



New South Wales

Legislative Assembly

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Sixth Parliament
First Session**

Thursday, 19 October 2017

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday, 19 October 2017

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

The SPEAKER read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

Bills

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT (ABORIGINAL FISHING) BILL 2017

Returned

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

Documents

INSPECTOR OF THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

Reports

The SPEAKER: In accordance with section 78 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, I table a report of the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption for the year ended 30 June 2017. I order that the report be printed.

INSPECTOR OF THE POLICE INTEGRITY COMMISSION

Reports

The SPEAKER: In accordance with section 142 and schedule 3 of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission Act 2016, I table a report of the Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission for the year ended 30 June 2017. I order that the report be printed.

Visitors

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the gallery my guests Gwen Downie, John Lang, David Tarbert and Gail Drummond from the Sussex Inlet and District Community Forum as well as Kelly Clarke from Shoalhaven City Council who will attend the New South Wales Resilient Australia Awards ceremony today. I congratulate them on their achievements.

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

Notices

PRESENTATION

Mr Daryl Maguire: Point of order: Notices of motions are meant to be brief and straight to the point. I have listened carefully to all notices of motions given this morning. Some of them were long and detailed and some members were unable to give their notices because many notices contained short speeches. I ask that a ruling be made that in future notices of motions are brief and to the point.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The notices of motions were given before I took the chair. I will speak to the Clerks about the member's comments.

Mr Greg Warren: To the point of order: Many notices of motions given are more like community recognition statements or portions of private members' statements. It is great for a member to congratulate his or her constituents; however, notices of motions should be about matters that will be brought before the Parliament for debate. It is becoming more common for members to give notices of motions that would be more appropriately dealt with as community recognition statements. I seek counsel from the Clerks as to the standing orders regarding notices of motions.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will seek counsel on this matter. This morning a number of members did not have an opportunity to give their notices of motions before time expired for the giving of notices of motions. I thank the member for Wagga Wagga and the member for Campbelltown for raising this matter.

*Budget***BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS 2017-2018****Debate resumed from 12 October 2017.**

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (10:14): I continue my contribution to debate on the 2017-18 State budget. Last week I spoke about some of the benefits of the budget for my electorate of North Shore. I congratulated the Treasurer on a budget that builds on our strong fiscal and economic track record and invests our success back into the families and communities of New South Wales, including in my electorate. It is important that the good work of this Government to bring about a strong fiscal and economic base is reinvested fairly into every community. Last week I spoke about infrastructure and the importance of the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link, which will be a game changer for congestion in my electorate and the electorate of the member for Manly, who is in the Chamber. Members opposite have indicated that, if elected, they will scrap the construction of this piece of infrastructure. It is crucial to the residents of the North Shore that the Berejiklian Government continues to manage infrastructure in our State.

Today I will speak about a few of the other benefits this budget brings to my electorate. I will begin with our investment in local public and active transport. Living close to the city, my constituents are some of the greatest users of public transport in this State. We also have one of our State's most congested roads—Military Road. My constituents want continued investment in public and active transport, including investment in a bi-directional cycleway along Ridge Street, North Sydney, and upgrades to the iconic Waverton and Wollstonecraft railway stations as part of our major \$2 million maintenance works program. They also want work to continue on expanding Milsons Point ferry wharf to improve safety, accessibility and efficiency. We have heard the announcement that a new timetable is about to be delivered. This will result in significant service improvements in my community, including from the new cross-harbour ferry service. For the first time ferry wharves in my electorate will be connected to ferry wharves in the city and eastern suburbs. Rather than all ferry services going through Circular Quay, our beautiful harbour will now be utilised.

The cycleway upgrade at Milsons Point has been put out for public consultation. It is currently difficult for cyclists to access the Sydney Harbour Bridge—they have to use an awkward ramp near the stairs. We are progressing the planning to deliver improved cycleway access to the bridge. Last Sunday it was wonderful to join with Bicycle NSW at the 2017 Spring Cycle at St Leonards Park to kick off the 50-kilometre ride—I was not awake early enough for the 100-kilometre ride. Bicycle NSW, BIKEsydney and the cycling community are excited about our investment to improve bicycle access to the bridge. I congratulate the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight on that work. I turn now to our record \$100 million funding package for palliative care across the State. Since being elected I have spent a bit of time working with the Cancer Council NSW. I acknowledge its work in advocating for palliative care funding and support for people who are at the most vulnerable point in their lives. [*Extension of time*]

I have spoken about palliative care before in this place and I will do so again today, so I will keep my comments brief. This budget commits a significant amount to palliative care services. When we think about the end of people's lives, their journeys there and the suffering they sometimes endure we know it is important to give them and their families as much peace, comfort and support as we can. This Government's commitment will fund new specialist palliative care nurse and doctor positions across the State. It will also enable North Shore frontline nurses and allied health staff to apply for scholarships and training to upskill in palliative care.

Cultural infrastructure is also important to my community. Our investment in arts and culture has increased to \$639 million, including funding for the Walsh Bay Arts and Cultural Precinct, the Sydney Opera House renewal program and support for the arts and screen industries through grants programs. Many people involved in the cultural infrastructure of this city live in my community. They have particularly welcomed the investment in the Sydney Modern Project at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the \$344 million that has been allocated to the two new projects. That funding will change the arts and cultural fabric of the State, and includes \$244 million for an iconic extension to the Art Gallery.

The North Shore electorate has a burgeoning population of young families. For a long time there was a sense that parts of my electorate were mostly populated by older people. I can tell the House that there is a baby boom on the North Shore. The Minister for Education, who is at the table, is well aware of that, given all the wonderful young children who are entering our local public schools. We are making significant investments in education and early childhood education. We have invested \$435 million in our youngest learners in the 2017-18 budget, which is a \$47 million increase on the figures for last year. The budget also includes an additional \$217 million over four years for the successful Start Strong reforms, which will ensure that all New South Wales children have access to 600 hours of preschool before they start school. We have also committed \$30 million in

continued funding to enhance participation and educational outcomes in early childhood education for children with disabilities.

Since my election as the member for North Shore I have worked with the community to obtain commitments and deliver outcomes in a number of areas, none of which could be delivered without sound financial management. We have achieved a number of local outcomes with the support of the community. We have made an investment in the environment and in maintaining public open spaces. We recently announced that a planning process is underway for the cliff top extension of Harry Seidler Park above Luna Park. The Government bought back that piece of land to ensure that it would never be subject to high-rise development and that we would retain public open space in a dense part of Sydney with many tall apartment buildings. Our purchase ensures that we are able to access our beautiful harbour foreshore and that there is space for families, children and every member of the community to enjoy the outdoors. Works are underway to create a beautiful public park in that area.

We have also been working on my by-election commitment that the Government would never privatise the Lavender Bay rail line but maintain it in public hands in perpetuity. I also said that the Government would pursue considering the feasibility of a walking track or high line across that stretch of the harbour foreshore. If feasible, the high line would stretch from the Luna Park end of the Lavender Bay rail line, through to Wendy's Secret Garden and to Waverton station. It will be a challenging exercise if we are able to achieve it. I pay tribute to Sydney Trains and Howard Collins, who is working closely with me on the feasibility of the engineering exercise. He is passionate about the project as well as ensuring that we maintain the operational needs of Sydney Trains. We need somewhere for trains to be stored close to the city to address peak demands or respond to any additional needs. However, Howard Collins has said that half of the rail line could be turned into a segregated walking track if all other factors makes it possible.

I thank the community organisations that are working with me on the project, including the Sydney Harbour High Line Association, the Lavender Bay Precinct, the Waverton Precinct and Transport Heritage NSW. I have also been working with local residents in Waverton to advocate for the future of the Berry's Bay area. In this iconic part of my community there are old, run-down wharves and mostly unused buildings. The land is owned by Roads and Maritime Services and has been under the threat of overdevelopment for many years. In the past a proponent holding the lease licence put in a development application for a grossly overdeveloped mariner. Thankfully, our planning processes proved to be appropriate and the application was rejected. However, I have been advocating for the Government to take back ownership of that land and to revitalise it to make it a wonderful and accessible area for tourists and the people of Waverton and New South Wales.

The area has a beautiful walking track to Balls Head Reserve and significant Indigenous heritage and artefacts that can be seen as one walks along it. The journey along the path ends at the Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability and there is a beautiful platform that North Sydney Council worked hard on delivering. Recently, Mayor of North Sydney Jilly Gibson, my Federal counterpart Trent Zimmerman and I toured the platform and saw the wonderful work of the council to preserve the place, which will soon be open to the community. If we could create broader connectivity and accessibility to that area for our community and the people of Sydney I would be happy. The Government has also committed \$100,000 to the Sydney Institute of Marine Science to investigate whether a centre for urban marine innovation could be created.

The Government is continuing to deliver the \$2.81 billion Sydney Metro City and South West, including new train stations at Victoria Cross and Crows Nest, which is just across the road from my electorate. One big outcome that we have achieved since my election is ensuring that the spoil from the shaft construction at Blues Point will not be trucked through McMahons Point. Considering the age of the buildings, their proximity to the street and the number of families living in the area, the trucking would have been disruptive, and that caused concern. The Government has made a commitment to move the spoil by barge, which will reduce the number of trucks movements through the streets of McMahons Point. We also had a great win when the project team took our advice on Victoria Cross station. We proposed that the second portal to the station be moved from the original proposed location to across the street. Now the portal will be not only an electricity substation but also a second entry into the station. It will allow people from the northern end of north Sydney towards St Leonards Park to connect to this new beautiful station.

The project will help to activate the St Leonards Park area and is supported by Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College and Wenona School, which are happy about the investment. We have also introduced funding for the new B-Line buses, which will begin operating next month. Those buses will reduce crowding and slash commute times on Military Road. The member for Pittwater, the member for Manly and I are happy about the B-Line buses, as are a number of people throughout our communities. By introducing double-decker express services and creating three lanes the traffic will flow faster and fewer buses will be forced to queue behind one another. That will be a great benefit to my community.

As I said, many people in my electorate use public transport. We had a great win with the B-Line buses. I thank the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure for helping the community to save the Cremorne town centre bus stop. There was a lot of concern about it being relocated, but we have saved it for off-peak services. The Minister came to the bus stop with me during my by-election campaign and listened to the community. He has responded to their concerns and I thank him for that. I am also excited about the fast-tracked funding for the installation of lifts on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The lifts will be crucial for people with disabilities or accessibility challenges, as well as for families with prams. I thank the roads Minister for that investment. I commend the budget to the House.

Visitors

VISITORS

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: With the indulgence of the House, I welcome to the public gallery representatives from the Lismore Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Deborah Benhayon, Andrew Gordon and Ellen Cronan; and, from Lismore Helping Hands, Councillor Elly Bird, Suzie Coulston and Mandie Kai. This morning they are being presented with awards in recognition of their contribution to the community of the northern rivers region during the floods. It is great to have them here this morning and we thank them very much. I know that they worked very hard to support those in trouble. On behalf of the NSW Business Chamber, I cannot thank Deborah, Andrew and Ellen enough. On behalf of the community, I thank Councillor Ellie Bird for her work with the Lismore Helping Hands project. It is great to have them recognised this morning.

Budget

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS 2017-2018

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (10:29): Mr Deputy Speaker, I too welcome your very valued constituents and I acknowledge the hardships and challenges faced in the northern rivers region. I am delighted to see that they are being recognised today. In my contribution I will highlight a few matters not only from a broad perspective but also on a more local level in relation to the New South Wales budget and the State economy. I am delighted that the Minister for Education is in the Chamber. He is always willing to listen to my concerns, and schools will be a strong focus of my contribution. At the outset, I highlight my greatest concern, which is shared by many in this place and throughout the community. Ultimately, budget revenue will reduce as a result of the asset sales and rising costs, which raises a serious issue as to operational funding in future budgets.

Asset sales give a one-hit injection. Everyone likes infrastructure but, in my view, the Government has been reckless. It has removed the capacity to increase budget revenue so things will go pear-shaped when it comes to paying for our police, fixing our schools, resourcing our teachers and nurses, and all the other operational fundamentals. The budget forecasts that net debt will rise to \$18.6 billion by 2020-21, or 2.7 per cent of gross State product. Total borrowings for 2020-21 are projected to reach more than \$45 billion. Interest expenses are expected to hit \$2.6 billion in 2020-21—more than \$6 million a day. This Government is not debt free.

Another issue is stamp duty. We know that stamp duty cannot be relied upon as a source of revenue because it fluctuates with the market. So it is most concerning that the Government appears to be solely reliant on it. We have an enormous surplus, but let us be very clear: It is not the Government's money; it is the money of the hardworking people of New South Wales. We should never lose sight of that fact. At times—and this is not a swipe; it is a fact—I get very frustrated when I hear Government members say "my", "our", "we did". This money is not owned by the Government; the Government is merely a facilitator and an administrator of public funds which, of course, are ultimately provided through taxes.

In relation to schools, Campbelltown schools have a maintenance backlog of almost \$10 million. I draw to the attention of the Minister for Education the fact that Campbelltown North Public School and Campbelltown East Public School—along with many others, but those two specifically—have serious maintenance backlogs. In one classroom at Campbelltown Public School the timber is literally falling off the walls because it has not had a coat of paint in goodness knows how long. The school also has issues with a leaking roof. Similar issues exist at Briar Road Public School and Leumeah High School, which I believe has the biggest maintenance backlog. It disturbs me greatly when mismanagement continues and our community has to pay the price.

The cost of the Intercity trains has blown out by \$1.1 billion; WestConnex mismanagement and blowouts have cost just under \$7 billion; the CBD Light Rail has \$600 million worth of mismanagement and blowouts; the Learning Management and Business Reform had a cost blowout of \$269 million; and even the Albert "Tibby" Cotter Bridge had a blowout of \$28 million. That speaks volumes about a Government that simply cannot manage its finances appropriately. Running surpluses is always good, but I like balanced budgets. How can we possibly go to our communities—to our schools, nurses, doctors and everyone else we need to be funding with government revenue—and express pride in that enormous surplus? People in our communities must receive the support and

resources they need. It is a great source of frustration for many in our community, particularly our nurses and other health service workers who work incredibly hard.

Emergency waiting times in our hospitals, particularly at Campbelltown, continue to hover at around 40 per cent. Yes, we had one of the worst flu seasons in history, and I pay homage to our fantastic hospital staff and doctors and nurses. But their goodwill extends only so far; they need funding from the Government. The budget featured more than \$4 billion in funding for new schools and for capital upgrades for existing schools. Even if most of that \$4 billion was just old announcements recycled, every day we see the effects of a lack of funding—and they will be compounded by inaction. In the recent budget not one cent was allocated to addressing the maintenance backlog in the Campbelltown budget. It was a terrible disappointment for me and for many in our community.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Does that mean they need a better local member?

Mr GREG WARREN: I note the interjection of the member for Myall Lakes. I ask him to pay me the courtesy that we extend to Government members during their contributions to this debate. As we know, Campbelltown is one of the fastest-growing regions in the State, and yet the Government could not find a single dollar for it in the recent budget. Minister Stokes, who is in the Chamber, appears to be taking notes on these matters and I appreciate that. But, most importantly, I will be watching closely to see what happens. Regardless of whether promised upgrades to schools and hospitals were deceptions, a failure to invest in the infrastructure that we need in our growing region continues to concern many people.

I draw the attention of the House to other schools in my electorate, such as Airs High School, Ambarvale High School, Ambarvale Public School, Beverley Park School, Blairmount Public School, Bradbury Public School, Briar Road Public School, Campbelltown East Public School, Campbelltown North Public School and Campbelltown Performing Arts High School. Campbelltown Performing Arts High School is a wonderful school, but it must hold two assemblies because it cannot fit all its students in the hall at the same time. The hall is very outdated and too small. That would be a good place for the Government to start because it represents the broader problem.

These issues are not only restricted to schools; we are still waiting on other infrastructure. For example, we are still waiting for our 450-space car park at Campbelltown station. That car park is full. It used to be full by about 7.15 a.m. but it is now often full by 6.30 a.m. Of course, if people cannot park at the station they may stay in their cars and add to the congestion on our roads, which brings me to the M5 toll that was scheduled to cease in 2026 but is likely to be extended for a further 40 years. That adds insult to injury for many people in Macarthur, south-western Sydney and Campbelltown. Not one upgrade is due to occur on the M5 which ultimately will be incorporated as part of the WestConnex project and subsequent sell-off.

The Government and the Minister have said repeatedly that the cashback will continue. How can they give that guarantee when the majority share will be in private hands? They cannot. That is the fact of the matter. We only know about this because the Minister for WestConnex dropped a bomb during budget estimates. In light of the lack of transparency regarding this matter, it is no wonder that so many people in south-western Sydney, Campbelltown, Camden, Wollondilly, Macquarie Fields, Liverpool, Holsworthy and East Hills are outraged—and rightly so. Why should they pay for the Government's mismanagement of projects, particularly WestConnex—the cost of which, as I said before, has blown out by just under \$7 billion. Ultimately the people will pay for that. Had the Government not mismanaged the project so badly, perhaps the toll extension would not be necessary. As for Appin Road, the Federal Government promised \$50 million before the election but has provided very little. It allocated \$5 million for maintenance work, which is appreciated but which is nothing compared with the scale of—

Mr Mark Coure: Just say thank you.

Mr GREG WARREN: I note the entry of the member for Oatley into the Chamber and his interjection. I will not be thanking those opposite for their failures on Appin Road and other road projects. Motorists do not need to turn too many corners on too many streets in Macarthur before they are sitting for hours on congested roads. Narellan Road has received numerous upgrades. Yes, upgrades are great but they also display the short-sightedness of a government that has no vision and that fails to take a holistic approach to regional roads. The south of Spring Farm Parkway needs attention, with a connection from Menangle Road to Appin Road. That will provide a strong link to the F5 that will benefit the developing southern areas of Campbelltown—as well as the people of Camden when Liz Kernohan Drive is extended. That is not in my electorate but I do not believe in having blinkers on when it comes to road infrastructure and planning. We need to look at infrastructure holistically and find regional solutions for regional problems. As we have seen, issues that are left unresolved only overflow onto other parts of our electorates.

To the north, we will soon see the opening of Gregory Hills Drive and Badgally Road. That will open up the pipeline to the northern developing areas, which will lead to an enormous increase in traffic and congestion along Eagle Vale Drive. That road has been upgraded but motorists cannot travel to the end of Eagle Vale Drive onto Raby Road—which, if action is not taken soon, will be the next Narellan Road. My point is that, while the upgrades on Narellan Road are good and welcome, they have taken an enormous amount of time. The Great Wall of China was probably built quicker than that road. I note that works are finally coming to an end so we need to revisit the provision of road infrastructure, with a focus to the north and the south.

Debate interrupted.

