, Ms A (teller)

Barr, Mr C  
 Chanthivong, Mr A  
 Daley, Mr M  
 Doyle, Ms T  
 Greenwich, Mr A  
 Haylen, Ms J  
 Kamper, Mr S  
 McKay, Ms J  
 Minns, Mr C  
 Piper, Mr G  
 Tesch, Ms L  
 Zangari, Mr G

**PAIRS**

Grant, Mr T

McDermott, Dr H

**Schedules 1 and 2 agreed to.****Third Reading****Mr JOHN BARILARO:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....46  
 Noes .....36  
 Majority..... 10

## 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	Fraser, Mr A
Gibbons, Ms M	Goward, Ms P	Griffin, Mr J
Gulaptis, Mr C	Hancock, Mrs S	Henskens, Mr A
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
Speakman, Mr M	Stokes, Mr R	Taylor, Mr M
Toole, Mr P	Tudehope, Mr D	Upton, Ms G
Ward, Mr G	Williams, Mr R	Williams, Mrs L
Wilson, Ms F		

## 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
Hoenig, Mr R	Hornery, Ms S	Kamper, Mr S
Lalich, Mr N (teller)	Lynch, Mr P	McKay, Ms J
Mehan, Mr D	Mihailuk, Ms T	Minns, Mr C
Park, Mr R	Parker, Mr J	Piper, Mr G
Scully, Mr P	Smith, Ms T F	Tesch, Ms L
Warren, Mr G	Watson, Ms A (teller)	Zangari, Mr G

## PAIRS

Grant, Mr T

McDermott, Dr H

**Motion agreed to.***Private Members' Statements***TRIBUTE TO DEAN MERCER**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (21:00):** I pay tribute to iconic Australian surf lifesaver Dean Mercer, who recently lost his life in a tragic car accident in Queensland. Dean was from the electorate of Keira, born and bred in Thirroul. He comes from a family of iconic surf lifesavers—his brother, Darren; his niece, Jordan; and his wife, Reen, who is a champion Ironwoman. The Mercers were synonymous with our beautiful coastline and beaches. I had the pleasure of knowing Dean. Every now and again I would run and train with him. He was an incredible athlete and left us all behind. He was a champion with a giant heart and great talent. Most of all, he had great courage and determination. He will be missed, not only by the surf life saving community, but also by the Illawarra community. On behalf of my electorate, I say to his family and children, his extended family, loved ones and friends that we are sorry for the loss of Dean Mercer.

Dean became a State and national icon because of his enormous talent on the sand and in the surf. His 1995 victory in the Australian Surf Life Saving Championships against Trevor Hendy is one of Australia's most incredible sporting moments. He pipped Trevor at the line after a beach sprint from the surf. Those of us who live in coastal communities know that the Tasman Sea and the Pacific Ocean can generate enormous waves, but Dean took on any surf and did what he did best—be a champion surf lifesaver. He was a great human being and a great role model. Dean had time for everybody. Even though he was an incredibly elite athlete, he was happy to coach

and assist up-and-coming athletes. But he was more than an athlete. He was a great father, a great friend and a great clubby, as they say in the surf life saving movement. Our community mourns the loss of Dean and it will continue to honour him. We come from a great surf life saving tradition in the electorate of Keira.

We have had some iconic men and women grace our beaches and weave their magic in the surf, but there was none finer than Dean Mercer. Today I pay tribute to Dean. I think of his family and all who are at this moment going through a very difficult time, trying to understand the tragic loss of a man we thought was simply immortal because of what he did on the sand and in the surf. To the Mercer family I say: I know this is a time of great sadness but know that your son, brother, husband, friend and uncle will always be remembered by those in the Illawarra who had the pleasure of knowing him as a truly iconic surf lifesaver and a great individual. To the Thirroul Surf Life Saving Club—a great, active and strong club in this State and nationally—I say: This is a very difficult time but we stand with you. We know you will continue to honour Dean and the Mercer family as you have done for many years. The broader Illawarra community will continue to remember, honour and celebrate the wonderful life of Dean Mercer. Vale, Dean Mercer.