Bills

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (AMALGAMATION REFERENDUMS) BILL 2017

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 1 August.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (10:44): I speak against the Local Government Amendment (Amalgamation Referendums) Bill 2017, which was introduced by the member for Orange. The bill is ill conceived, poorly drafted, politically opportunistic and just plain dumb. The member for Orange—that Labor Party sycophant—introduced the bill. His second reading speech is interesting. The member for Orange said the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party has been in lock step with the Opposition—lock step with the Labor Party. No truer words have ever been spoken: The Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party is in lock step with Labor. Over the past 12 months we have watched the member for Orange getting advice from the Labor Party and talking with Labor members. When a Labor member is supposed to move a motion it is pulled—

Mr Philip Donato: Point of order: The remarks of the member for Myall Lakes are not relevant to the bill before the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The member for Myall Lakes is quoting statements made by the member for Orange.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: If members check *Hansard* they will see it. The member for Orange said that his party was in "lock step"—shoulder to shoulder—with the Labor Party. In the past 12 months we have seen evidence of that day in and day out. But it is far worse than that. When we look at the hunters, shooters, slaughterers and more guns in the community party—

Mr Philip Donato: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 75. The member for Myall Lakes should refer to our party by its correct title. No party is registered in New South Wales such as that referred to by the member for Myall Lakes.

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

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: The member is very touchy. His party came third in the Cootamundra by-election, and the Shooters hated it when people highlighted the fact that it is the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party. Next we will hear that they have changed their name to the fabric makers, candlestick makers and hairdressers—whatever suits them—because they are about nothing but political opportunism. There is nothing more sinister than the fact that the party has hired a former staffer of Eddie Obeid as a strategist; the stench of corruption is all over the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party.

Mr Philip Donato: Point of order: How are the comments of the member for Myall Lakes relevant to the leave of the bill?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I uphold the point of order. The member for Myall Lakes will return to the leave of the bill.

Mr Philip Donato: We had no dealings with Eddie Obeid.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: I acknowledge the interjection that the Shooters had no dealings with Eddie Obeid. I am speaking about the strategist—the brains behind Eddie Obeid and the Labor Party, and the 16 years of corruption. Those shameful 16 years are now ending with the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party. That is significant, and it is an absolute disgrace.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Myall Lakes will return to the leave of the bill.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: The bill refers to wasting ratepayers' money by holding plebiscites that will cost more than \$1 million per council. The merged councils are getting on with the job. For example, in my electorate the community are very pleased with the performance of the new MidCoast Council, which is the

product of a complex merger of three councils. The council received through the merger \$20 million, \$1 million for community projects and \$14 million for roads and bridges. The biggest issue for the council was roads and bridges. If it were not for the amalgamation, the council would not have received that \$20 million. We should remember that in the course of 100 years council mergers have taken place from time to time but never before in the history of New South Wales has a merged council received a dollar of assistance from the Government. Indeed, Labor—the party that the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party is in lock step with; stands shoulder to shoulder with—merged Clarence council by facsimile, without consultation or support.

In contrast, in 2012 all general managers and mayors attended a summit in Dubbo at which it was agreed that changes were necessary, that the present situation could not continue, and that councils had to be fit for the future and provide the necessary services and infrastructure, which could not happen under the present structure. It was agreed that a review was necessary and that boundaries should be part of the review. Community consultation was undertaken across the State—something that had not happened with previous amalgamations in the past 100 years. MidCoast Council is very happy with the way things are going. The council has received \$20 million through the merger, with another more than \$4 million a year through savings, amounting to \$16 million over four years. So this \$16 million added to the \$14 million from the State equates to an amazing \$30 million roads and bridges package.

Together with the special variation, the council was able to borrow \$50 million from the State Government through a special low-interest loan from TCorp. The special rate variation will pay down that loan. I call on the Government to match that \$50 million dollar for dollar to provide a roads and bridges package of \$130 million, which is unheard of. That is the sort of support that merged councils can receive, and I am fighting for it. The council is undertaking community consultation and receiving great feedback on its performance. I make an interesting observation. In the weeks leading up to the by-elections in the electorates of Cootamundra and Murray, when it is important for all members to be present in the Parliament to do their duty for the good governance of this State, where were Bob Borsak and Bob Brown? Were they in the Legislative Council doing their duty? No, they were in the electorates of Cootamundra and Murray doing their sleazy politicking rather than doing what they were elected to do. It is an absolute disgrace. It is interesting that the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party, which is in lock step with the Labor Party, is holding a regional conference. Is it holding the conference in Broken Hill, Moree or Orange? No.

Mr Philip Donato: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. How are the comments of the member for Myall Lakes relevant to the bill?

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): Order! I have listened closely to the member for Myall Lakes. He remains relevant to the bill as he is talking about local government.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: So where are they holding the conference? They are holding it at Castle Hill. That is a party for the regions! That is one for the farmers!

Mr Stephen Kamper: There are a lot of fishermen around there.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: That is right. Returning to my electorate and MidCoast Council, before there was any talk of a merger the expected rate rise from Greater Taree City Council was 48.8 per cent but after the merger the rate rise will be only 20 per cent. That is a significant saving as a result of the merger. Gloucester council applied for a rate rise of almost 40 per cent, but after the merger and the special rate variation it is only 20 per cent. That is a fantastic saving for ratepayers. I went on an electorate tour to the little town of Burrell Creek and was told that for the first time that they had not only a grader grading the road but also a roller. When I went to the top pub at Wingham to do some polling the blokes sitting at a table up the back started cheering. When I asked them what they were cheering about, they said, "You merged the council and we're getting our roads done. How good is that?" That is what the people are saying. They are cheering. If those opposite, who are in lock step with each other, did not go around scaring communities— [*Extension of time*]

The bill proposes a de-merger to undo all the good things that are happening. There would be riots in the streets of my electorate if that were to happen. My constituents are seeing tangible benefits flowing from the merger. The money would not be available if it were not for the merger. The savings on rates would not be there but for the merger. The merger has been a great thing. What else does the bill propose?

Mr Philip Donato: Haven't you read it yet?

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: I have read it over and over again. It is interesting to hear the unprofessional member for Orange speak. Just the other day he had the hide to say that he had spoken to the Deputy Commissioner Regional NSW—

Mr Philip Donato: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 76. I gave an explanation of what happened. The member for Myall Lakes is misquoting what was said. I ask that he retract that statement.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): Order! I invite the member for Myall Lakes to retract the statement. He will return to the leave of the bill.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: I will return to the leave of the bill. In a speech about 24/7 nurses the member for Orange said that I had spoken in support of the proposal when talking to the association. I spoke to the association, the manager and the president—

Mr Philip Donato: Point of order: Mr Temporary Speaker—

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): Order! The member for Myall Lakes will resume his seat.

Mr Philip Donato: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 76. This is not relevant to the bill.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): Order! The member for Myall Lakes will return to the leave of the bill.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: I certainly will. The bill was brought to this place by the member for Orange. I am speaking about his credibility and what weight should be given to anything he says in this Chamber. His claim was a complete falsehood—a complete lie—and a misrepresentation. He lied about what the deputy commissioner had said—

Mr Philip Donato: Point of order—

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): Order! I direct the Clerk to stop the clock.

Mr Philip Donato: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 76. How is this relevant to the bill?

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): The member for Myall Lakes will return to the leave of the bill.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: I am not cavilling at your ruling, Mr Temporary Speaker. The member for Orange introduced the bill, he has spoken on it and I am testing whether anyone should believe what he says in light of some of the statements he has made. I suggest that people not believe what he says because he has misled the House on two prior instances.

Mr Greg Warren: Point of order: Mr Temporary Speaker, you have directed the member to return to the leave of the bill on a number of occasions. I am of the view that the member is treating you and the House with contempt. If the member for Myall Lakes does not return to the leave of the bill we will have no choice but to move that he be not further heard.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): Order! The member for Myall Lakes will return to the leave of the bill. He has been asked to do so several times.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: The member for Orange would seek to have phenomenal costs imposed on poor, unsuspecting ratepayers by holding a plebiscite. Once again, we talk about Labor and the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party being in lock step, shoulder to shoulder—they are the words of the member for Orange—and we know who is running the protection racket for the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party today. It is Labor. That is another example of Labor jumping up to protect the member for Orange. The Labor Party is saying every seat that is not held by a Coalition member is a seat for Labor. I say to people in regional New South Wales: A vote for the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party is a vote for Labor—a wasted vote. They have been in the Parliament of New South Wales with a view of rolling back the fantastic national gun laws that have been in existence for 21 years, and they have not achieved their one reason for being here.

Mr Philip Donato: Point of order: My point of order is Standing Order 76, relevance. How is this relevant? The member has been advised ad nauseam by the Chair, yet he continues to disregard the rulings.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): I have been listening to the member for Myall Lakes. In this instance, there is no point of order.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: I will finish by saying it is a misconceived, poorly drafted, time-wasting bill from a dumb party. [*Time expired.*]

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (11:00): I contribute to debate on the Local Government Amendment (Amalgamation Referendums) Bill 2017 in my capacity as chair of the Local Government Caucus Committee. I note the representations made by my friend and shadow Minister the Hon. Peter Primrose in the other place. I have travelled with the member to regional New South Wales talking to local mayors, chambers of commerce and, most importantly, members of communities who are somewhat perplexed and angry about the forced amalgamations. We welcome the bill, which will amend the Local Government Act to provide:

- (a) plebiscites are to be conducted to ascertain whether the electors of the local government areas amalgamated during 2016 wish the amalgamations to be reversed, and
- (b) certain proposed amalgamations of local government areas are not to proceed unless approval to the amalgamation has been given by the electors of each of the areas concerned at a referendum.

Although the Government has effectively abandoned pursuing these 14 council mergers, there has been a lack of certainty for many communities. I will refer to some comments made by the member for Myall Lakes during his contribution to the debate, particularly in relation to the transition funding provided by the Government. The new mayor at Young, Councillor Ingram, noted accurately that metropolitan councils received \$10 million for transition costs, whereas the area of Cootamundra and Young, where three councils covering more than 7,000 square kilometres were forcibly merged, is receiving only \$5 million. In the mayor's words, "That is not right". The community there is now \$2.3 million out of pocket. That is a lot of money by any standard, but it is an enormous amount of money in regional New South Wales particularly given the road network and unique nature of asset backlogs of rural councils.

The Labor Opposition is not anti amalgamation; it is anti forced amalgamations. It is forced amalgamations that have outraged so many communities, and rightly so. The Hon. Peter Primrose and I visited Cabonne during our regional tour. This small but strong community is fed up with The Nationals. The swings against The Nationals of 40 to 60 per cent in Molong, Canowindra, Cummock and Manildra made that crystal clear. The other day I asked the Deputy Premier in the House whether he would consider providing the communities around Gundagai and in the areas of the recent by-election with the opportunity to have a plebiscite to de-merge.

The answer given by the Deputy Premier was totally unrelated to the question. I took two points of order during the Deputy Premier's contribution. My question remained unanswered. What that says to me and to regional New South Wales is that The Nationals have learnt nothing. The contempt that The Nationals have for the bush continues. Their lack of concern and consideration for good hardworking regional people is obvious. I was born and raised in the Central West of New South Wales. I know the good nature of these people, but they will not be taken for granted. I point to the member for Orange as evidence of that. The Nationals must focus on the needs of the communities they represent.

Government members speak of the Labor Government in a petulant and cheap manner. What they talk about is well before my time, of course. But there is one difference between Labor and those on the other side, and that is that we listened and we learnt our lesson. It was a hard pill to swallow. We got thrown out of government, and that is precisely what will happen to this Government. It has learnt nothing. The level of ignorance shown by the Government, particularly The Nationals in the regions, is sending shock waves through the regions. We are seeing swings away from The Nationals such that the electorates of Cootamundra and Murray, which were previously The Nationals heartland, are now marginal seats.

Mr Mark Coure: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. The member is not talking to the bill in any way, shape or form. The member is talking about swings and roundabouts. I ask that the member return to the leave of the bill.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): I have been listening intently to the member for Campbelltown. The member will return to the leave of the bill.

Mr GREG WARREN: Cabonne shire is not the only merger that the Government is hell-bent on ramming through. The same situation has occurred in Dungog, Conargo, Corowa, Cootamundra, Boorowa, Gloucester, Murray, Jerilderie, Palerang, Bombala, Tumbarumba, Dubbo city, Wellington, Bathurst regional and Oberon. At the end of the day, these were Liberal Party policies that were put in place in the regions by The Nationals, with devastating effect. Country people are good people. They work hard and do not ask for much, but they do expect and deserve to be treated with regard. That has not happened during this process. The Government's backflip on its promise of no forced mergers has had a devastating effect throughout regional New South Wales. The Hon. Peter Primrose, in his contribution in the other place, stated:

If the Government cannot convince a majority of the local residents that it has a good argument to merge or de-merge, then it should not happen. What is very clear is that for all their talk about wanting less government, what the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals really mean when they say that is that they want to privatise assets and services ...

That encapsulates the feeling of frustration regarding forced amalgamations. The Hon. Peter Primrose stated further: The whole dog's breakfast that has been the fiasco of forced council mergers in this State has shown that the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals are happy for people to be passive customers, but not citizens in control of their own communities.

He could not have put it any better way. It sums up the feelings of the community throughout regional New South Wales. We are yet to see the KPMG report that the Government used to substantiate its decision in relation to council mergers. If the report is relevant and adds validity to the Government's decision it should be released. The \$400,000 report is not in the hands of the public. I urge the members opposite to consider making representations to the communities that have been financially affected by the dog's breakfast of forced mergers.

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) (11:10): The Local Government Amendment (Amalgamation Referendums) Bill 2017 does three things. It creates a new process for council amalgamations; it creates a new process for boundary adjustments; and it deals with current areas of dissatisfaction by plebiscite or referendum. I will deal with those three items in order. The new process for amalgamations under schedule 1 division 2B reveals a couple of problems. The bill establishes a process that can be initiated by a small number of electors. This is unusual and a costly process. I will say more about that in a moment.

Next, the Minister may not recommend council amalgamations unless approved by a referendum but the Minister can, for whatever reason, decline to recommend to the Governor that an amalgamation proceed. Even if a referendum of electors has voted in favour of the merger, this will kill it. Is the referendum binding as stated in section 218I (4), or is it not as stated in section 218G (2)? The latter section establishes a new process for boundary adjustments under schedule 1 division 2C. Again, we are presented with a process that seems to offer hope to small communities but that may in fact entrap them. A small number of electors in a small electorate can call for an amalgamation, particularly as part of an area or boundary change starting the process. This can be abused.

For example, town dwellers might want an outcome different to that wanted by farmers and those in outlying areas. Significant costs could be incurred by those pursuing personal vendettas, feuds or localised issues and ratepayers will be left to pick up the bill. An amalgamation or boundary adjustment process can be commenced by a council affected by the proposal. What if a council affected is not a member's council but an adjoining council? What if a neighbouring council wants to join a council so that it can take resources away? If a neighbouring council has more enrolled votes than a member's council area, democracy will prevail against that council and it will lose. That is the process established by the bill.

What we are looking at is new in local government. It is the creation of a mechanism for, let us call them, pirate raiders of the local government area. One council can eye off the resources of another smaller council and contemplate a raid. That might not be the intention of those putting forward this bill, but a new pirate strategy is woven into the fabric of the bill. Next, the Minister can overrule a council and force a boundary adjustment on an unwilling council without a referendum of the people but provided a minimum number of electors has first approached the Minister for a boundary change under section 218L (3). In other words, boundary adjustments can still be used to effect a practical change of councils in council areas, as has happened in the past. Is it a step forward or a step back?

I have cause to wonder whether the bill is genuine about making progress. Australians have a history of voting "no" in referenda, so this is not a good start for anyone who is serious about reform. The bill is establishing a referendum as a mandatory element for the restructuring of the mechanism for delivery of basic services such as waste, planning, roads, et cetera. This locks residents into a one-size-fits-all procedure for managing what ultimately becomes service delivery. Every time someone is unhappy, forces will be pushing for another referendum, and small councils, in particular, will be stuck in stasis for months while local politics and the grudge matches of the local government play out.

The third section for discussion is titled, "Current areas of satisfaction—Schedule 10". This provides the referendum process for six amalgamations in Sydney. It also provides a plebiscite process for other contested amalgamations, including those in the Albury electorate. My interest is in the plebiscite process for Tumbarumba. A proposed plebiscite must be held within one month of the commencement of the schedule. At the earliest this would have fallen at the time of the recent election but most likely after the election. If the Shooters were serious, this bill should have been brought on months ago. It smacks of a self-defeating political stunt by the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party that was never intended to succeed in substance but only to trick desperate shire residents into thinking that the party cares for them. Under clause 1 of schedule 10, the bill states:

- (5) It is the duty of the Minister to use his or her best endeavours to give effect to the wishes of the majority of the electors in each former area ...

Therefore, the plebiscite is not binding. There is no time frame for action and no flexibility to consider any relevant matters other than the pure voting numbers. This is a trifecta of trouble. What can be made binding? A Federal

referendum changes the Australian Constitution. A Federal plebiscite is not binding. Anthony Green makes this comment about the States:

Confusingly, all States hold votes that they call referendums but by the national definition are actually plebiscites.

In other words, a State referendum is not binding on the State Government, despite the bill stating to the contrary under section 218I (4). This bill is establishing plebiscites, not referenda, and neither is binding. That is confusing. There will be High Court litigation on this one. Anthony Green added what we all know:

There is much scope for using the words of a referendum or plebiscite to tilt the result one way or the other.

There is room for introducing confusional influence. I note that this bill does not specify the words "for a referendum or plebiscite". It should have included those words for certainty. Let us compare the question "Do we want a return to Tumbarumba Shire Council?" with the statement "I support a termination of the current status with an associated dismantling of current jobs and structures affecting this local government area." The position and mood in the former Tumbarumba shire is not good. Demands and threats which continue to emanate from those described as Tumbarumba's community leaders demean the issues and genuine community grief. The amalgamation of Tumbarumba Shire Council with Tumut Shire Council is not a game.

My position from the start is that I opposed amalgamation for Tumbarumba. I called the decision a shock. It placed the Government's program in a poor light with diminished respectability. I was a regular presence and speaker at community meetings and inquiry sessions and I never shirked a public stoning. Members might remember that Tumbarumba went through the Fit For Future process with flying colours. It was the fittest of the fit. It was put through a forced merger at the request of its much larger neighbour. That is how bad the process has played out for Tumbarumba.

My record on securing funding and support for Tumbarumba's major infrastructure renewal projects is beyond reproach. It includes rebuilding and upgrading the broken Mannus Dam, the new multipurpose health service, the new sewage treatment plant and improved environmental protection for the river system. I treat seriously the job of getting the best for Tumbarumba residents and businesses. History shows I have always done so, with many wins and the occasional loss. I consider the amalgamation as a loss but I have never given up on the people of Tumbarumba and its surrounding areas.