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (21:05):** I join the member for Keira in acknowledging the wonderful life of Dean Mercer—an Ironman, a father, a husband and someone who made an enormous contribution to surf life saving. Forty-seven is far too young. To his wife, Reen, and his four children I say: This is a tragedy felt by the whole community. He was an inspiration to many young clubbies and people who walked onto the beach for the first time and needed the confidence to get into the surf and participate at the highest level. He was a true Ironman in the true spirit of being an Illawarrarian. We will miss you. We thank you for everything you have done for the surf life saving movement. It is appropriate that members on both sides of the House acknowledge the contribution you have made and the sadness that your passing has caused to so many. Vale, Dean Mercer.

#### **NORTHERN TABLELANDS BLOOD COLLECTION SERVICES**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Tourism and Major Events, and Assistant Minister for Skills) (21:06):** Tonight I bring to the attention of the House the lack of blood collection service centres across the Northern Tablelands, specifically in the communities of Inverell, Glen Innes and Moree. Sadly, the Australian Red Cross Blood Service withdrew collection services from those communities in 2015, to the huge disappointment of the many hundreds of regular donors throughout the Northern Tablelands. While whole blood and plasma collection services remain open in Armidale and further afield to the south in Tamworth, many of those hundreds of committed blood donors were reluctantly forced to cease donating blood due to their inability to afford either the time or the cost of travelling the up to 400-kilometre return trip from their homes to the Armidale Red Cross blood collection centre.

Red Cross volunteers in the Inverell community are frustrated and have maintained their rage over the removal of blood collection services from their town. Beth McNeil is a passionate local who ran Inverell's once very busy blood bank out of Inverell hospital for approximately 18 years. She tells me that it never wanted for donors, with approximately 40 regular donors visiting twice per month to donate blood. Similarly, the community of Glen Innes felt so strongly about the withdrawal of collection services that locals rallied and pushed hard at the time for travel subsidies from the then Minister for Health so that people could afford to travel to Armidale and back—a round trip of more than 200 kilometres—to continue making their regular donations, so passionate were they about the contribution they were making. I vividly recall discussions with the then president of the Glen Innes Red Cross branch, Val Lennon, who was personally distressed by the decision and determined to have it reversed.

The growing towns of Glen Innes, Inverell and Moree and the surrounding districts are home to more than 40,000 people. The withdrawal of blood collection services from those communities came at a terrible time when blood donations were most needed. As we all know, in country areas—as in other parts of the country—history repeats itself. Just a few weeks ago the Red Cross put out a public call for an additional 3,000 donors across the country to make blood donations as their O-negative reserves had slipped to just one day's supply. I can report that donors in smaller regional communities in my electorate were more than happy to do their share and donate their blood. In fact, they would still be donating if the Red Cross had not removed the collection centres from Moree, Inverell and Glen Innes. It is such a shame that the services were taken away. That precipitated a dramatic shortage and has forced the Red Cross to call for extra donors. The donors are there; unfortunately, the collection facilities are not.

The need for blood donors is critical. That is why this week I have again written to the Australian Red Cross imploring it to reverse its 2015 decision and restore those blood collection services, even if they are only mobile services every month or two. That will allow passionate people in those communities to give their blood and help address the critical shortage that the Red Cross is so keen to ask the community to do something about. My message is that the Red Cross has a shortage and I have the people, but we need the collection services. The Red Cross has the ability to reinstate those services and help address the shortage.

With \$30 million locked into the State budget this year for the Inverell hospital redevelopment there is an opportunity to build a permanent blood donation centre in that facility if the Red Cross is willing to meet NSW Health and the Hunter New England Local Health District halfway. I have confirmed with the local health district that there is capacity within the redevelopment plans for a blood donation centre if the Red Cross is interested. I say to the Australian Red Cross that there is a tailor-made facility on offer in Inverell. It will enable locals to make their donations and negate the need for people in the neighbouring towns of Moree and Glen Innes to travel to Armidale or Tamworth to donate blood. I continue to support the communities of Moree, Inverell and Glen Innes to have these services restored, which will help to increase blood donations across the State.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest):** As a regular blood donor I understand the desire of the member for Northern Tablelands to restore blood donation services in Moree, Glen Innes and Inverell. I wish him all the best in his endeavours because it is a worthwhile cause. I believe one in every three people will need a blood transfusion at some point. I congratulate the member for Northern Tablelands.