The opportunity to hold warded council elections in September was not made available. This could have happened at the consultation stage. Repeatedly I have requested that issues of democracy must be built into the merger process. Warding at the first election would have been an important part of the process and would have garnered support. As it turned out, 10 candidates stood for nine positions and two Tumbarumba-based councillors were elected. There is talk of a possibility of a plebiscite following the election so Tumut and Tumbarumba can decide to de-merge. Realistically, Tumbarumba has terrific resources. It is a desirable merger partner and is one-third of the population of Tumut with some 3,500 residents. Democracy will take its course unless Tumut-based councillors are of the same mind.

I am pleased to say that the Premier agreed recently to my request for a meeting with former councillors of Tumbarumba shire and a representative of the Save Our Shire group. This took place and, again, we had practical discussions to find a way forward for this unpopular merger. I am hopeful that new paths can be opened. Unfortunately, the Local Government Amendment (Amalgamations Referendums) Bill 2017 offers no hope and is in fact a hoax. The bill is poorly drafted and is in a hurry to be seen to do one thing which can be broadly labelled as democratic when, in harsh reality, it is a stuff-up. The people of Tumbarumba and other regional centres struggling with mergers deserve more. Ultimately, what the bill fails to do is offer hope of a better and more prosperous future for all who live or base their businesses in small regional communities.

Unlike the situation in my electorate where a Labor government pushed through a forced merger involving three shires with no financial compensation or grants, this Government is putting up much-needed funding. As I move around the electorate I am aware of wonderful projects underway, using these funds. This is where the New South Wales Government shifts away from the political machinations of Labor and the Shooters. We have managed the State's economy so that there is money for regional infrastructure—at long last.

There is unrest over the Tumbarumba council merger, it is true. The Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party has picked up on this disquiet but has squandered the potential goodwill in favour of playing pure politics. I do not support this kind of policy pointlessness being played with the people of my electorate of Albury. I do not support a lazy, insubstantial piece of drafting which opens more gaps than it claims to fill—a theme park of hazards to mire any small council area. When the good people of Tumbarumba read this bill and my reply, they will know that distant interests have played on their genuine concerns in the hopes of scoring personal political gain in Sydney, not in the valleys of the Great Dividing Range. I do not support this bill.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (11:20): The Opposition supports this bill because it encapsulates a promise made by the Leader of the Opposition more than six or nine months ago to restore democracy and choice to councils throughout New South Wales. This bill restores the promise made by the Liberal Party and The Nationals prior to the election in March 2011. In writing, the Leader of the Liberal Party and the Leader of The Nationals promised that there would be no forced amalgamations. If the Government wants to know why the member for Orange is sitting in this House and why it nearly lost its two safe seats of Murray and Cootamundra, it is because it broke its word to the people of New South Wales.

The people of New South Wales will not cop dishonest politics. The Government has been caught with its pants well and truly down. As members of the Government who stood at the polling booths in Cootamundra and Murray know full well, The Nationals are bleeding to death over council amalgamations. In the old days, members of The Nationals would not have copped it from the Liberal Party; they would have stood firm for the people in rural New South Wales. The Nationals is no longer the party of Doug Anthony or Ian Sinclair. It is a shadow of its former self and people throughout rural and regional New South Wales know it. The Government's amalgamation proposal has been a political disaster and a breach of faith with the people of New South Wales. The only shining light from it is my message to the member for Oatley that Kevin Green and Bill Saravinovski may attack him sincerely for the personal boundaries he has drawn up for Georges River and Bayside Council.

This bill restores democracy to local government areas and gives them choice. The administrator of Bayside council has reported that the merger between the City of Botany Bay and the City of Rockdale has cost \$18 million. To those economic zealots who have no brains and no substance and who have tried to assert to the people of New South Wales that there would be cost savings as a result of mergers, their dishonesty has been demonstrated in their own KPMG report.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (11:23): Government members should be embarrassed because the people always get it right. The people got it right last September, they got it right last week and they got it right at the council election a few months ago.

Mr Mark Coure: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. The member for Canterbury is not addressing the bill.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): The member for Canterbury will return to the leave of the bill.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: I will. I acknowledge our shadow Minister the Hon. Peter Primrose, who has done a fantastic job in holding the Government to account. He has certainly shown the Government up. The member for Oatley should be embarrassed because he was the architect of two failed gerrymandered council mergers in our community, in Georges River and Bayside councils. The people got it right. If the people had the opportunity to vote in a referendum they would have voted no. As the former shadow Minister for Local Government between 2011 and 2015 said, this was designed by the O'Farrell and Baird leaderships.

In 2012, Mike Baird, as the then Treasurer of New South Wales, commissioned the TCorp report. He wanted to see the balances of all local councils and their borrowing capacity. The Government wanted to merge the councils, as it did, so that it could take a lot more in levies from the mega councils and use them as credit cards. The merged mega councils would be able to use their borrowing capacity to obtain funds to build the O'Farrell-Baird-Berejiklian so-called infrastructure. That has all backfired, as we have seen in the results from last year's council elections and this year's council elections. Six days ago we saw swings against The Nationals of 50 to 60 per cent. How embarrassing for The Nationals that they got only a 10 per cent primary vote in Gundagai. I would be worried if I were them.

Labor learned from our mistakes. We went to the 2011 election with a commitment of no forced mergers, and at the 2015 election we made the same commitment that there would be forced mergers and we would let the people decide. The local government Minister at the time, Paul Toole, and Mr Baird were asked by Alan Jones and community leaders what their commitment was. They would not give a commitment against mergers, and now we have a dog's breakfast of mergers.

Mr Mark Coure: No, we don't.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: Yes, you do.

Mr Mark Coure: Georges River is working fine.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: Yes, you do. As the member for Heffron said, this is an important bill. The member for Heffron was formerly a fantastic mayor who did great work.

Mr John Sidoti: You never had opposition.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: Because you guys didn't have the guts to stand up. You were gutless.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): Order! The member for Oatley and the member for Drummoyne will come to order.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: I acknowledge the member for Orange for introducing this important bill. Local communities overwhelmingly voted for Labor candidates in the recent council elections to fight against local council mergers. This Government has wasted ratepayers' money as well as taxpayers' money by making a shambles of local planning, as these amalgamations were just a line on the map to gerrymander their preselection votes. There are very few Liberal members on the Northern Beaches council or in Strathfield, Burwood or Canada Bay. Look at those results.

Mr John Sidoti: Labor voluntarily amalgamated in 2000.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: The Government is supposed to be delivering for its communities but the Liberal-Nationals parties went backwards.

Mr John Sidoti: Point of order—

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: They do not like the truth.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): The member for Canterbury will resume her seat.

Mr John Sidoti: The member for Canterbury is misleading the House. In 2000, Concord and Drummoyne councils amalgamated under the Labor Party, against the wishes of the people. You're a hypocrite.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): The member for Drummoyne will resume his seat. I call the member for Drummoyne to order for the first time. The member for Canterbury will return to the leave of the bill.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: In 2014, at a CPA Australia breakfast in Sydney, Minister Constance said, "Local government's terrible. This city should have five councils at best." That is out-of-touch arrogance, and it is the hallmark of how this Government announces and delivers policy. Disapproval with this Government's \$445 million council mergers policy was evident by the large number of protest votes against the Government at last Saturday's by-elections.

Mr Mark Coure: So you didn't want Canterbury to amalgamate?

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: No.

Mr Mark Coure: So you supported those people, did you?

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: Hang on a minute. I will get to that.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! Members will observe Standing Order 52 or they will be removed from the Chamber.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: In Cootamundra there were swings of up to 41 per cent against The Nationals at some booths. With swings against them in Murray and the historic loss in Orange last year, this Government should be listening to voters. It should be listening not only to our city communities but also to rural and regional communities. Professor Graham Samson produced a report when Don Page was the Minister for Local Government. That report contained some good recommendations including recommendations about investing in rural and regional New South Wales, governance, deficiencies and regional councils working together. This Government took the lazy option by merging councils and that has caused a lot of angst in local communities. I have been a strong advocate against forced council amalgamations. As I said, we took a policy of no forced amalgamations to the last election. This Government must listen to the people and allow a referendum.

Rural and regional councils are very different from Sydney councils. My travels across rural and regional New South Wales—whether in Condobolin or the mid North Coast—have reinforced how important those councils are. They are the local government of the people—they represent them. It is a shame that the Government forced these councils to merge, rather than invest in them. What did Tony Abbott do in the 2014 Federal budget? He froze the indexation of the financial assistance grants, and we have gone backwards in infrastructure development. This has affected the growth and productivity of rural and regional communities. When I was in Coffs Harbour not one of those members opposite came to support our campaign against Tony Abbott, who ripped the guts out of funding some of the smaller and most important communities in our State. I continue to oppose the forced merger of my council—

Mr John Sidoti: What have you done about it?

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: I have been out there rallying with the community. We will continue to fight this. It is affecting the community in my electorate. We want upgrades to our ovals and investment in our local communities. My electorate has a very large multicultural community. We need investment to build our capacity. I do not support the forged merger and we will continue to fight hard against it. The document I am holding shows the reviews that this Government conducted in 2011 with taxpayers' money. It shows a multitude of reviews—a dog's breakfast. Members opposite should be embarrassed and ashamed.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (11:32): I will be brief in my contribution to debate on the Local Government Amendment (Amalgamations Referendums) Bill 2017 because it is my understanding that members want to vote on this bill today. On behalf of The Greens I put on record our very strong support for this legislation. If there are merits about amalgamation, the proponents of amalgamation should be able to persuade the community. If they can persuade the community, the community will vote for it in a referendum that will be binding upon the Government. It is well known that forced amalgamations were an own goal for this Government. I thank everyone from the Save our Councils Coalition and all those groups that have worked so hard on this issue.

I also note that The Greens in the upper House successfully moved an amendment to this legislation to ensure that neither this nor any future government can amalgamate councils without first holding a referendum. That is critical. In my electorate the former Labor Government tried to gerrymander the City Of Sydney by moving Glebe from Leichhardt Council to the City of Sydney. Glebe then started voting for Clover Moore; it did not work. It demonstrates that manipulating political benefit for ideological reasons does not work. We need to listen to our communities. They should decide who governs them. A referendum should be the benchmark for determining whether or not these councils are amalgamated. I support the legislation. I will soon conclude my remarks so the legislation can be voted on.

I draw the attention of members to the comments of The Greens in the other place, in particular that when residents were surveyed about amalgamations huge majorities opposed them. The figures were Guyra, 85 per cent; Leichhardt, 61 per cent; Marrickville, 72 per cent; Pittwater, 58 per cent; Gloucester, 81 per cent; Gundagai, 76 per cent; and Canterbury, 60 per cent. It is clear that people support standalone councils. If the merits are there, persuade the community. When the Government tries to gerrymander or push people in a direction that they do not support the pushback is apparent. The Government suffered as a result of that in the recent by-elections. Hopefully, that is a lesson for all governments and all parties. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (11:34): In reply: I thank all members of the Save Our Councils Coalition in the gallery today, as well as those who have been present over the several days this bill has been debated and those who are watching the webcast, for their continued advocacy and support for this important issue. I thank the Minister for Local Government and members representing the electorates of Myall Lakes, Albury, Maitland, Granville, Campbelltown, Heffron, Canterbury and Balmain for their contributions to this debate. The Minister used a filibuster to delay debate and defer a vote on this bill for as long as possible. I will address a number of the matters she raised during her cumulative 70-minute speech. In doing so, I note the time constraints to get this bill voted on today. The Minister said, "The bill is a roadblock to all future merger proposals." The Minister and the Government have clearly outlined that they have not ruled out future forced council mergers. That is very important. The people of New South Wales should remember that when they cast their vote in March 2019. It would appear that this policy has not been put to bed.

The Minister also referred to me as a hypocrite. People in glass houses should not throw stones. On 11 October 2015 the Minister addressed a rally on the forced merger of Woollahra council. At that rally she said, "L.O.C.A.L. I believe in local interest and local community. My position is that Woollahra council should not be merged. I want to lodge a petition in Parliament..." Was a petition ever lodged? Was this just another lie to her community? The Minister raised ad nauseam the costs pertaining to running a plebiscite. Firstly, no cost can be placed on democracy. Secondly, so far the Government has spent well over half a billion dollars on these amalgamations. Plebiscites would cost a mere fraction of that. Indeed, the amalgamated councils were predicted to deliver surpluses but have so far generally produced deficits.

The Minister spoke about returning funding that has already been delivered. The bill contains no reference to that. That is a blatant and misleading smear by the Minister. Forced mergers have been shown to be hugely unpopular amongst affected communities, especially in regional New South Wales. Last year there were huge swings against the Government in the Orange by-election, particularly around Cabonne and Molong. Since then we have continued to see that replicated at other by-elections, as well as in the recently conducted local council elections. In the recent Cootamundra and Murray by-elections there were significant swings of about 20 per cent against the Government.

The results at the Gundagai booths, where the Government averaged just over 10 per cent of the primary vote, with more than 1,000 votes casts in that area, should be a warning to Government members. They should be very worried. The Government has now chosen not to proceed on some selected mergers. It is time for members

to support this bill and give the people affected by the Government's decisions the opportunity to vote on this issue—to vote on their community, their independence, their representation and to remain local. I commend the bill to the House.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

The House divided.

Ayes37

Noes47

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)
McDermott, Dr H
Mihailuk, Ms T
Piper, Mr G
Tesch, Ms L
Zangari, Mr G

Atalla, Mr E (teller)
Catley, Ms Y
Crakanthorp, Mr T
Donato, Mr P
Foley, Mr L
Harrison, Ms J
Hornery, Ms S
Leong, Ms J
McKay, Ms J
Park, Mr R
Scully, Mr P
Warren, Mr G

Barr, Mr C
Chanthivong, Mr A
Daley, Mr M
Doyle, Ms T
Greenwich, Mr A
Haylen, Ms J
Kamper, Mr S
Lynch, Mr P
Mehan, Mr D
Parker, Mr J
Smith, Ms T F
Washington, Ms K

NOES

Anderson, Mr K
Berejiklian, Ms G
Conolly, Mr K
Crouch, Mr A
Elliott, Mr D
Gibbons, Ms M
Gulaptis, Mr C
Humphries, Mr K
Lee, Dr G
Notley-Smith, Mr B
Pavey, Mrs M
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
Johnsen, Mr M
Maguire, Mr D
O'Dea, Mr J
Perrottet, Mr D
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
George, Mr T
Griffin, Mr J
Henskens, Mr A
Kean, Mr M
Marshall, Mr A
Patterson, Mr C (teller)
Petinos, Ms E
Rowell, Mr J
Stokes, Mr R
Tudehope, Mr D
Williams, Mr R

PAIRS

Minns, Mr C
Watson, Ms A

Barilaro, Mr J
Grant, Mr T

Motion negatived.

Motions

LAKE MACQUARIE PALLIATIVE CARE SERVICES

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (11:46): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Government and the Minister for Health on the allocation of an additional \$100 million over the next four years for palliative care services in New South Wales.
- (2) Notes that outreach palliative care services in Lake Macquarie are not provided equitably with a demarcation line at the Fennell Bay Bridge, denying around-the-clock home palliative care to the people living south of the line.
- (3) Calls on the Government and Hunter New England Health to ensure that all people in the lower Hunter have equal access to this important end-of-life service.

This is an important topic and I am pleased to put this motion forward today. I thank the Government for allowing it to happen. The discussion concerning the end of life can be emotional because it touches on when those closest to us will leave us through death. We all want the best kind of passing for our loved ones and for ourselves. While we can personalise this matter through our experiences or imaginations, as legislators we need to apply what we would want for ourselves and our loved ones to all. Every member of our community deserves a respectful and dignified passing. That is most likely to happen when a person's wishes about how and where their death occurs can be fulfilled. I congratulate the Government on allocating an additional \$100 million to New South Wales palliative care services over the next four years.

This is a major step forward and a significant acknowledgement by the Government that palliative care matters. Most people in the Hunter region access palliative care services through the privately operated Calvary Mater Hospital at Waratah near Newcastle or John Hunter Hospital, which is managed by Hunter New England Health. Last year, I met with local representatives of the Cancer Council, who briefed me on their concerns about the future of 24/7 palliative care outreach services in the Hunter. In general terms, the outreach service provides on-call assistance, including phone calls and home visits to patients in the final stage of their lives who have returned home to spend their remaining days with family and friends. People using this service place a substantially lesser burden on our stretched hospital system than those who receive palliative care in hospital. These valuable outreach services provide terminally ill people with support that provides as gentle and as dignified a death as possible, and also gives support to loved ones in this often difficult time.

However, a concerning deficiency in the current system needs to be addressed. The current 24/7 outreach service operated by Calvary Mater in Newcastle does not serve more than half of my electorate because a boundary is drawn at Macquarie Road in Fennell Bay. People living south of Fennell Bay, for example in the highly populated areas from Toronto through to Morisset, do not have access to the 24/7 service. Instead, they have access to a nine-to-five service operated by Hunter New England Health. I have no idea why someone in the health service would think that such a vital health support would only be needed between 9.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. on weekdays in some areas and 24 hours a day in others. I can only assume that it happens for budgetary reasons.

The final stage of life is generally a highly emotional and distressing time. That cannot be changed, but it becomes more stressful than it needs to be when good palliative care is not available. For example, without the outreach service which allows a qualified nurse to visit a patient's home that patient would need to be transported to the emergency department of their nearest hospital for treatment. That not only places an added burden on the ambulance service and hospital emergency departments but also reduces the patient's right to choose where and how they die.

In August this year the Auditor-General tabled an evaluation of palliative care services in New South Wales. The Auditor-General reported that 70 per cent of people would prefer to die at home but only 14 per cent manage to do so. These figures emphasise the looming cost to the Health budget from the growing aged population. Public health costs will always be significantly greater for in-hospital deaths as opposed to those that take place at home, particularly if the percentages do not change dramatically. The overall conclusion of the report was that the approach of NSW Health to planning and evaluating palliative care is not effectively coordinated. It further stated that there was no overall policy framework for palliative and end-of-life care, nor was there comprehensive monitoring and reporting on services and outcomes.

It is pleasing that NSW Health accepted all of the Auditor-General's recommendations in relation to this. We need to begin moving on those recommendations by reviewing current systems, developing an integrated palliative care and end-of-life care policy framework, and providing better, more equitable in-home palliative care services. More than 300 people access the 24/7 palliative care outreach service in the parts of the Hunter in which it operates. As this motion acknowledges, palliative care services provided by Hunter New England Health are good, but they are not provided equitably. Using the Lake Macquarie example, there is a demarcation line at Macquarie Road north of the Fennell Bay Bridge that denies the 24/7 service to those further south.

The Government and Hunter New England Health should ensure that all people in the lower Hunter—particularly those in the most populated areas such as south-west Lake Macquarie—have equal access to this important end-of-life service. In fact, Hunter New England Health should make it a priority to try to extend this extremely important service to all in its area of responsibility. We simply cannot have a health service that is delivered by postcode or determined by where people live. We simply cannot have a gold-class health service for

people on one side of the street and a budget version for those on the other side. The 24/7 palliative care outreach services must be extended to the main population centres of the Hunter New England Local Health District, and that includes all of the Lake Macquarie electorate.