#### **TRIBUTE TO DENISE ANNETTS ANDERSON**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation) (21:12):** I pay tribute to Denise Annetts, one of the greatest female cricketers Australia has ever produced. Denise smashed many records during her cricketing career, some of which she still holds today. She represented Australia playing against some of the toughest competitors and on the best pitches in the world. She is one amazing lady, who continues to give back to the Hornsby community by coaching and mentoring young cricketing stars. It was recently made official that Denise has been given a Marylebone Cricket Club [MCC] life membership. The MCC is the world's home of cricket and has given out 320 life memberships and only 19 to female players. This award recognises Denise as one of Australia's true cricketing greats. She has the highest batting average of any living cricketer, male or female, and she is second only to the great Sir Donald Bradman. Her accomplishments have stood the test of time and still remain as benchmarks for the national woman's cricket side.

Denise attended Abbotsleigh at Wahroonga, where she was heavily involved in sport. Captaining the firsts for both cricket and hockey, her sporting talent shined bright from a young age. She finished her schooling in the leadership position of school vice-captain. She began playing for the Mirrabooka Cricket Club before it merged with the Gordon District Cricket Club. They could see they had a star on their hands when at just 14 years of age Denise was picked to play first grade. By 18 she was playing for the New South Wales team and also served as captain. But one sport was just not enough for this phenomenal woman. At the same time, Denise was also representing our State in the New South Wales hockey team and our country in the under-21 Australian team. She eventually had to give up hockey to focus on cricket, her one true passion. In January 1985 she was selected for the Women's Cricket Association of Australia President's XI to play in England. Following her good form she was selected to go on to play in the Australian team to face New Zealand. She scored 26 runs in her first innings and Australia won that match comfortably—by nine wickets.

It was her pairing with Belinda Haggett the following season that saw her score a maiden half-century in a One Day International. She opened the batting with 57 against New Zealand in Wellington. She scored her second half-century in the 1987 One Day International, when the Australian women's team toured the British Isles. She went on to make a 183 second-wicket partnership with Lindsay Reeler against England in Collingham. During her second test appearance she was partnered again with Lindsay Reeler, after Denise Emerson and Belinda Haggett had fallen early. The partnership saw Lindsay Reeler score 110 and Denise score 193—a combined record in women's test cricket of 309 runs.

In the eight years she played for Australia between 1985 and 1993 she achieved some statistics that are more than just impressive; they are statistics that will blow interested people away. She holds the world record partnership with Lindsay Reeler of 309. She also holds the record for the fastest century in women's cricket. This was awarded to her when matches were played on full-size test grounds. She has held a one-time world record individual score of 193. She finished her impressive test career with 819 runs in 13 innings, which is an average of 81.9. This record is only surpassed by the great Sir Donald Bradman, and she holds the highest batting average of any living cricketer. She is also ranked by the *Guinness Book of Records* as one of the top 1,000 athletes globally. She has played cricket at some of the best pitches in Australia and all over the world, including the hallowed turf of cricket, Lords. It was during these matches against England that Denise says she felt most proud. She has had many highlights over her career, but it was hitting the winning runs in the Australian World Cup against England that is her favourite.

Not surprisingly, in 1987 Denise was awarded New South Wales Sportswoman of the Year and runner-up Australian Sportswoman of the Year. In March 2012 she was inducted into the Cricket NSW Hall of Fame. Somehow, during this amazing cricketing career she managed to forge a successful career as a pharmacist. She also married my good friend Ross Anderson. Together they have had three beautiful children: Daniel, John and Jessica. Denise, who is now known by her married name, Denise Anderson, has clearly passed on the sporting



genes to her children. They are already finding great success in sport. Both Daniel and John currently play for Northern District Cricket Club. Her husband Ross is also heavily involved in cricket in the Hornsby district as Director of Operations and Secretary of the West Pennant Hills Cherrybrook Cricket Club.