I call on the Government to support my motion and to increase its efforts in this regard. I am not dismissing the significant costs associated with it—I genuinely appreciate them, as all members do. As groups such as the Cancer Council have emphasised, we acknowledge the Government's recent investment in this area.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (11:53): I congratulate the member for Lake Macquarie on bringing this important issue to the House for debate today and thank him for his advocacy on behalf of his electorate. As the member noted, the Government has taken on board the recommendations in the Auditor-General's report. But we acknowledge that there is more work to be done to ensure that people receive palliative care services when and where they need them, no matter their postcode. I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for enabling us to discuss this important subject.

The member for Lake Macquarie spoke of the work of the Cancer Council. Before I speak specifically about the Hunter New England Local Health District, I acknowledge the amazing work of the Cancer Council across this State. I know the council has representatives in all our electorates and that we all have the opportunity to work closely with them. We all support them. Their working alongside us as members of Parliament and alongside government and non-government organisations is really appreciated.

NSW Health and the Hunter New England Local Health District recognise the importance of palliative care, and I know the member for Lake Macquarie acknowledges the work they are doing. We are committed to ensuring that people with a life-limiting illness can access specialist palliative care services. The Westlakes Community Health Service palliative care nursing service works in collaboration with Calvary Mater Newcastle palliative care specialists. The Westlakes community has access to a 24-hour palliative care service no matter where people live. The service provides a 24-hour on-call service to deliver advice and support to patients. After hours this service is provided via telephone. Home visits are conducted during business hours.

The Hunter New England Local Health District works closely with a range of palliative care services available to those living in the Westlakes area. Palliative care can be provided in a range of settings and can involve doctors, nurses, allied health workers, volunteers, families and carers who work in networked teams to allow the best access to high-quality palliative care. These networks include primary care providers, including general practitioners, generalist community nurses and allied health workers, tertiary care providers, community support services and aged care services.

Palliative care is a priority for this Government. This year, the Government has opened a dialogue with stakeholders through a series of 10 palliative care roundtables held across New South Wales. As the Parliamentary Secretary for Regional and Rural Health, I was pleased to attend almost all of those roundtable sessions, particularly the ones in our regional and remote communities, where we know there are some challenges in delivering 24-hour palliative care support services. I acknowledge that the member for Lake Macquarie attended one of the roundtables that I did not attend. I know he was very much a part of the conversations there. We appreciate the input not only from members of the community and health professionals but also from members of Parliament; I know many members opposite attended roundtable sessions. We thank them for their contribution.

The roundtables were held in Lismore, Orange, Kempsey, Broken Hill, Tamworth, Newcastle, Griffith, Queanbeyan, Kiama and surrounding communities. We listened to what people had to say about which palliative care services were already working well on the ground, but we also wanted to hear about how we could enhance some of the services and make them better. That is because, as I said at the outset, we acknowledge that there is more work to do. We want to ensure that we facilitate that and focus on what local communities are particularly concerned about. The roundtable meetings provided an invaluable opportunity for the community to give direct feedback to the Government on this important issue. We have taken the feedback on board and we will shortly present a discussion paper so that people—particularly those who could not attend a roundtable—can have further input and engage with us about their thoughts on palliative care services in their local area.

We know that approximately 50,000 people die each year in New South Wales, and this number is expected to more than double over the next 30 years. With a growing ageing population and an increase in chronic illnesses, the need to provide quality palliative care and end-of-life care will only increase. The feedback obtained during the roundtables is invaluable and will help us to ensure that we set the Government on the right course to address future need. In July the New South Wales Government released reports on the discussions that took place at the roundtable meetings. The discussions were placed online so people could see what was raised in their local community. Those reports reflect the views shared by consumers, health representatives and academics during the roundtables. We thank those people who were able to provide us with their input. Three key priorities for future palliative care were universally shared during the discussions. They were: the need to improve access to

services, which was raised by the member for Lake Macquarie; linking a skilled workforce with integrated care and support; and ensuring that palliative care is more patient centred. I encourage everyone to read the roundtable reports, which we have made available online, to continue informed discussion and the creation of a statewide strategic direction for the delivery of palliative care services.

As the member acknowledged, the Government has already taken on board the issues that were raised. In this year's budget the Government committed a record \$100 million over the next four years specifically to provide more tailored, community-based palliative care services. That is exactly why we went to individual communities. We could have held only one round table in Sydney but it was important to hear what local communities needed in their particular areas. All this activity will build on initiatives introduced under the Government's earlier plan to increase access to palliative care during the period 2012-2016. Once again, I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for bringing this very important issue to the attention of the House today.

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (12:00): I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for moving this motion. Palliative care is very important to the member and to his community, just as it is to me, to my electorate of Port Stephens and to all Labor members who represent Hunter electorates. I am happy to join in calls for the Government to ensure that all people in the Lower Hunter—indeed, the entire Hunter—have access to palliative care services that support people in their most difficult days and their families. It makes sense morally and economically.

This issue has been building momentum in recent years because of the incredible community campaigners and activists who have been pushing for decades for fair and equitable palliative care services. I thank Dr Yvonne McMaster, one of Australia's first palliative care doctors, for her advocacy over many years. I also thank the Cancer Council for its campaign in support of palliative care. Yesterday I read a report from the ABC about the severe and continuing lack of palliative care workers within the Hunter New England Local Health District. Dr McMaster summarised the issue by saying:

The people who are dying can't speak, the people who are dead can't speak, the people who look after them are too busy and too stressed to speak up and the people who are employed to look after them are not allowed to speak up, because they are employed by the government.

This dire situation was illustrated and emphasised in the New South Wales Auditor-General's recent report into palliative care services across New South Wales. The Auditor-General said:

NSW Health has a limited understanding of the quantity and quality of palliative care services across the state, which reduces its ability to plan for future demand and the workforce needed to deliver it.

In my electorate the provision of palliative care services comes down to which towns people live in. If they live in Raymond Terrace, they have access to the outreach palliative care services offered by the Mater hospital in Newcastle. However, if they live anywhere else in Port Stephens then the stretched team at Port Stephens Palliative Care Service are their port of call. This means that the nurses who are based at Nelson Bay must travel through Raymond Terrace to the areas they cover. It makes no sense at all.

We also have palliative care beds at Tomaree Hospital, which is the only hospital in my electorate, but it employs no dedicated palliative care nurses. I am also of the understanding that additional palliative care services are delivered by the Silver Chain Community Palliative Care Service and by HammondCare in parts of the Central Coast and Lake Macquarie. I do not understand why families in my area do not have access to the same services. I also do not understand why my local, hardworking palliative care volunteers have to raise funds to purchase equipment that is necessary for the delivery of palliative care. Why are they purchasing portable hospital beds, pressure mattresses and oxygen concentrators? None of that is cheap; nor should it be their responsibility to fundraise for such critical equipment that is necessary to support these services.

The concerns raised by Dr McMaster regarding palliative care services within the Hunter New England Local Health District are very much evident in my community—and, I have no doubt, across the Hunter. They are ad hoc, unfair and inadequately resourced. This is some of the most important and meaningful work that anyone can do, and many families in my community have been supported by palliative carers' kindness over many years. I thank the hardworking nurses and volunteers at the Port Stephens Palliative Care Service. But the fact is their work needs to be supported by better planning on the part of the New South Wales Government to ensure that we have the palliative care nurses and the palliative care facilities we need.

The Government has committed more money to palliative care services over four years, and that is welcome. But we still do not know where those resources will be allocated or, indeed, if there are specialist staff available to take up positions, particularly in rural and regional New South Wales. Four of the nursing staff in my area are turning 70 this year. Succession planning has not been good. The Auditor-General's findings must be addressed. We must have an integrated and equitable model of palliative care because it should not depend on

where a person lives, the postcode or how much money a person has as to whether these important services can be accessed. .

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (12:04): I commend the member for Lake Macquarie for moving this motion. He has long been a strong advocate for palliative care. I also acknowledge the contribution of the member for Port Macquarie, the Parliamentary Secretary. Both the member for Lake Macquarie and the member for Port Macquarie have worked as nurses and continue to raise these important issues in this place. We all know the importance of palliative care in the community, and I support the Government's \$100 million record funding for palliative care across New South Wales. As the member for Lake Macquarie said, we need to make sure that this funding is accessible across the State in different parts of our community. The member for Port Macquarie spoke quite extensively about the Hunter New England Local Health District.

I am very supportive of our investment in palliative care because it gives people at the end of life's journey the peace, comfort and support they deserve. I have spoken in this place before about palliative care. In my community I have spent quite a bit of time with the Cancer Council, which does so much work in this space and was a strong advocate for the funding announcement that the New South Wales Government made earlier this year. It ran a campaign alongside the Northern Suburbs Cancer Action Network, which is chaired by Liz Hing, for Palliative Care Awareness Week with the theme "You matter, your care matters". Palliative care can make a difference. I acknowledge those advocates who have fought for so long for this funding and who have succeeded in achieving it.

The Government ran a number of palliative care round tables during the year—including nine round tables in regional areas and one at Parliament House in April—to work with primary care providers, including general practitioners, community nurses, allied health workers, tertiary care providers, community support services and aged-care services, to get it right. In my community of North Shore the Royal North Shore Hospital has a specialist palliative care team that provides a 24/7 consultation service to patients throughout the facility. Palliative care services are provided across the Northern Sydney Local Health District, including consultation services at the acute hospitals provided by a specialist palliative care team that is available 24/7; and ambulatory care services at three sites across the local health district, including Greenwich—which is the closest to my community—Neringah near Hornsby and Mona Vale.

Home-based palliative care services are provided by HammondCare and the Northern Sydney Home Nursing Service from 8.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. to support patients at the end of life, offering a support service to enable clients to remain in their own home. The hours of this service were recently extended to cover the weekend. Inpatient palliative care is provided by some outstanding professionals at Greenwich and Neringah hospitals. I have met with the team at Greenwich Hospital and understand the work they do and how important they are for our community. Recently the service received some enhancements, including the creation of a director of palliative care position to lead and improve the service provided. The local health district has been successful in securing funding for a clinical nurse consultant based at Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Hospital, and at Royal North Shore Hospital part-time clinical nurse consultant and full-time nurse practitioner roles are also being created.

We are developing a universal approach to palliative care across our facilities and the local health district is working with the primary health network to improve referral criteria. I congratulate both the member for Lake Macquarie on raising this matter and the Government on continuing to invest in palliative care for people when they need it the most.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (12:09): I support the motion moved by the member for Lake Macquarie. The motion was placed on the *Business Paper* at the beginning of the year and, given that the Calvary Mater Hospital is in my electorate, I wanted to speak on it. I read the *Business Paper* every day and noticed that the motion had fallen off it. However, I am pleased the motion has now been moved, I have an opportunity to speak on it and the speech I wrote six months ago is still relevant. I support not only the motion but also the palliative care round table that was held in my local area.

I thank the Minister for Health because originally I was told that I could not attend the round table. Indeed, I had a disagreement with a Government member—which is unusual—who was not going to allow me to attend despite Calvary Mater Hospital being in my electorate. However, the Minister for Health intervened and other Labor members and I were permitted to attend the palliative care round table held in our area. I thank the Minister for his intervention. The round table was successful—indeed, invaluable—and it would have been disappointing if the Government had not allowed a member to attend a round table held on her own patch.

The member for Lake Macquarie is quite correct in saying that it is great to have a nine-to-five service but that he and his constituents are entitled to equity and should have a 24/7 service. People who live on the Lake Macquarie peninsula miss out on many services. They should have access to the same services as those who live in Wallsend. All members are aware that the Mater hospital is a wonderful facility. It would be the worst

news possible for a person and a family to hear a terminal diagnosis. There is an unimaginable flood of emotions when someone is given the news that they will not get better. We would all have had some experience of this with a family member or loved one.

At the Calvary Mater Hospital the specialist palliative care focuses on supporting patients who are approaching or reaching the end of their life and aims to help them achieve dignity, comfort and to maximise the quality of life for the patient and those they love. They are very important words. Specialist palliative care does this by engaging with the primary treatment team, the patient's support network and the patients themselves. They offer their services on an inpatient basis or with home visits if necessary. That is important. People in Wollongong can avail themselves of that service but it is not available to everyone in New South Wales. The former member for Newcastle, Bryce Gaudry, has also suffered. He has stated:

Palliative care really is to ease people on a journey all of us will go on.

Bryce and Barbara have become very involved with this cause, and I am thankful for that as they are great ambassadors for us. I conclude by expressing my support for this excellent motion. I supported it six months ago and I support it now.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) (12:13): I support the need for quality palliative services in our community. This motion is important for patients, families, carers and loved ones. Palliative care must be respectful, dignified, gentle and caring, and where possible meet the needs of the patient and carers. Caroline Raunjak is a volunteer and champion for Cancer Council NSW and her words best illustrate the need for quality palliative care. She said:

My husband died from Cancer in 2011. I was lucky enough to look after him at home as we had really good Community Palliative in Western Sydney. Initially my husband wanted to die in hospital as he didn't want our 2 children to see him die at home ... however, after a bad experience in hospital that decision changed.

With the support of our GP, Palliative Care Specialist, Palliative Care Nurse and community nurses, I was able to be a carer for my husband and provide a good end of life for him and our family.

From my experience of being a carer I understand the importance of good Palliative Care and decided to become an advocate for Cancer Council NSW. I'm passionate about Palliative Care as my husband had a good death and I believe everyone deserves a good death.

I thank Caroline for sharing her very personal story to illustrate the importance of quality palliative care services in our community. Another champion for palliative care is Dr Philip Lee. Dr Lee is a supportive and palliative medicine specialist. He was recently named City of Parramatta Australia Day 2017 Citizen of the Year. He grew up in Western Sydney and has lived and worked there for most of his life. Philip was a general practitioner in Western Sydney for 23 years and from 1995 was a palliative care specialist at Westmead, St Joseph's and Blacktown Mount Druitt hospitals. He recently resigned from the position as Western Sydney Local Health District director of supportive and palliative medicine. Philip is a strong advocate for palliative care and wants to achieve greater community understanding of what palliative care can offer people well before they die, as well as ensuring there are appropriate levels of funding, specialist clinical staff and facilities to provide that care.

I pay tribute to Caroline for sharing her story and her advocacy on behalf of all the people facing end-of-life situations and to Philip for his long advocacy and care. He has brought hope and some level of comfort to those who have needed palliative care. I commend the member for Lake Macquarie for bringing to the attention of this House and everyone across New South Wales the importance of palliative care. I support the need for increased palliative care services and I commend to the Government an increase in funding for palliative care programs in the community—there was an announcement recently in Western Sydney. All members will agree that palliative care is an important issue, and I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for moving the motion.

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (12:17): By leave: I contribute to debate on the motion moved by the member for Lake Macquarie. Palliative care is the difference between living well with a terminal condition or suffering until death. Access to quality palliative care makes the difference in people's dying experience. My electorate is extremely fortunate to have access to the Calvary Mater Hospital, which is the main public palliative care inpatient unit for the greater Newcastle region. The Calvary Mater Hospital provides a 24-hour palliative care outreach service, offering advice and treatment for palliative patients over the phone or in their homes when required. This extensive service successfully helps patients achieve dignity and comfort, and maximises the quality of life for the patient, family and loved ones.

However, as the member for Lake Macquarie has highlighted, people who live more than 20 kilometres away from the Calvary Mater Hospital are not entitled to access this vital 24-hour home service. Residents in highly populated areas such as Toronto and Morisset must rely instead on a telephone service for care provided outside business hours. The terminally ill do not experience pain only during business hours. This year Cancer Council NSW has run a successful campaign highlighting the shortage of specialist palliative care services across

the State. The Cancer Council identified that New South Wales has a shortfall of 10 palliative care specialists and 129 specialist palliative care nurses, and a lack of culturally appropriate palliative care for Indigenous people with cancer.

In response, the New South Wales Government announced a \$100 million funding boost for palliative care over the next four years and Hunter New England Health announced that it was boosting palliative care services in response to criticism that it was failing the terminally ill. The funding is welcome and is a step in the right direction, but I am not at all certain that the Hunter will see much of it; simply more is needed. People in New South Wales nearing death deserve to be as comfortable as possible. As part of the I Care for Palliative Care campaign the Cancer Council released a book called *Our Stories*. The book included powerful personal accounts of Hunter people who used or needed palliative care services for their loved ones. Dungog resident Jennifer Creal contributed to the book. In 2013 her late husband, Christopher, finished his active cancer treatment of surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy, and his oncologist suggested that he choose quality of life over quantity as the treatment was not working.

It was at this point Jennifer discovered that palliative care services were lacking. The Creals were referred to the local palliative care team, which was 40 minutes away from the farm where they lived. Unfortunately, even though the will was there, the palliative care team were so overworked they were not able to assess Christopher. At the end of two weeks, Jennifer could no longer control his pain at home and their general practitioner admitted him to the palliative care unit at Dungog Hospital. Jennifer basically lived there until Christopher died seven days after admission. If Jennifer had had access or support from a palliative care team to manage his pain Christopher could have remained in the comfort of his home surrounded by family, his grandchildren, and his beloved dog.

The \$100 million funding increase announced by the Government needs to be used to expand the Calvary Mater Hospital's 24-hour palliative care outreach service. Twenty-four hour care is a cornerstone of palliative and end-of-life care best practice and is vital to enabling the choice to die at home. I support the motion moved by the member for Lake Macquarie and call on the Government to ensure that all people in the Lower Hunter have equal access to palliative care.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (12:21): By leave: I congratulate the member for Lake Macquarie on moving this motion about palliative care. Across regional New South Wales there has been significant focus on how to better resource and staff palliative care positions. Palliative care provides for those who are in the latter stages of their life and allows them to choose whether to die at home, in a hospital or in a hospice. In my electorate the Nioka Palliative Care Unit is part of the Tamworth Rural Referral Hospital. It is a beautiful facility, purpose built for palliative care, and is a very calm and serene part of the hospital. The dedicated staff do a magnificent job.

There are those who choose to spend the last part of their life at home, which requires better connectivity between the patient, the general practitioner and the specialist. We need to ensure that there are clinical nurse specialists to provide a connection between the patient, doctor and the specialist. Often one visit every 10 days is not enough; there needs to be connectivity with the carer as well. The carer spends all their time with the patient and can see nuances and small changes in the patient on a daily basis as they move towards the latter stages of their life. At that point the carer must have connectivity with a clinical nurse specialist who has links to the general practitioner and specialist in order to relay little bits of information that mean a world of difference to the quality of care and comfort delivered to the patient.

The Government has announced funding for palliative care specialist nurse positions across the State. I am looking to Hunter New England Health, part of the New England North West, to put its best foot forward and announce the positions and start the recruitment process. I believe in training local nurses who choose to move into the palliative care space. Anecdotal evidence suggests that local nurses have better connectivity with and understanding of the local people and patients who are in their network and their neighbourhood. Commonality builds trust and evokes compassion, making it easier to communicate and provide the flow between carer, doctor and specialist. I am fan of local nurses having the opportunity to train in the palliative care space in order to utilise their critical local knowledge. I commend the member for Lake Macquarie for bringing the motion forward. Palliative care needs to stay on the radar and we must do more to ensure that those who desperately need quality of life and comfort in their hour of need receive it.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (12:25): By leave: I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for raising this important issue. Earlier this year I was proud to stand with palliative care advocates in my community and support the I Care for Palliative Care campaign. I thank the hardworking members of the Cancer Council. I share their vision that every person with a life-limiting illness who needs specialist care can access it when they need it, regardless of where they live in New South Wales. I acknowledge Sylvia Shearer, in particular. Sylvia works tirelessly as a volunteer for the Cancer Council in the East Lake Macquarie community to ensure that people who are diagnosed with cancer get the healthcare services and support they need.

Following the shocking media reports about the state of palliative care in the Hunter region, I welcomed the Government's announcement of \$100 million in funding for palliative care services. Palliative care advocates in my community tell me this is a good start in addressing the shortage in palliative care services, but more is needed. There is still little detail available on where that \$100 million will be distributed. The discussion paper from the palliative care round tables held earlier this year is yet to be released. Palliative care advocates are keen to see initiatives that will deliver culturally appropriate palliative care services for Aboriginal families in need.

The Auditor-General's report handed down in August this year shone a light on the gaps in palliative care service provision, and what is needed to enable people with a life-limiting illness to have a death free of pain and suffering. The report tells us that demand for palliative care services will more than double over the next 30 years. At the moment, 70 per cent of people want to die at home but only 14 per cent of people do. We also know that the cost of dying in hospital far exceeds the cost of dying at home. Providing the necessary care and support to people with a life-limiting illness means they can pass peacefully in the comfort of their own homes, with their loved ones.

At the moment, even with the recent injection of much-needed funds into palliative care services, this option is not available to everyone. I acknowledge the Government's commitment to implementing all the recommendations made by the Auditor-General. I note the recommendation reviewing the funding allocation model to ensure that future enhancement funds are distributed equitably and transparently based on the need and population of districts. Palliative care, in order to be effective, must be responsive to the needs of the community. It is not fair that people who live in regional areas should suffer at the end of their life due to a lack of funding or poor coordination of services. At the end of the day, this is an easy decision to make. I know my colleagues across the political divide will maintain a watching brief to ensure that these recommendations are fully implemented to improve palliative care services in our communities. I applaud the member for Lake Macquarie for bringing this matter before the House and I support the motion.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (12:29): By leave: I make a contribution to the motion on palliative care services moved by the member for Lake Macquarie. Next Wednesday evening I will attend a meeting with people who have raised funds for Elsie's Retreat. The member for Terrigal, who is in the Chair, is across that issue. I agree with the comments of previous speakers that there should be home visits by palliative care services. Palliative care includes people accessing a hospice-type facility so that they do not have to go into hospital. I am told by local health practitioners that spending your final days in a hospital ward is not a good way to die. Even though the doctors, nurses and staff do their best, dying in hospital is difficult.

The Central Coast does not have a hospice facility. People from across the region have raised funds to hopefully establish one. It is disturbing to note that the 2017 report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare states that statistics show a strong correlation between palliative care, hospitalisations and socio-economic status. The capacity to pay also affects choice. Where people live and their socio-economic status have a significant bearing on whether they have to rely on hospitals to receive palliative care or are able to access it within the community. The good news is that one of the local not-for-profit providers has made a development application in Woy Woy for a not-for-profit aged care facility, and palliative care will be part of that development. Although the community supports that facility as part of a suite of services that must be made available, we need a fully funded public facility so that people without the resources can access palliative care.

There is a strong argument for a palliative care facility on the Central Coast. Statistically, its population is higher than in other regions of the State. Even though there are a large number of nursing homes on the Central Coast, many elderly people live alone in their homes. The local Meals on Wheels recently celebrated its anniversary. I note that the member for Terrigal also attended that function. The event highlighted the many people who live alone and access that service. Research tells us that 76 per cent of people would rather die at home. Palliative care home support services do a great job, but not everyone is able to die at home. A hospice would go a long way to providing patients and their families with comfort as they pass away. This year I and many of my colleagues attended the Elsie's Retreat ball, which is held to raise funds. The Central Coast community does not ask for handouts; it helps to raise funds. I hope the Government comes on board, and together with the community's effort I am sure we will be able to establish a palliative care hospice.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (12:34): By leave: On behalf of The Greens, I address the motion on palliative care services moved by the member for Lake Macquarie. I indicate that I give it my wholehearted support. I acknowledge all members on both sides of the House who have spoken to this motion, which highlights that palliative care is a matter of priority. The motion of the member for Lake Macquarie is in three parts. It acknowledges and congratulates the Government on its commitment of funds over the next four years. That is a welcome contribution but there is always an opportunity for more. The motion notes that outreach palliative care services in Lake Macquarie are not equitably provided and mentions the issues involved. The Balmain

electorate is well served by many high-quality hospitals, such as Balmain Hospital and Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. People who live outside major cities often have difficulty accessing palliative care services.

A debate on end of life care, including euthanasia and palliative care, is currently underway in this Parliament. Regardless of one's view on euthanasia, the provision of palliative care services should be supported by all members. It is important for the Government to acknowledge the needs in the regions and invest in all of these areas across the State. I acknowledge the work of the member for Lake Macquarie in addressing issues in his local community. I ask the Government to deal expeditiously with the issues noted in this motion. The people in the Lake Macquarie electorate and across the State, particularly in rural and regional areas, have significant needs. I am a strong supporter of euthanasia but I am just as strong a supporter of increasing investment in palliative care. I acknowledge the contributions of all members to this motion and the stories they have told about the experiences of people in their electorate. I trust that the Government will address this issue as quickly as possible. I commend the member for Lake Macquarie for moving the motion.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) (12:36): By leave: I make a contribution to this important motion before the House relating to palliative care services. I congratulate the Government on investing more than \$100 million over the next four years in this area. Former health Minister Jillian Skinner raised the contribution to palliative care by approximately \$80 million. Those funds will allow local communities to put plans in place, mostly constructed through alliances with palliative care organisations as well as local health services, providers of aged care and facilities that deal with end of life. I have listened to a number of contributions by members. I have served in this place for quite a long time and have been intimately involved in the provision of cancer care, radiotherapy and accommodation at Lilier Lodge, Ronald McDonald House, and a palliative care alliance which my community has worked on for approximately 20 years.

On behalf of the Government, last week I announced a contribution of \$2 million to the Forrest Centre to match the community's fundraising efforts of \$2 million to provide 10 slow stream beds—in other words, hospice beds—for end of life. Palliative care is complex. Local members must take leadership and become involved in getting organisations together to form an alliance to deliver a strategic plan. It may not happen all at once. In this case, eight acute care beds were sought, funded and placed by this Government in Calvary Hospital. It is a public-private partnership that provides access to all patients needing acute treatment. The outreach treatment was enhanced by many millions of dollars contributed by the former health Minister Jillian Skinner, and it will be enhanced further by the \$100 million allocated to the region.

Members have more opportunities to apply for funding through their local alliance. They have to be very active and make sure that these people make applications. The next part of the palliative care puzzle, shall I say, is enabling those who are unable to pass peacefully at home, or may not have the resources or family to support them, to choose a suitable environment. In this instance, the Forrest Centre is providing such an environment. It has 10 beds with room for families and friends and facilities that make the passing of a loved one as comfortable as possible. This \$2 million contribution will complete that plan.

There is always more to be done. We can never stop developing plans and looking for ways to try to assist those who are stricken. We are all committed to providing better services. There have been many debates in this place in relation to this matter, and we soon will be debating issues around end of life. I encourage all members who have made a contribution to this debate to engage with their alliances. I pay tribute to the alliance in Murrumbidgee which has delivered for the entire region. It is a magnificent team of committed people. The palliative care nurses now deliver very flexible packages for those who have a terminal illness and wish to choose different settings and treatment options to make their passing as comfortable as possible, with support from their loved ones and the community.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): I also congratulate the member for Lake Macquarie on moving this motion. It has been a very good discussion.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (12:41): In reply: I appreciate the heartfelt contributions of members representing the electorates of Port Macquarie, Port Stephens, North Shore, Wallsend, Parramatta, Charlestown, Tamworth, Swansea, Wyong, Balmain and Wagga Wagga. It will be very hard to deal with all the points that were raised but it seems that members have a very good understanding of how issues around the provision of public care, or the paucity of it in some cases, affects their communities. I do not speak in this House and claim to have knowledge or wisdom about this particular matter but like some other members, particularly the member for Port Macquarie, I have probably had greater exposure than most members to end of life through people who have died in my care, but not as a result of my care, the passing of family members—my brother, mother and father—and some other people who were very close to me.

I have observed a range of deaths, from the best possible to the most disappointing for those who are left behind, and ones that I considered did not achieve the standards of a good death. Certainly some people died in

more pain than they should have and without those dear to them around them. I acknowledge the people who work in that field. All of us hear from people who face these issues and we speak to people, for example, from the Cancer Council, who work day in and day out with people who are at the end stage of their life. In my area I acknowledge Shayne Connell, as well as a person who often advocates to me, Howard Dick. The member for Port Stephens and others have referred to the great work of Dr Yvonne McMaster. Many people with great knowledge in this area speak to us to give us a greater insight into what is needed.

Like the member for Wallsend, I want to acknowledge former member for Newcastle Bryce Gaudry and his wife, Barb, who have done so much in this space. They have very courageously put their stories out there before the community. The members who have contributed to this debate spoke very eloquently on this issue. I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Port Macquarie, who led for the Government and whom I consider to be a friend. I have worked very closely with her and we have had many discussions on these types of issues over the years. I appreciate her sensitivity in understanding this issue. With her advocacy, I know it will stay front and centre before the Government.

I acknowledge the members who represent electorates near to Lake Macquarie: Wallsend, Charlestown, Swansea in particular, Port Stephens and Wyong. We share many similar issues and they understand the issues faced by Lake Macquarie. We must provide people across New South Wales with equitable access to palliative care. I thank the Government for the opportunity to bring this motion before the House. I call on the Minister and the Government to ensure a continuing improvement in palliative care services in New South Wales and the equitable provision of them.

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

Motion agreed to.

WALLSEND ELECTORATE POLICING

Debate resumed from 12 October.

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (12:46): I support the motion moved by the member for Wallsend which states:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that the Central Hunter Local Area Command received only two new probationary constables in the latest allocation of new recruits.
- (2) Notes that crime in the Wallsend electorate is increasing.
- (3) Calls on the Minister for Police to review how resource allocations are made to local area commands.

Crime is an issue that people in the Charlestown and Wallsend electorates and the wider Hunter community care deeply about. People want to feel safe in their homes, at work, at school, in playgrounds, on the streets and in shopping centres. There is a strong desire from the people serviced by the Central Hunter Local Area Command for an increased police presence with more resources. I am happy to support a call for the provision of additional police resources in that local area command. In my electorate, as in the electorate of Wallsend, we are fortunate to have police who work tirelessly. No doubt this is the case right across New South Wales. However, the work of our police officers is made increasingly difficult when our local area commands are under-staffed and under-resourced.

A huge population growth is happening across the Hunter, and that is why the Government must adjust the authorised strength levels of the Central Hunter Local Area Command. The geographical reality is that in country and regional areas, like the Central Hunter, police simply have to travel further. That means they spend less time working with the community and more time travelling from job to job. The member for Drummoyne talked about record levels of sworn positions. That may well be the case, and that is a good thing. But it is no good having extra police if they are allocated to Sydney stations and not allocated appropriately across rural and regional communities.

The escalating spate of crime in the Hunter demands superior resources for our struggling officers. Recent events in Charlestown highlight this need. Earlier this year the Pacific Highway at Charlestown had to be closed down after an out-of-control party resulted in an estimated 300 drunken and drug-affected teenagers aged between 13 and 26 creating havoc. Bottles were thrown at the heads of police officers and there was significant vandalism to shopfronts along the Pacific Highway. Police came from the Newcastle Local Area Command, the Central Hunter Area Command and the Central Coast Area Command. Three teenagers, including two girls aged 13 and 16, were taken to John Hunter Hospital suffering from suspected drug overdoses.

As the party was shut down, the revellers moved to McDonald's on the Pacific Highway where they broke windows and terrorised staff. That restaurant, which is usually open 24 hours a day, had to be closed due to the teenagers' dangerous behaviour. The teenagers continued their rampage down neighbouring streets, kicking in windows and hurling bins. Another incident earlier in the year saw an Uber driver left bruised and bloodied by up to five teens when he was called to a job in Charlestown. The driver was dragged from his car and assaulted by the teens. He was kicked and punched before he was able to run to a nearby house.

Charlestown, with its major shopping districts, is a hotspot for crime, with high rates of retail theft, fraud, and theft from motor vehicles. Criminals are becoming more unrelenting and aggressive and will offend at any opportune moment. Having ample resources and a high police presence are essential to combating crime in our community. I have an excellent working relationship with the Lake Macquarie Local Area Commander, Superintendent Brett Greentree. I thank him for keeping an open dialogue with me on policing matters in my electorate. I commend the member for Wallsend for moving this important motion. I also support her call on the Minister for Police to review resource allocations to local area commands.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (12:50): I speak in support of the comments recently made by the member for Drummoyne on this issue. In New South Wales police numbers are at a record high. The current authorised strength of the NSW Police Force is 16,757 officers. Over the term of this Government, we are committed to boosting this number to 16,795. Since December 2011, 951 positions have been added to the NSW Police Force, 60 of those in the six local area commands in the Hunter, including 13 to the Central Hunter Local Area Command. Hunter commands also benefit from additional police positions allocated to the State Crime Command and other specialist areas. This goes hand in hand with this Government allocating record budgets to the NSW Police Force. In 2017-18, total expenses have hit \$3,429 billion and capital expenditure for the financial year is at a record high of \$243.7 million—a total of almost \$3.7 billion.

The Commissioner of Police determines the allocation of officers based on operational requirements. The Government is working closely with Commissioner Fuller and his executive team on reforms to bring additional focus to frontline policing and crime prevention across New South Wales. This re-engineering process will enable the Police Force to better prepare to protect communities into the future. There will be a stronger, more refined focus on terrorism. This will provide a tailored focus to meet the needs of regional and Sydney communities. Rather than dictating to the NSW Police Force how to use its resources, the process will provide flexibility to adapt policing techniques and resources in response to each community's challenges instead of a one-size-fits-all approach. Recently, the commissioner issued an update to the troops on work to date, which included changes to command structures to ensure that frontline services are where they need to be.

I remind the member for Wallsend that Labor had 16 years in office and eight police Ministers—nine if we count when John Watkins was Minister. They probably do not want to count Matt Brown's turn as Minister for Police. In the dying days of the previous Government, it was not unheard of for 600 to 800 of the then 15,000 officers to be on long-term sick leave at any given time. Thankfully, we have been working tirelessly with the NSW Police Force to right these wrongs and to ensure that our police receive the necessary resources and, more importantly, the manpower they need to keep crime at a record low. I repeat, the strength of the NSW Police Force is sitting at a record high of 16,575 officers. We on this side of the House are getting on with the job of helping and assisting our local police on the beat.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (12:54): I speak in support of the motion of the member for Wallsend, who is a passionate advocate for her community. That was evident on my recent visit to the Wallsend electorate in my capacity as shadow Minister for Justice and Police. The member for Wallsend and I spoke to many local residents in the Wallsend area, particularly at Wallsend Diggers and Beresfield RSL. We wanted to talk to them about issues affecting their community and their concerns about crime. We also discussed the police presence in the area. One of the key concerns, which was raised countless times, was the lack of policing in the area. Labor is a passionate advocate of our Police Force. A well-resourced local area command allows our police on the front line to do their jobs effectively to keep the community safe and assists in the welfare of officers.

The residents we spoke to were gravely concerned about the future of Beresfield Police Station. Currently that police station is open only one morning each week, and that is taken advantage of by the unruly element in the community. For example, they go on crime sprees or intimidate people because they know, unlike in the eastern part of the Wallsend electorate, about the lack of presence in that police station. I draw the attention of the House to Lake Macquarie Local Area Command statistics for August 2017 which show 22 officers down in the combined Newcastle city area. It does not matter whether we are talking about metropolitan or rural and regional local area commands, every local area command deserves to be fully staffed. Those reduced staffing numbers do not include officers on sick leave or maternity leave or those on secondment. Paragraph (3) of the motion calls on the Minister for Police to review how the resource allocations are made to local area commands. That is fair enough.

The member for Wallsend is not attacking police. As I said earlier, she is a staunch advocate and has a wonderful working relationship with her local area command. I implore the 93 members in this place to keep in contact with their local area commands to ensure their communities are kept safe. Members of this Chamber should not be criticised for bringing motions forward that relate to community wellbeing and advocate for more police resources. There is nothing wrong with that. We must ensure that our local area commands have the resources they need. We all want to live in safe communities. As parliamentarians we also must ensure the health and wellbeing of our police officers as they work to keep our communities safe.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (12:58): In reply: I thank the members for the electorates of Drummoyne, Charlestown, Fairfield and Oatley for their contributions to this debate. The member for Charlestown spoke eloquently about the need for people to feel safe in the Hunter. She said that the Central Hunter Local Area Command requires additional resources. She noted that local area commands in the Hunter are under-resourced and are unable to meet the needs created by the growing population and the tyranny of distance. I agree with her.

It is all very well for the member for Drummoyne to talk about these sorts of issues, but Wallsend covers a large area and it is impossible for a police officer to get from Stockton to Minmi in a short time when there is an emergency. That tyranny of distance affects anyone who lives in rural or regional areas. The member for Oatley talked in generic terms about how wonderful the police force is, and I agree with him. But he did not talk about the need for additional resources and staff in Wallsend for which we are crying out. He gave us some archival stories about the number of police officers and police Ministers when Labor was in power, but that was more than six years ago. I was a member of the Labor Government at the time and I argued with the Government about better police resourcing. I am passionate about making sure that our police service is well resourced. I will argue for that whether Labor is in government or in opposition.

No-one has ever suggested that I do not have courage. I am consistent about the fact that I want a better police force now and when Labor is in office in 2019. The member for Fairfield talked about his attendance at two community forums, which were well received. Hundreds of people attended and they told him that they thought police response times were poor. They all respected the police, as do the member for Fairfield and I, but everyone knows that if a police car is at one end of a large geographical area it is impossible for it to attend to an emergency at the other end. The people of Beresfield and Tarro, who have a police station that is operational only one morning a week, need more police in the area. The member for Drummoyne has been quoted as saying, "We are awash with police." He suggested that the local area command has "more bodies than seats" and that there are not only more officers on the ground but also they are walking the beat.

I invite the member for Drummoyne and any other Government member to come with me to any community forum at Beresfield and Tarro, put that to the local community and see how they respond. The problem is that police are invisible in that area, not through any fault of their own but because they are under resourced and understaffed to meet the demands of a growing population in a large geographical area. I say to the Government that we need more resources as the demands of a growing population are not being met. I urge members to support this motion.