Denise is still involved in local Hornsby sporting groups, mentoring and helping young sports stars—and not just in cricket. She has managed teams in the Northern District Cricket Club as well as the Asquith Magpies Rugby League teams. She was named coach of the year in 2015 at the Warrawee Junior Netball Club. She dedicated six years as a junior coach at the West Pennant Hills Cherrybrook Cricket Club as well as training young representative players who aspire to follow in her footsteps. It begs the question: Is there any sport this woman cannot do? Denise is an amazing sportswoman, and I congratulate her on being awarded an Honorary Life Membership of the MCC. I also take this opportunity to thank her for continuing to give back to the Hornsby sporting community, and for making such a great difference to our country.

### GOVERNMENT SERVICE DELIVERY

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (21:17):** Tonight I will speak on behalf of my community, because when the history of this Liberal Government is written certain themes will emerge. Backflips will be one. No other Government in the history of this State will ever come close to the number of policy backflips of this Government in such a short period of time. Backflips on greyhounds, Hurlstone Agricultural High School, council amalgamations and the fire and emergency services levy [FESL] come to mind. No doubt others are in the pipeline as the 2019 election draws near.

Another theme of this Government is arrogance. Like its record on backflips, this Government will long hold the record for arrogance. Think of the destruction of trees along Anzac Parade or the decision to ignore the wishes of local communities. But no doubt the signature theme of this Government—the one that will forever define it—is greed in all its forms. I am talking about greed at the expense of hardworking residents, greed to sell off vital public assets such as the Land Titles Office and the electricity network, and greed to privatise public bus services. I am talking about the Government's greed to impose the most draconian and repressive regime of road tolls virtually anywhere in the world.

That brings me to the issue that grips my community every day—the M5 and this Government's consideration of extending the toll for another 40 years until the 2060s, which is well beyond 2026, when the road will be paid off. Let us think about that for a minute—the M5 is due to be paid off in 2026 but this Government, gripped by its greed, is considering extending the toll for another 40 years to increase the road's value, only to sell it off to the private sector as part of the WestConnex deal. I cannot think of a more blatant or cynical cash grab than that. Who are the victims? They are the struggling residents and motorists of south-west Sydney, including the hardworking people in my electorate, who for 40 long years will be left paying a toll for a road that was paid off in 2026. Even worse, that toll will not be used to make any improvements to the M5 or to alleviate congestion on this embarrassing car park of a road, and it is all because of this Government's greed.

This Government has made many cynical decisions but this one is the all-time winner. No doubt the Premier, the Treasurer and the roads Minister will have a top-class spin machine ready to fool the public and to make them forget. I can assure the Government that the motorists of south-west Sydney will not forget; my community will never forget. Every day as they pay for a sub-standard road—stuck in yet another traffic jam on their way home from work—they will remember that the road was paid off decades before. This Government has no understanding of the meaning of a fair go and does not have a single clue about the struggles of life in south-west Sydney. My constituents are sick of the Government's spin, tired of its backflips and fed up with being treated so unfairly. We have copped an unfair deal many times before—there is still no lift at Macquarie Fields station and Hurlstone Agricultural High School's vital green education open space has been sold to fatten the profits of developers.

Now the Government is set to make us pay, for decades to come, for the Premier's never-ending toll, which will put more pressure on the purse strings of motorists and families across south-west Sydney when household budgets are already stretched to the max. It is unfair, unjustifiable and just another greedy cash grab, and the motorists of south-west Sydney will get nothing in return. But each day when those motorists drive on the M5 they will be thinking about one thing—namely, that this Liberal Government is to blame. That judgement day will come and when it does the people will have a say at the ballot box. This appalling decision is rotten to the core. It stinks of a greedy cash grab, of secret deals and of profits before people in my electorate. I will not stand by and let the motorists in our region get whacked with unfair tolls because of this Government's greed, nor will I let this Government rob our pockets yet again. I will always fight for the community's fair share and I will fight against this Government's greedy cash grab. The Government should stop the M5 toll cash grab and look after our motorists.