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

The House divided.

Ayes34

Noes45

Majority..... 11

AYES

Aitchison, Ms J
Car, Ms P
Cotsis, Ms S
Dib, Mr J
Greenwich, Mr A
Haylen, Ms J
Kamper, Mr S
Lynch, Mr P
Mehan, Mr D
Piper, Mr G
Tesch, Ms L
Zangari, Mr G

Atalla, Mr E (teller)
Catley, Ms Y
Crakanthorp, Mr T
Doyle, Ms T
Harris, Mr D
Hoenig, Mr R
Lalich, Mr N (teller)
McDermott, Dr H
Mihailuk, Ms T
Scully, Mr P
Warren, Mr G

Barr, Mr C
Chanthivong, Mr A
Daley, Mr M
Finn, Ms J
Harrison, Ms J
Hornery, Ms S
Leong, Ms J
McKay, Ms J
Park, Mr R
Smith, Ms T F
Washington, Ms K

NOES

Anderson, Mr K
 Bromhead, Mr S (teller)
 Constance, Mr A
 Dominello, Mr V
 Fraser, Mr A
 Goward, Ms P
 Hazzard, Mr B
 Johnsen, Mr M
 Maguire, Mr D
 O'Dea, Mr J
 Perrottet, Mr D
 Roberts, Mr A
 Stokes, Mr R
 Tudehope, Mr D
 Williams, Mr R

Aplin, Mr G
 Brookes, Mr G
 Coure, Mr M
 Elliott, Mr D
 George, Mr T
 Griffin, Mr J
 Henskens, Mr A
 Kean, Mr M
 Marshall, Mr A
 Patterson, Mr C (teller)
 Petinos, Ms E
 Sidoti, Mr J
 Taylor, Mr M
 Upton, Ms G
 Williams, Mrs L

Ayres, Mr S
 Conolly, Mr K
 Davies, Ms T
 Evans, Mr L
 Gibbons, Ms M
 Gulaptis, Mr C
 Humphries, Mr K
 Lee, Dr G
 Notley-Smith, Mr B
 Pavey, Mrs M
 Provest, Mr G
 Speakman, Mr M
 Toole, Mr P
 Ward, Mr G
 Wilson, Ms F

PAIRS

Foley, Mr L
 Minns, Mr C
 Watson, Ms A

Barilaro, Mr J
 Berejiklian, Ms G
 Grant, Mr T

Motion negatived.

MULTICULTURALISM

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (13:09): I seek leave to amend paragraph (4) of General Business Notice of Motion (General Notices) No. 1942 as follows:

- (4) Condemns the comments made by Mr Mark Latham on Mark Latham's Outsiders and Ms Pauline Hanson's constant attack on multiculturalism in Australia as derogatory, inflammatory and divisive.

Leave granted.

Accordingly, I move:

That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges Fairfield City is a multiculturally diverse community.
- (2) Notes the efforts made by migrants and refugees in contributing to the overall culture of Fairfield.
- (3) Congratulates local schools, religious organisations, social clubs, multicultural centres and sporting clubs for the dedicated work undertaken in maintaining and promoting a socially harmonious and cohesive community in Fairfield.
- (4) Condemns the comments made by Mr Mark Latham on Mark Latham's Outsiders and Ms Pauline Hanson's constant attack on multiculturalism in Australia as derogatory, inflammatory and divisive.

The Fairfield community is culturally diverse and has been for many years. There has been a constant wave of migration. The face of our community has changed constantly—from 70 years ago with the wave of southern European and eastern European migrants into the electorate, through to the mid-1970s with the influx of refugees from Vietnam, and then through to the 1980s and the 1990s with the influx of Syrian and Iraqi refugees. Our community is proud of the contributions made by each and every nationality. There are more than 130 different nationalities in the electorate. I note that members who will be contributing to this debate have just as many different migrant communities in their electorates and they are advocating for them. In my electorate, as in many electorates right around the State, New Year's Day starts on 1 January, but celebrations continue well into April as a result of the many cultures that have their festivities during this period. Many of us say in our area, "How good is it to have the ability to make a New Year's resolution for about four months of the year?" If our New Year's resolution does not succeed we have an opportunity to get it right.

We have the famous Italian Republic Day festival at Club Marconi. This year it was held just before Italian Republic Day on 2 June and 30,000 people attended. The Moon Festival was held recently in John Street, Cabramatta—and I note the member for Cabramatta is present in the Chamber—which 90,000 people from all

walks of life attended. I will not cop comments from people who say that multiculturalism is not working, that people are not mixing or sharing their cultures. That is rubbish. Mark Latham came into the electorate and basically bullied and accosted individuals—who had only been in the country for a short time and who had come from war-torn areas—and rammed a microphone in their faces and started talking to them. Those people came here to escape the torture and trauma they suffered before they got here, yet they are confronted by an individual like Mark Latham. I make no apologies for condemning that.

I also condemn Pauline Hanson's constant attack on multiculturalism in Australia. First it was an attack on Asian communities, then she flips it around to Muslim communities. Where does it end? We need to come together and say enough is enough; we will not accept these derogatory and divisive comments as being the norm in our country because it is totally unacceptable. I thank Government members for agreeing to my amendment to the motion. We need to stand united on this issue because we come from many different cultures and Australia has many different nationalities. Let us be frank: our first peoples came from many nations themselves. They spoke many different languages and they had different cultural practices. We must always put it at the forefront of our minds that this country, before Europeans arrived, was very multicultural indeed, and it has been for thousands of years. Once the Europeans came and the other waves of migrants from the Middle East, Africa, the South Pacific—

Dr Geoff Lee: China.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: The member for Parramatta has thrown in China. Yes, from Asia too. They brought wonderful flavours, wonderful traditions, great colour and vibrancy to our community. We are not going to cop this type of vitriol from individuals who just do not acknowledge that if it were not for our Indigenous people and all our multicultural communities we would not have this great country called Australia. I have travelled to many parts of the world and I can say that there is no place like home. We can walk down any street in this State and enjoy tastes and flavours from all parts of the world. I note that the member for Drummoyne is in the Chamber. He knows what I am talking about because we grew up in the same area; we were born here and we went to the same school. He knows from growing up in the area how multicultural communities, particularly in the west, have contributed to a diverse and great community. [*Time expired.*]

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) (13:16): I support the motion moved by the member for Fairfield. I listened intently to the member's comments on this important subject of multiculturalism in Australia and noted that members on both sides of the House share very common themes but we also have some differences. First, I will outline some of the areas that are common to members on both sides of the House. Over the past 200 years Australia has been built up by and has benefited from people from all over the world. This nation owes its success to those great people who came here before us and to those who continue to come and contribute to building our wonderful nation, and especially New South Wales. This great State demonstrates the benefits of multiculturalism. It is an exemplar of how people from around the world can come and live in Australia and make a productive contribution. That is why we are so successful.

It is not the minerals on the ground, the wheat that we grow or our agricultural and horticultural produce; our real success is due to the people who came before us. Migration has played a vital part in the success of Australia. I always say that Australia welcomes people from anywhere in the world who want to make a productive contribution to this country. This may be biased—I should declare an interest as I was a teacher for a long time at Western Sydney University—but we should welcome overseas students who want to study in Australia. They come to Australia and they study for three years at our universities and colleges.

Students pay \$30,000, \$40,000 or \$50,000 a year to study, spend two years in Australia in order to obtain permanent residency, and they then obtain full-time work and contribute to our society. Some students even choose to become Australian citizens, which is wonderful. We cherry-pick the best minds—the best people to come to Australia—and they become citizens and contribute to our society. Many of them start businesses and they and their families contribute to our economy. It is important for us to encourage the best and brightest students to study in Australia in the hope that they will then become permanent residents and Australian citizens.

Earlier the member for Fairfield said that his local government area had the best multicultural community in Australia, which is untrue. Parramatta is the best example of a multicultural community—one that delivers for New South Wales and Australia—and fantastic people live in the Parramatta electorate. Fifty per cent of the people in my electorate were born overseas and 13 per cent were born in India. Last weekend we closed the streets of Harris Park, which is known as Little India, to celebrate Diwali. It was a fantastic celebration and everybody had a great time. Last weekend 30,000 people attended an event in Parramatta Park organised by the Hindu Council of Australia. I commend the Hindu Council for organising that fantastic event.

The Government has committed to providing another three years of funding for the Parramasala festival. Initially funding was provided by the Labor Government but this Government has committed to providing

long-term funding. Parramasala includes people not only from an Indian or subcontinental background; it is a more cohesive festival that includes many nationalities. Thirteen per cent of people who were originally born in China now choose to call Parramatta home. I pay special tribute to the Buddha's Light International Association, headed by Reverend Man Ko, a fantastic and highly respected leader in that community.

I pay tribute to the Korean community—an expanding community that is benefiting from living in the beautiful electorate of Parramatta. Five per cent of the Australian Lebanese community is also living in the Parramatta electorate. Parramatta houses the Our Lady of Lebanon Church and Our Lady of Lebanon Co-Cathedral and it is also home for second and third generation Greek communities. I pay tribute to St John's Cathedral and the hard work it is doing in the community and wish it all the best for its new church and the school it is establishing along the railway line. I commend the member for Fairfield for moving this important motion.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Crouch): Order! The member for Bankstown will cease interjecting.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) (13:24): Fairfield City Council local government area has one of the most multiculturally diverse communities in Australia. I was mayor of Fairfield City Council for more than 10 years, having served on that council since 1987. Since coming to Australia I have lived in that area and I have seen the community enriched as other cultural groups have joined its ranks. Cabramatta is well known throughout New South Wales as home to many people of Asian background. With the iconic Pai Lau gates of Freedom Plaza, numerous temples, the renowned Vietnamese, Chinese and Lao food and the Moon Festival, Cabramatta is deservedly known as the shining pearl of south-west Sydney. But Cabramatta has a richer history of multiculturalism that is rarely mentioned these days.

As far back as the 1830s records make mention of two people of ethnic background in the local area—Henry Zions, a Polish Jew and tailor; and Benjamin Stein, a winegrower from Germany. In the 1870s many Chinese settled in the area and took part in the gold rush. Many of these Chinese people and their descendants became market gardeners. From the 1880s until the advent of World War I, Cabramatta experienced a steady stream of migrants from a European background and welcomed German, Italian, Maltese, Croatian and Serbian families. Migration to Australia ceased with the advent of World War I.

Many Italian families looked to Australia as a potential home and came to Cabramatta and other parts of Sydney in the 1920s after the United States began to tighten restrictions on immigration at the time. In 1956 the German-Austrian Club was born. I recently attended its sixty-first anniversary celebration. In the 1960s Cabramatta welcomed many who had suffered from the ravages of war in Europe—many from the former Yugoslavia such as Serbians, Croatians and Bosnians and many from Ukraine, the British Isles and Hungary. If someone had taken a photograph of Cabramatta in that era and the Cabramatta that we know today and compared them, we would have seen remarkable differences.

The 1970s saw the arrival of many South Americans, primarily from Chile and Argentina, and the relaxing of immigration laws under Gough Whitlam saw many of Arabic and Turkish descent arrive in our community. The mid 1970s and the following years saw the arrival of war refugees fleeing Vietnam, many of whom were former soldiers from the South Vietnamese Army, or Chinese-Vietnamese business owners who feared targeting under Communist rule. Through the 1980s more and more families arrived and settled in Cabramatta and we now have a thriving and active culturally diverse melting pot. Fairfield and Cabramatta are unashamedly and proudly multicultural electorates.

I am an Australian of Serbian descent and I was born in Egypt. I married a New Zealand girl and had children. My son married a Chinese-Vietnamese girl and my granddaughter is Eurasian. My daughter married a Scotsman and they have two cheeky boys. In my office I have an Italian, an Irish person, a German and a Malaysian-Chinese person. In this place I hang out with a person of Jewish faith, a person of Muslim faith, a couple of Greeks, an Italian, an Egyptian, a Russian and a few Aussies. Modern Australia is proudly multicultural and Fairfield City is a fantastic example of how multiculturalism works.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) (13:28): I commend the member for Fairfield for moving this motion. Although Fairfield has a multiculturally diverse community it is but a microcosm when compared to the multicultural communities in the rest of New South Wales and Australia. As members of Parliament, some of the most gratifying events we can attend are our multicultural citizenship ceremonies where people from all over the world pledge to become part of this great nation. We do not ask them to forget where they came from and to forget their traditions, cultures and customs; we ask them to bring those traditions, cultures and customs with them, which is what makes Australia so successful multiculturally.

I believe that by any measure Australia is the best country in the world when it comes to multiculturalism. Australia is the most successful multicultural country in the world. It therefore comes as no surprise when an event

occurs every now and then that knockers come out of the woodwork. The member for Fairfield suggests combating discrimination and racism by hitting the nail on the head and calling it for what it is. That is one approach, but it is often not necessary because the community will call out stupidity and ignorance. Australian society has come a long way. Every member of this House comes to this place with a story. The story of my parents is probably no different from the story of many other member's parents. My parents arrived in Australia with nothing and were not given the support and programs such as public housing, et cetera, that we expect for all newcomers now. Australia is a very giving nation and we help whenever we can, but Australians never want compassion to be abused. When the system is abused is when Australians become really upset. Australia has got the mix absolutely right.

The member for Fairfield alluded to challenges, such as when large numbers of a particular group migrate to one region, and I acknowledge those challenges exist. The present situation is no different from the 1940s, the 1950s and the 1960s with Little Italy in Leichhardt where there often was discrimination, racism and many other challenges. But we have grown as a nation. In this country we have witnessed the contribution of people from so many nationalities who have made Australia what it is. Some members of this House, particularly the member for Fairfield, can speak of how proud we are of our Italian multicultural heritage, just as the member for Lakemba is proud of his cultural heritage and the member for Canterbury is proud of her Greek traditions. We can speak of that pride because every facet of society has been touched by contributions of people from various nationalities. Although I could speak about this for another 10 days, in conclusion I thank the member for Fairfield for moving the motion.

I seek the leave of the House to sit past 1.30 p.m. to permit the conclusion of the debate.

Leave granted.

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (13:32): I thank members for extending the time for debate. Because time is limited, I will keep my contribution as short as I can to enable other members to make a contribution. I thank the member for Fairfield for moving the motion. I acknowledge that his motivation originally came from a place of hurt, but the outcome has become a cathartic experience that speaks to the very best of us as a nation. Last year I joined the member for Fairfield, the member for Cabramatta as well as a number of community members at the Moving Forward Together event in Fairfield, which was excellent. I noticed at that event the manner in which those two members were treated, particularly by people from a non-English speaking background. I could see that people—especially young people—looked up to those members because they could see themselves in what those gentlemen had become. That is a really great thing about Australia.

It has been alluded to that there is a great diversity of cultural heritage in this Parliament. We could have greater diversity, but my colleagues know that the best thing about Australia is that, irrespective of where people were born, the language they speak and their religious beliefs, there is the opportunity to succeed. However, there are accompanying challenges, the like of which are alluded to in paragraph (4) of the motion. We cannot pretend that life is all smiles, sunshine and rainbows: It is not always that way. We have to create the Australia we want and in Australia the migrant story, among others, is incredibly important. When people refer to the Australian story, we think of the famous photograph of the bronzed sunbaker on Bondi Beach. But that is not the only Australian story. The Australian story is multifaceted and includes our Indigenous heritage extending over 65,000 years, white settlement and people who came from different parts of the world. Every one of those people constitutes the Australian identity.

What is it to be Australian? To be an Australian is in the way we act and behave. Paragraph (4) of the motion shows that there are people in Australia who seek to divide us as a nation and who will use events for political opportunism. They claim to be calling reality as it is, but my challenge to them is to get out in the community and meet culturally and linguistically diverse people—people who want the same thing that every other person in Australia wants. They want Australia to become the greatest nation on earth. They want to make a contribution and to see their children succeed. They want what everybody wants. It is not a level playing field for most people. Some cannot speak English and do not have the same opportunities for employment, but we must focus on generational change. The member for Canterbury, the member for Bankstown, the member for Fairfield, the member for Cabramatta and the member for Port Macquarie are culturally and linguistically diverse. I know the member for Oatley is half Lebanese because he is married to Adla, which is fabulous.

To those people who want to attack Australia's multiculturalism, I say this: Remember it is not just multiculturalism but rather modern Australia that comprises people from different cultures. Look to the best of who we are instead of dog whistling cultural and linguistic diversity and having a go at one another. Make a positive contribution. I thank the member for Fairfield for moving the motion.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (13:36): Australia is a wonderful example of multiculturalism. It is a melting pot of people from 200 nations who speak 200 languages. Australia's immigration story has been a

wonderful success over the past 200 years and for thousands of years before that. The most recent census showed that 42 per cent of Sydney's population was born overseas. In my electorate of Oatley, the community comes from a mixture of cultures and groups ranging from people of Chinese background to Greek, Macedonian and Lebanese backgrounds and more. This country provides our communities with hope and opportunity. The story of many migrants is of working hard and making a difference. It is a wonderful story that I relate to through my grandparents.

Many individual stories have made the Australian story one of multiculturalism and show how Australian society has been built over the years. I thank the member for Fairfield for moving this motion and providing me with an opportunity to inform the House that Fairfield is similar to my electorate as well as the electorates of Bankstown, Canterbury and Lakemba. It is a multicultural community. According to the 2016 census, more than 50 per cent of people in Fairfield city were born overseas and more than 70 per cent of the population speak a language other than English at home. With the top five ancestries being Vietnamese, Chinese, Assyrian, Australian and English, Fairfield has a proud history of refugee settlement. According to the Department of Social Services more than 6,000 humanitarian entrants settled in Fairfield in 2016-17 and 82 per cent of those were sponsored by family members.

When given the chance, refugees display that they have the skills, experience and determination to succeed in starting a new life—not just in Fairfield but throughout Australia. Efforts made by local churches and church groups, many of whom I have met, schools as well as sporting and social clubs assist refugees in making a new life in Fairfield. In September 2015 the New South Wales Government appointed Professor Peter Shergold to the role of New South Wales Coordinator-General for Refugee Resettlement. New South Wales is working closely with the Commonwealth Government and with settlement providers to ensure the seamless planning for refugee settlements in New South Wales. I thank the member for Fairfield for moving this outstanding motion.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (13:39): By leave: I thank the member for Fairfield for bringing forward this important motion on multiculturalism. I share the views of colleagues on both sides of the House, who have expressed their pride in our multicultural communities. I am very proud of the Canterbury-Bankstown community and the fact that the vast majority of our residents speak a language other than English at home. More than 150,000 of the 350,000 residents of the Canterbury-Bankstown local government area have at least one parent who was born overseas, which shows that our communities are a melting pot of multiculturalism. We are blessed to have people from all parts of the globe calling our area home.

This motion is also about condemning the likes of Senator Pauline Hanson and former Leader of the Labor Opposition Mark Latham, who embody political opportunism at its worst. They attempt to divide our community, with Mark Latham making disgraceful comments about the community of Fairfield earlier this year. The Labor Party once held Mark Latham in high regard, and I am disappointed that somebody who in the past relied on the support of multicultural communities is now a divisive figure. I would describe this transformation of a former politician as a Shakespearean tragedy. Mark Latham claimed that 90 per cent of the people in Fairfield who he approached for comment on multiculturalism could not speak English. But to me Mark Latham, a burly bloke with an ugly mug, accosted some poor people on the street and thrust a microphone into their faces. I can understand why they did not take the opportunity to comment; however, he decided that they did not respond because they could not speak English and that was a problem with multiculturalism.

Mr Mark Coure: He's a buffoon.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: The member for Oatley is quite right; Mark Latham is just a buffoon. I congratulate the member for Fairfield on taking a very strong stand, as he did in his local community, and note that he has often spoken on multiculturalism in this place. It is important for us to defend our communities at every opportunity. We must defend the wonderful multiculturalism that our Sydney regions are blessed with.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (13:41): In reply: I sincerely thank the member for Parramatta, the member for Cabramatta, the member for Drummoyne, the member for Lakemba, the member for Oatley and the member for Bankstown for their contributions to the debate on this motion. I also thank Government members for granting leave to extend the time to speak on this motion, as well as for allowing the motion to be amended. As the member for Bankstown said, we will not cop individuals like former Leader of the Labor Opposition Mark Latham and Senator Pauline Hanson. They are intent on tearing down multiculturalism. I will not repeat comments made by those who contributed to this debate, because members of this Chamber unanimously support the motion. We in the New South Wales Parliament stand by our multiculturalism. We stand with our communities and will denounce anybody who seeks to tear down multiculturalism. This is the essence of today's motion, and I am very proud that we have all spoken of the high regard in which we hold our multicultural communities. We are one, but we are many, and at the end of the day we are all Australians.

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

Motion agreed to.

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

*Announcements***BIRTH OF NICHOLAS JOHN BISHAY**

The SPEAKER: I draw to the attention of the House that the member for Mount Druitt has become a grandfather for the second time. Congratulations. Nicholas John Bishay was born yesterday at 12.30 p.m. I am reliably informed that both mum and baby are doing well and everybody is happy.

*Visitors***VISITORS**

The SPEAKER: Before I welcome our visitors to the gallery, I mention that today is the member for Ballina's birthday. I will not say how old she is but she looks incredibly young. I extend a very warm welcome to Rosslyn Finn, the mother of the member for Granville, as well as her sister Elizabeth Akers, who is visiting from the United Kingdom with her children, Alexander and Abigail, guests of the member for Granville. I welcome the Right Worshipful Lord Mayor of Parramatta, Andrew, guest of the Leader of the House and of the member for Parramatta. I welcome to the Chamber students and teachers from St Columba Anglican School, guests of the Parliamentary Secretary for Regional and Rural Health, and member for Port Macquarie. I acknowledge in the public gallery members of the Labor Party from Maroubra, guests of the Manager of Opposition Business and member for Maroubra. I welcome also Margaret Chadwick and seven members of the Older Women's Network from the Illawarra, attending Parliament as part of their thirtieth anniversary, guests of the member for Keira. Finally, I welcome Indonesian study tour students from the University of Technology Sydney.

*Members***REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS**

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: On behalf of Ms Gladys Berejiklian: I advise members that the Minister for Lands and Forestry, and Minister for Racing will answer questions today in the absence of the Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional New South Wales, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business, and that the Attorney General will answer questions today in the absence of the Minister for Police, and Minister for Emergency Services.

*Question Time***CBD AND SOUTH EAST LIGHT RAIL PROJECT**

Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn) (14:23): My question is directed to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. Given the Minister's insistence on calling the police to investigate leaks, will he be calling them to investigate today's leaks that reveal his true contempt for the Premier's light rail project? Will the Minister ask them to investigate his office, and will he make his mobile phone available to the investigators?

The SPEAKER: Order! That question was very poorly worded in regard to the standing orders. The Minister may take the question if he wishes, and the Opposition will probably get the answer it deserves.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Infrastructure) (14:23): I was not expecting a question on light rail today. The CBD and South East Light Rail project will change Sydney for the better. This Government is getting on with building it and the outcomes it will deliver will be transformational for the city. It would not matter whether it is light rail in the city, Parramatta, the eastern suburbs or in Newcastle—this Government is getting on with transformational projects. The light rail project will include a one kilometre pedestrian zone in the heart of George Street that will become a boulevard for shopping and a commercial precinct in the middle of the city.

It will be a mass transit solution for the people of the east, linking the racecourse, university, hospital and Moore Park. Members opposite are an interesting group of people when it comes to light rail. I decided to pull out a file and found a couple of documents that might be relevant to the Leader of the Opposition's question. This document is headed "A Better Way: Labor's Fully Funded Infrastructure Plan". It is a bit light, but it is from the last election. The House will remember this document quite well because it is the one in which Labor forgot to mention the Parramatta Light Rail.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. The Minister has previously indicated that leaks have terrorism implications. Labor wishes to know if the police will be called into his office to investigate and whether he will hand over his mobile phone.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. I should have ruled the question out of order under Standing Order 128 (2). A question should not contain allegations that cannot be authenticated. The Minister has taken the question and the Opposition will receive the answer it deserves for asking it.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: On page 19 of the document Labor says it will complete the CBD and South East Light Rail project. A few weeks later a Jake Saulwick article appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* titled "Why NSW Labor backflipped on George Street light rail". It reports that Mr Park, the Labor Party's transport spokesman, stated that Labor had changed its policy in recent weeks after he spent some time reading "serious government reports". I then found another article in my file. This one is a cracker.

It appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* and is titled "Maroubra MP Michael Daley calls for more funding for light rail extension to Maroubra". Let us examine where the Labor Party is on this. The member for Maroubra does not want light rail but wants it in Maroubra; the Leader of the Opposition does not want light rail but wants it to extend to Central; the member for Strathfield does not want light rail but wants it in Strathfield; and the member for Newcastle, who has campaigned for two years, does not like light rail but wants it extended to the university. They do not have a consistent policy.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Bankstown, the member for Canterbury, the member for Keira and the member for Maitland to order for the first time.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The Leader of the Opposition has delivered a confusing message. Members opposite want the light rail extended to all their suburbs and communities but they do not back the project. It is like Labor's position on WestConnex—they do not know whether they are Arthur or Martha, coming or going, building or cancelling. Labor is the party of cancellation and its attitude to light rail is no different.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: They do not support infrastructure for the communities of New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for the Blue Mountains to order for the first time. I call the member for the Blue Mountains to order for the second time. I can only guess why Opposition members are in an angry mood today. Members who continue to interject will be removed from the Chamber.

JOBS GROWTH

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (14:29): My question is addressed to the Premier. How is the Government helping families and individuals by creating jobs?

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:29): I thank the member for Manly for his excellent question about jobs. He is one of our new members and he is doing an outstanding job on the ground in his community.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Keira to order for the third time. Members will cease interjecting.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: There is nothing like the Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] confirming that the Liberal-Nationals are the party of the workers. Hot off the press a couple of hours ago—the ink is barely dry—we have the most recent jobs figures for New South Wales, and they are good. The ABS confirmed that in September the New South Wales unemployment rate fell to 4.6 per cent. In one month we have created 21,000 jobs.

Ms Prue Car: Casual.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No, we have the highest rate of full-time jobs in the nation. Members opposite do not know what they are talking about. They are interjecting and they have no idea. Go and do your homework. To put that into context, the rest of Australia has an unemployment rate of 5.9 per cent. Unemployment in New South Wales is at 4.6 per cent. Guess what colour all the other States are—Labor. We are showing them how it is done in New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will come to order. If the member for Keira continues to interject he will be removed from the Chamber. He may join the ladies in the gallery if he wishes.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: While we have created 21,000 new jobs in New South Wales, unfortunately, the other mainland Labor States had jobs fall by 1,300. We are up 21,000 and the Labor Party is down 1,300. As the Treasurer highlighted a couple of hours ago, since we came to office we have created 410,000 jobs in New South Wales. Members on this side of the House know that it is important for a government not only to create jobs but also to ensure that people keep those jobs. That is why I am especially pleased that we are creating jobs in New South Wales. We have the highest proportion of full-time jobs created. At least 75 per cent of the new jobs in this State were full time, compared with 39 per cent for the rest of Australia. The interjection from the member opposite is complete rubbish. Those opposite speak the lines but they do not know how to create jobs. I am pleased that since the 2015 election we have created more than 220,000 jobs in New South Wales, which exceeds our election promise of 150,000. We are extremely pleased. We will not stop.

Youth unemployment is the lowest in New South Wales and around the nation. We will not stop because we know there is always a job to be created. We know communities always want work and we are the Government that will create it. I am pleased to say that this jobs growth is not only where we would expect it; it is occurring in all parts of New South Wales—across Greater Sydney and our regions. The Hills and Hawkesbury have created an exceptional number of jobs. In the past year they have created 13,000 jobs, up 10.7 per cent. We could attribute that figure to the local members, but we could also attribute it to the infrastructure we are building in that part of New South Wales.

In Sutherland, we have created almost 14,000 jobs since the last election. That is five times more jobs than Labor created in its last three years in office. Members from south-west Sydney are pleased to know that we created 28,000 jobs there. We are proud of Western Sydney, where we have created 120,000 new jobs. I am looking forward to the October jobs figures because they will reflect the two new jobs we created this week for the member for Cootamundra and the member for Murray. We shall keep on creating more jobs. [*Extension of time*].

We know that in our regions' jobs growth is important. Some of our regions are demonstrating that unemployment figures are below the State average, but we are pleased that we have created 47,900 jobs in regional New South Wales. That is more jobs than in all of South Australia and Western Australia combined. It is great news. We know we are the party of jobs because we build the infrastructure that creates jobs. We are providing the frontline services that create jobs. When Labor was in office, it axed projects and services. Labor created the highest unemployment rate in the nation. We are the party of the worker; we will continue to be the party of the worker. We will continue to create jobs in every part of New South Wales. Those opposite should hang their heads in shame. They are full of rhetoric and hot air. They should look closely at their own jobs at the rate they are going. We will continue to deliver for the great people of New South Wales.

SYDNEY CBD LIGHT RAIL

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) (14:35): My question is directed to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. Why is the Minister wasting \$13 million of taxpayer's money on an advertising campaign to promote the Premier's CBD light rail project, which he has described as "a dog"?

The SPEAKER: Order! Under the standing orders, I could rule the question out of order but the Minister may answer it if he wishes.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Infrastructure) (14:35): Why did you want funding for its extension? Here it is. Are you saying that News Limited is telling lies?

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: It is too soon to take a point of order.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I heard the member for Maroubra say that he did not say this.

Ms Jodi McKay: I ask that you instruct the Minister to direct his comments through the Chair.

The SPEAKER: The Minister will direct his comments through the Chair.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I note that the member for Maroubra implied that he did not say what is quoted in the *Southern Courier*. It is interesting because the headline is clear that he wanted to extend the light rail. The member for Maroubra has been busy lobbying members in this place for its extension. The community's response and the way in which Sydneysiders have worked in and around the light rail construction have been incredible. I will point out some interesting facts. In 2015 we introduced a program called Travel Choices. We

also established the CBD coordination office. We needed to plan and encourage those who commute to the city every day to work in and around a fairly intrusive construction site.

Pleasingly, as a result of the Government's efforts, not only did we change a bus network where we removed hundreds of buses from the core of the city and convinced commuters to change their travel behaviours, but because of Travel Choices more people caught public transport and we saw a reduction in motor vehicles between the hours of 5.00 a.m. and 10.00 a.m. in the city, which is a reduction of 11 per cent. That is what this Government has achieved in managing construction disruption. Members would not understand construction disruption because they never constructed anything.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: In terms of the Labor Party's attitude to light rail, I went back into my magic file and I was quite amused by a question that I received on notice following the budget estimates hearing. During budget estimates I made an observation to the Hon. Daniel Mookhey that if he does not like light rail, he should not catch it. He then asked, "Am I the only person who is barred from using it?" I responded, "Just members of the Labor Party". What particularly amused me is the Labor Party, through an upper House member, has seriously put 25 questions on notice—such as what Act I will use to ban the Labor Party from catching light rail. The Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane had a particular gripe. He asked: Will Transport for NSW transit officers be required to enforce the ban? This Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane bloke ain't particularly bright.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am sure that all members want to hear the answer.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: He goes on: Will Transport for NSW light rail drivers be required to enforce this ban? Will the NSW Police Force police transport commands be required to enforce this ban? What is the maximum penalty for violating this ban? When does this ban come into effect? Is this a lifetime ban? Was the ban put to Cabinet? Was the Police Minister, the Attorney General or the Premier consulted prior to your statement on the ban?

Mr Ryan Park: What's the answer?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The answer is "Yes, yes, yes, yes." You are all banned for life from catching public transport—particularly the member for Newcastle. My favourite question of all is: Is there a public consultation in which the Labor Party members will be permitted to make submissions? I look forward to it.

HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (14:41): My question is addressed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. I cannot hear the member for Oatley.

Mr Stephen Kamper: Use your biggest voice, mate.

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

Mr MARK COURE: How is the Government delivering better health services for patients, their families and health staff across New South Wales?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research) (14:41): I thank the member for Oatley for his question. As many of our colleagues will know, he has worn out the carpet on the way to many ministerial offices—he has certainly worn out mine. I thank him for being a local champion for his community, and without his advocacy I guarantee that we would not have all the great outcomes we are seeing at St George Hospital. I thank the staff who make up our incredible health system across New South Wales. Whether it is medical staff, nursing staff or allied health staff, they work very hard right across this great State. The challenge for the Government is to make sure that we can do far better than the former Labor Government did for 16 long years. In those 16 long years the former Labor Government spent most of the time either cutting its budget or not doing the work of improving hospital infrastructure.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. There are too many audible conversations in the Chamber.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: In fact, in more than seven of its 16 years it cut the Health budget.

Mr Stephen Kamper: Twenty-two years ago.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The member for Cessnock knows we are doing a good job. He is very pleased with what has happened at Cessnock hospital. In 2011 nearly half of our hospitals were more than 50 years old—

Ms Gladys Berejiklian: Shame!

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: It was a shame, as the Premier said. It was appalling. Labor's last budget contained Health spending of just \$15.5 billion—that is only just over six years ago. It was absolutely inadequate to look after our growing community across New South Wales. Since 2010-11, when Labor was last in office and its budget was \$15.5 billion, has the Liberal-Nationals Government increased the budget by \$1 billion?

Government members: No.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Two billion?

Government members: No.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Three billion?

Government members: No.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Four billion?

Government members: No.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Five billion?

Government members: No.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Six billion?

Government members: No.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Seven billion?

Government members: No.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Eight billion? Yes.

Government members: Yes.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Yes, yes, yes. That is what we did. The increase is \$8 billion. Members of the Coalition know how much money we have put into Health but nobody on the Labor benches wants to know.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Rockdale that he is on three calls to order. Members will come to order.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: In the next four years we will spend nearly \$8 billion just on infrastructure, which will make a huge difference to New South Wales. We are going to continue the pipeline of infrastructure. Our Government is not just about increasing and improving infrastructure; we have actually increased the staff. We recognise that there are staff who are doing the job but who need help. Members of the Labor Party stand up in this Chamber and tell big porkies time and time again about what is going on with health staff. Medical staff have increased from 9,614 to 11,705—an increase in the past few years of 2,091 medical staff. Nursing staff have increased from 42,915 to 47,282—an increase of almost 4,500 new nurses at the front line looking after New South Wales patients. Allied health staff have also increased, from 9,019 to 10,241. It does not matter where we look across this great health system, we are delivering for the people of New South Wales. We have 288 hospitals across this State, including 62 multipurpose services and 283 community health centres. This Government is delivering for the people of New South Wales.

Ms Kate Washington: Why are the nurses striking?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I beg your pardon?

Ms Kate Washington: Why are the nurses striking? They are understaffed.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: When we look at the increases in staff and infrastructure, we should also look at some of the other allegations. [*Extension of time*]

Every aspect of the health system is being worked upon by the Coalition Government to make sure we improve it for patients. As the member for Oatley asked the question I will pick on St George Hospital and review what has been happening there. When we came to government the number of patients leaving the emergency department at St George Hospital within four hours of presentation was just 49.1 per cent. It is now up to 64.2 per cent—a massive increase. What about the percentage of patients whose treatment started on time? Under

Labor it was about 57 per cent—a lot of people just did not get treatment. In April-June 2017 it increased to 71.6 per cent. Elective surgery has jumped from 70-odd per cent to 91.9 per cent. The member for Oatley has obviously been instrumental in getting all these improvements. I congratulate him on his advocacy.

It does not matter where you go. The other day I was in Bega with my colleague to look at the South East Regional Hospital. We have already done magnificent work there, and I thank the nurses and staff of the south-eastern region. They told me that this year's flu season was the worst on record. They worked very hard, and many staff were off sick. I thank them all. The member for Bega also announced \$500,000 for planning future health services in the region. We are looking at Moruya, Bega, Pambula and indeed the whole area to see what we need to be doing. The member for Wagga Wagga loves the Wagga Wagga hospital. He has got hospital funding coming out of his ears; it is magnificent. [*Time expired.*]

SYDNEY CBD LIGHT RAIL

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:49): The Minister for Health should sit down and rest.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Strathfield will not tell members to sit down.

Ms JODI McKAY: I am worried about the Minister's health. I apologise. My question is directed to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. Will the Minister confirm that the rush to sign the CBD light rail contract before the project was fully designed means that every variation to the project is costing the taxpayer, and in fact these claims now exceed \$350 million?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Infrastructure) (14:50): Just thinking of bans, I know someone who should be banned from the Parliament House lifts. The premise of the question is—

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

[*Interruption*]

Ms Jodi McKay: Stop, squeakie.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Did I just get called "sweetie" by you?

Ms Jodi McKay: No.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease making personal remarks.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Do not call me "sweetie". Madam Speaker, I reject being called "sweetie" by the member for Strathfield. That hurt me.

The SPEAKER: Does the Minister wish the comment to be withdrawn?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Yes, I would like the comment withdrawn.

The SPEAKER: Will the member for Strathfield withdraw the comment?

Ms Jodi McKay: No.

The SPEAKER: The member will not withdraw the comment.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I do not want to be called "sweetie" by the member for Strathfield. Could you imagine what would happen if I called her "sweetie"? The member for Strathfield should withdraw her comment.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. I cannot hear the Minister. I will not be able to rule on points of order if I cannot hear what the Minister says.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The premise of the question is absolutely wrong. It shows that those opposite do not understand public-private partnerships. They certainly do not understand contracts, contractors and how it all works. But the one thing they do understand is factional politics. The Leader of the House has drawn my attention to some correspondence.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Members of the Labor Left need to be a little more careful with their correspondence. I have a letter in solidarity from Peter Primrose, a member in the other place. He wrote to colleagues saying, "The New South Wales Left Executive has asked Senator Jenny McAllister, Vice President Tim Gartrell and myself to prepare a review of the 2017 New South Wales annual conference."