### BAYS PRECINCT DEVELOPMENT

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (21:22):** The Bays Precinct will undergo massive transformation to bring thousands of new residents, workers and visitors to the region. Tonight I call for a consultative, transparent and coordinated planning process to ensure the redevelopment is environmentally and socially sustainable. The Bays Precinct covers largely government-owned harbour land just two kilometres from the city centre. It incorporates the existing and future Sydney Fish Market sites and Bank Street waterfront land in Pyrmont, as well as land in Rozelle, Balmain, Lilyfield and Glebe. Planned populations for the region have not been made public, although there are indications that the current Sydney Fish Market site will accommodate 2,760 new dwellings.

There is a growing community view that concerns about overdevelopment and the potential overburden on existing services are being ignored. Pyrmont residents are understandably sceptical after they were promised consultative planning for the Darling Harbour redevelopment. They attended forums and focus group sessions and made multiple submissions. Their fundamental concern was that pedestrian connections between Pyrmont and Darling Harbour be improved. I supported those calls in meetings with project officers and was reassured that connectivity to the site would be a priority. The project is now complete and access between Pyrmont and Darling Harbour remains inadequate.

Pyrmont-Ultimo is one of Australia's most densely populated areas. Its roads, public transport services and schools are at capacity and it has very low levels of open space. If the adjacent Bays Precinct redevelopment is not properly planned and the region fails to provide new transport, open space and social infrastructure such as schools, sporting facilities and affordable housing, services and infrastructure in Pyrmont and Ultimo will suffer significantly. UrbanGrowth's latest push for Bank Street provides little hope. After successive governments promised to transform Bank Street into a passive recreation destination, and plans for a Sydney Heritage Fleet workshop with museum, community space and harbour park were approved, UrbanGrowth secretly submitted a modification to instead turn this prime waterfront land into a storage facility for charter vessel supplies and rubbish. There will be an ugly demountable building housing large rubbish bins, and shipping containers stacked up to the waterfront. Promises of a continuous public foreshore walk will only be achieved with a timber floating walkway.

The proposal is being put forward as a modification to the Sydney Heritage Fleet plan despite significant differences in activity. The modification was lodged after UrbanGrowth got the planning department to separate land and water activity assessments on the site, which conveniently makes approval more likely. The process smells of deals behind closed doors. Years of visionary work through the Bays Precinct Taskforce, the Bays Precinct Strategic Framework, the Community Reference Group, the Bays Precinct Implementation Committee, the 2006 Bank Street Master Plan and the 2015 The Bays Precinct, Sydney Transformation Plan earmarked the site for public open space and recreation. The local community is concerned that other good planning principles will also be disregarded. Residents ask whether Wentworth Park was added to the Bays Precinct project area to increase the open space ratio without providing new parks. Green open space is needed throughout the Bays Precinct, including within the redevelopment of the current Sydney Fish Market site, through a publicly accessible harbour, not just a walkway.

How transport and traffic will accommodate new residents and workers is unclear as there is no traffic and transport plan yet. WestConnex plans do not account for the redevelopment, with the Rozelle spaghetti interchange to expel thousands of cars into the precinct, causing disastrous traffic jams on the already congested local road network. How will roads cope when the thousands of new residents and workers arrive? The Bays Precinct needs to be vibrant and diverse and not an enclave for the rich, and this requires strong social and affordable housing targets. Barangaroo will only provide 2.3 per cent per 100,000 square metres of floor space, and that may end up off site. The Bays Precinct must provide new schools and sporting and health facilities given local services are already full and the redevelopment will increase demand.

The key principles of the 2005 community reference group opposing harbour land sell-offs and promoting public access must be honoured. Only proper engagement with the local community and open and transparent planning will ensure that the Bays Precinct is a great place to live and work and that it does not impact on surrounding communities. Following my recent meeting with the Premier's office and a delegation of residents, I again ask for a community point of contact to address residents' concerns about Bays Precinct planning and to provide ongoing information.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 21:28 until  
Wednesday 13 September 2017 at 10:00.**