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: I do not know where the answer is going. If the member for Maroubra is wasting time the clock will be stopped.

Mr Michael Daley: This is boring, it is vacuous and it is irrelevant. The question was about variations to the contract.

The SPEAKER: I do not know where the answer is going yet. The Minister is referring to a letter. I will listen further to the Minister. The member for Maroubra will resume his seat.

Mr Michael Daley: We know it is over \$300 million. We have got the document. They have admitted to \$70 million. They should cough up and be honest.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra will stop blabbering and resume his seat. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the first time.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Attached to the letter is a list of possible questions. Now one might think there might be some questions about public policy or maybe light rail—and, when it comes to the Left of the Labor Party, maybe gun law reform. But one of the interesting questions was, "Are the fringe events of value?" What are the fringe events of the Labor Party?

Ms Sophie Cotsis: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: I am not ruling on relevance.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: What are the fringe-dweller events of the Left of the Labor Party?

Ms Sophie Cotsis: You can speak about the light rail.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury is not taking a point of order, she is arguing with the Minister. The member will resume her seat.

Ms Sophie Cotsis: Madam Speaker—

The SPEAKER: The member took a point of order, I recognised her and then she continued to argue with the Minister. The member for Canterbury will resume her seat.

Ms Sophie Cotsis: Why?

The SPEAKER: When members take a point of order they seek the attention of the Chair, go to the microphone and cite the standing order that has been breached. The member for Canterbury did not do any of that.

Mr Jihad Dib: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Lakemba can sit down too. The Minister for Transport and Infrastructure has the call.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I would like to know why—

Mr Jihad Dib: Madam Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Is this time wasting? I direct the Clerk to stop the clock. Based on the nature of the questions that have been asked today, Opposition members are getting what they deserve. What is the point of order?

Mr Jihad Dib: It is not time wasting. My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance. The question was about the Sydney CBD light rail. It is a genuine point of order.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Lakemba did not listen to the question. There is no point of order. The Minister has the call.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: We on this side of the House are somewhat intrigued to know what these fringe events are and what is their value. The only thing I could come up with is that the member for Fairfield has had a fringe event, and isn't it special? I do not know what hair products you are using, mate, but they ain't good.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! If Opposition members ask the sorts of questions they do, this is the kind of answer they will get. What is the point of order? The question was out of order. I should have ruled them all out of order. They were stupid. What is the member's point of order?

Ms Jodi McKay: Madam Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Order! The ladies are upset; they have got their nails out. The member for Strathfield, their senior member, is waiting to take a point of order and the ladies are yabbering. What is the member's point of order?

Ms Jodi McKay: Ladies, please stop being upset.

The SPEAKER: Get the nails back.

Ms Jodi McKay: Sorry?

The SPEAKER: What is the point of order?

Ms Jodi McKay: Did Madam Speaker mention my nails?

The SPEAKER: No, I would not do that. I would not ever make a personal remark about the member for Strathfield. What is the member's point of order?

Ms Jodi McKay: My point of order relates—

The SPEAKER: Order! Time has expired.

SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (14:56): 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 delivering better services to the most vulnerable people 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) (14:56): I thank the member for Myall Lakes for his question and for his concern for the most vulnerable people in his community. The New South Wales Government is committed to delivering better services for people in New South Wales through maintenance pop-ups, new supply and our social and affordable housing reform. We are transforming social housing to improve services and transform the lives of our tenants. A central component of that is working with and engaging the non-government sector to deliver better outcomes for social housing tenants.

On Tuesday, I was pleased to announce the awarding of contracts for the Social Housing Management Transfer program. That program signals the continuation of the large-scale transformation of our social housing system under the Future Directions strategy. This program, which transfers the management of social housing properties to the community housing sector, will mean the community sector will now manage 32 per cent of our total stock. I was proud to announce on Tuesday that as part of the initiative we are partnering with the following successful community housing providers across New South Wales: Maitland and Port Stephens, Hume Community Housing; Hunter and Mid-Coast, Compass Housing Services; Hunter-New England, Homes North Community; Shoalhaven, Southern Cross Community Housing; Bellingen and Coffs Harbour, Mission Australia Housing; Mid North Coast, Community Housing Limited; Northern Sydney and the Northern Beaches, Link Housing and Bridge Housing, and St George Community Housing Limited.

The benefits of transferring the management of social housing assets to community housing providers will mean that we can utilise a community housing provider's local knowledge in the area they service to better support vulnerable people who are in housing need; we can harness Commonwealth Rental Assistance from the Federal Government; and, most importantly, the system will deliver better services for the tenant. Community housing providers deliver consistently better satisfactions levels for tenants compared with government services.

Our non-government organisations are able to provide the invaluable and crucial local support that is required to break intergenerational disadvantage in communities. I remind the House that the transfer to the community sector is only part of the work we are doing to provide better housing and services for the vulnerable. Yesterday we officially began our market engagement for the second phase of the Social and Affordable Housing Fund [SAHF] with a market briefing held in Parliament House.

The SPEAKER: Order! There are too many audible conversations in the Chamber. The member for Keira will stop wandering around the Chamber and will resume his seat.

Ms PRU GOWARD: It was a terrific turnout. As the *Australian* reported this morning, the briefing was attended by property and infrastructure heavyweights, signalling a strong interest in the latest phase of this part of our social housing reform. Phase two of the SAHF will see an additional 1,200 social and affordable dwellings committed to, on top of the 2,200 dwellings committed to as part of phase one. Each dwelling includes not only a new property for families on the social housing waiting list but also tailored support coordination to help people live better lives and, when possible, gain housing independence.

This Government is leading the way in housing services for vulnerable people. We are engaging the private and community housing sector to provide homes and tailored support for those who need it. One would think that those Opposite would be celebrating the transfers to community housing providers and would be rushing to congratulate the Government on everything it is doing in social housing. In 2015, the Opposition leader said "Not-for-profit community housing associations have proven records as providers of affordable housing. We should build on their success."

Mr Luke Foley: I did.

Ms PRU GOWARD: You did? We are doing it and the Leader of the Opposition should say thank you.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bankstown will come to order. The member for Bankstown is on three calls to order.

Ms PRU GOWARD: Those opposite have been silent because their record is appalling. It took this Government to clean up the mess that the former Labor Government left. [*Extension of time*]

It took this Government to invest in social housing in places such as Telopea, Ivanhoe and Waterloo. It took this Government to properly engage community housing providers and the private sector and expand the number of refugees. This Government is building more public housing for our most vulnerable to live in and is providing the services that help those people live their lives.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: We will continue to deliver social policy reform and services that improve the lives of vulnerable people across New South Wales.

JORDAN SPRINGS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (15:02): My question is directed to the Premier. Given that the community of Jordan Springs has been waiting for a new school since 2013, why is the Premier prepared to spend \$2 billion on sports stadiums instead of building our new school?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (15:03): This Government has the highest spend in education in this State's history, with more than \$4 billion invested over the next four years. Those opposite know that if they want a school we will build it. They failed to do it. Many communities waited 16 years for a school but they did not get it. Since we have been in Government, we have been upgrading and building school after school. I say to the community of Londonderry, it will take our Liberal-Nationals Government to build the—Jordan Springs public school.

Ms Tania Mihailuk: You can't even say it.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No, I do not know the name of every single school in the State. There are more than 2,000 schools and I confess I do not know the name of all of them by heart.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Londonderry will stop calling out in an aggressive manner.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I post this question to the Labor Party. We are building record numbers of schools, hospitals, roads and rail. What does the Labor Party have against us building sporting facilities? Why should the people of New South Wales not also have sporting facilities?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gosford and the member for Fairfield will come to order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Why should the people of New South Wales not also have cultural facilities? No matter where one lives in New South Wales, strong communities are made up of strong education facilities, hospitals, roads, rail and other forms of infrastructure, as well as sporting and cultural infrastructure. Unlike those opposite, we have done the hard yards to make sure we have the resources to deliver everything that communities need. The Labor Party's position is that if we do not build one thing we can build something else. We can build it all.

Mr Stephen Kamper: You can sell it all too.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: What was that, member for Rockdale?

The SPEAKER: Order! I direct the member for Rockdale to remove himself from the Chamber for one hour.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Rockdale left the Chamber at 15:05.]

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The member for Rockdale as he leaves the Chamber should say thank you for stage one of the F6. His constituents will avoid 23 sets of traffic lights getting to their electorate. Those opposite have let the Leader of the Opposition take them down the dangerous path of supporting the relaxation of gun laws. Those opposite have gone down the path of justifying why 10-year-olds should have guns.

Ms Kate Washington: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129. The Premier is talking about gun laws when the question was about education in Jordan Springs.

The SPEAKER: The Premier has been relevant to the question throughout her answer. The member for Port Stephens will resume her seat.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It is relevant because the Leader of the Opposition has taken those opposite down the wrong path when it comes to preferencing the Shooters. They should not let him do the same when it comes to infrastructure. Those opposite should stick up for their communities.

The SPEAKER: Order! Ladies, settle down. The member for Londonderry will come to order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Does the shadow Minister for Sport support the Leader of the Opposition not investing in sporting infrastructure?

Mr Luke Foley: Point of order—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I ask for the clock to be stopped.

The SPEAKER: The clock will be stopped because of the time-wasting interjections and the shouting, squealing and screaming from the Opposition.

Mr Luke Foley: I do want the Government to build sporting infrastructure, but after seven years it still cannot make a decision.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The Leader of the Opposition does not understand the standing orders. The member will resume his seat.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: In New South Wales there is a huge issue with obesity. Is the shadow Minister for Health suggesting that we should not upgrade sporting infrastructure and discourage people?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bankstown will cease interjecting or she also will be directed to leave the Chamber.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We are building record numbers of schools, hospitals, rail lines and roads. Why should we not also build sporting facilities in New South Wales?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Londonderry will cease calling out. Opposition members are so angry and restless this afternoon.

SENIORS CARD

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (15:08): My question is addressed to the Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Women and Minister for Ageing. How is the New South Wales Government making improvements to the popular Seniors Card program to deliver better services and savings for seniors in New South Wales?

Ms TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Women, and Minister for Ageing) (15:09): I thank the member for Riverstone for his question. He is a fantastic advocate for his family, his community and his region in north-western Sydney. I commend him for the work he does, particularly in standing up for seniors. The Liberals and Nationals Government recognises that our community functions better and is more inclusive and effective thanks to the contributions made by our seniors. I acknowledge members of the Older Women's Network in the Chamber today. When seniors are active and involved in community life, everyone benefits.

That is why at the 2015 election the Liberals and Nationals committed \$2 million to deliver better services by expanding the number of businesses offering discounts to our seniors. We also committed to secure partnerships with a major energy retailer, a telecommunications company and a supermarket chain to deliver more savings for seniors. And we are delivering on our promise. Businesses that join the Seniors Card program recognise that older people in New South Wales make up one of our largest consumer groups. The New South Wales Seniors Card is one of the most widely used services for New South Wales residents over the age of 60. Seniors Card members access discounts of up to 50 per cent off goods and services.

Over the past 2½ years, the Liberal-Nationals Government has achieved more to bolster the Seniors Card program than Labor did in 16 years of government. Under this Government, the Seniors Card is the largest member benefits program delivered by a government in Australia, and it is growing at a rate of more than 8,000 new members a month. The New South Wales Seniors Card program is one of the many ways we support seniors to continue to be active, healthy and socially connected. The card not only offers savings on everyday items but it also provides access to government transport concessions and a wide range of community and business discounts.

Through the \$2 million investment we have made, more than 4,700 new businesses have joined the program since 2011, meaning Seniors Card members can now access more than 5,700 participating businesses right across New South Wales. There are now more than 1.5 million Seniors Card holders in New South Wales, and members can access almost 8,000 different offers. The Government has now exceeded its election commitment target for recruiting new businesses two years ahead of schedule. We have achieved far more than we said we would, but we will not stop here. I am proud to say that earlier this week the Premier and I announced a new Seniors Card partnership with the Woolworths Group, which will deliver a bundle of new discounts to drive down the cost of living for seniors. This partnership is a first for New South Wales. I was pleased to be joined at that announcement by the member for Riverstone as well as my ministerial colleagues the member for Castle Hill and the member for Baulkham Hills.

New South Wales Seniors Card holders can now claim a 5 per cent discount on WISH eGift Cards, which can be used at Woolworths Group stores across the State, including supermarkets, Big W and other outlets. It is estimated that a senior can save, on average, up to \$200 a year on the cost of their groceries alone. That is without considering other discounts that are available through the partnership on other everyday items such as fuel and household items at Big W. This is a first for New South Wales and a first for Woolworths. These discounts are available free to seniors. Seniors Card members can also receive a 25 per cent discount on mid-week home delivery passes. Seniors can now have their groceries delivered to their home mid-week for just over \$1 a week. Particularly for large or heavier items, it is a fantastic service that we can now offer to our seniors. Through the partnership there are also discounts of up to 30 per cent on a number of insurance products. [*Extension of time*]

The SPEAKER: Order! Members who wish to have a conversation will do so outside the Chamber.

Ms TANYA DAVIES: In June this year I announced another important saving for seniors with a renewed partnership with AGL to offer Seniors Card members discounts on electricity and gas far above the best market price. When this Government came to office in 2011, Seniors Card holders had access to discounts at just over 1,000 businesses. Those opposite were in government for 16 years; we have been in government for 6½ years. How many additional businesses have we secured in just 6½ years? Is it an additional 1,000 businesses? No. Is it an additional 2,000 businesses? No. Is it an additional 3,000 businesses? No. We have, in fact, delivered 5,700 additional businesses. That is 500 per cent more businesses participating and helping our seniors across the State.

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

Ms TANYA DAVIES: Food, energy and telecommunications are major components of a household budget and we know Labor did nothing to deliver savings in those areas for our seniors. Labor failed to deliver a discount energy offer or a phone and internet bundle offer through the Seniors Card. It was the Liberals and Nationals Government that delivered those benefits for our seniors. Those opposite failed to deliver grocery savings—again, it was the Liberals and Nationals Government who delivered those for our community. This Government takes seriously the cost-of-living pressures on our community and we are putting downward pressure on everything we possibly can across the board. We support our seniors across the State. It is not just me saying this; we have the evidence. More businesses are participating in the Seniors Card program. I urge everyone who has not done so yet to become a Seniors Card member.

CLEAN ENERGY

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (15:16): My question is directed to the Premier. If the details of the Federal Government's new National Energy Plan demonstrate that the plan will fail to meet either the Paris climate targets or New South Wales' own climate target, will the New South Wales Government reject the Federal plan and consider joining other States and Territories in a State-based clean energy target scheme instead?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (15:17): I join the chorus and wish the member for Ballina a very happy birthday. I can give her some good news on her birthday. This side of the House will not sell out on principle. We have seen evidence from those opposite that they will sell their soul to get a headline.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We have set targets for our State for zero emissions by 2050 and to meet the interim Paris agreement targets by 2030, and we intend to stick to those. I am extremely proud that we are the most energy-resilient State in the nation because we have been responsible in the way in which we have acquired our energy sources and we have supported initiatives to reduce emissions. I stand by our policies. As the member for Ballina would know, being a member on the North Coast, before we came to government Labor had given out coal seam gas [CSG] licences like confetti all over northern New South Wales. Those opposite had again sold their souls in relation to green policy. We had to clean up a lot of the mess we inherited.

I am very proud as Premier to restate our position because in New South Wales we have the right balance. To give an extra degree of comfort, in the next four years we will be spending \$1.4 billion not just to secure our energy sources and put downward pressure on households through a climate change fund but also to invest in other programs that meet our targets for reduction and emissions. I am very proud to announce all the rebates and incentives for people to use more energy-efficient resources. It often gets lost in the debate that we can be energy resilient and responsible and still make sure we are making a good contribution to other forms of energy. I note that the two largest solar farms in Australia are in New South Wales at Broken Hill and Nyngan I think is the other one.

Mr Thomas George: Nimbin.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Nyngan, not Nimbin.

Mr Thomas George: You said wind farms.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No, solar, buddy. I make these statements because governments can be responsible in securing their energy and putting downward pressure on resources but also in respecting our environment. We have the right balance in New South Wales. I am very proud to lead a government that has achieved that balance. We will not sell our souls for a headline or a preference deal. We will not be doing deals with the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party just to get a few votes here and there, and we certainly will not sell out our principles.

If I were a member of Parliament on that side of the House I would question the strategy of the Leader of the Opposition. If the Leader of the Opposition thinks it is okay to give 10-year-olds guns, what on earth does he think about emissions and the environment? I would say not much. He can wax and wane and change policy on the go. The member for Ballina can be rest assured that our Government will stay true to our targets and our sources of energy. We will focus on our priorities to ensure that New South Wales continues to be the most resilient State when it comes to energy and can boast the lowest household prices. We will continue to do that. If I were the member for Blue Mountains or the member for Summer Hill, I would be worried about Labor's future environment policy. What does the comrade from Liverpool think about Labor's policy on gun laws and the environment?

I refer to a survey that was left on seats by the Left faction about policy development and challenges. It lists all the questions the Left faction is asking its members. If the members of the Left faction were being honest, they would have a lot to write about in answer to the questions in this survey. The members opposite should be questioning their leader's direction because he has sold out. It is an absolute disgrace. This Government will not sell out. We will respect the policies we have and we will respect the people of New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order. Many of them are very upset and are angry little souls.

WESTCONNEX

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (15:22): My question is addressed to the Minister for Western Sydney, Minister for WestConnex and Minister for Sport. Will the Minister update the House on the delivery of the WestConnex project?

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. The member for Canterbury will resume her seat.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Western Sydney, Minister for WestConnex, and Minister for Sport) (15:23): I thank the member for Holsworthy for her question. I know that the WestConnex project, particularly all the work that we are doing along the M5 corridor to make travel times faster for her community, is incredibly important for her community. I also know that the member for Holsworthy values the significant economic contribution that WestConnex is delivering to this State, particularly the jobs boom that it is creating. Earlier this week, I was in the electorate with the local member visiting Prysmian Australia Pty Limited, the company that is delivering so much of the cabling across the entire WestConnex project.

In fact, on the M4 section of WestConnex alone this company is delivering over 1,100 kilometres of cabling. It has increased the size of its workforce by more than 10 per cent in order to keep delivering on the contracts it has for infrastructure from the New South Wales Government, particularly the WestConnex project and the North West Rail Link. This company now has more than 400 employees across Western Sydney delivering on projects across the State. This is what WestConnex is delivering. Already more than 54 million man hours have gone into the WestConnex project. The Government is creating more than 400 apprenticeships through the delivery of the WestConnex project.

In a fantastic partnership, the Sydney Motorway Corporation, the joint venture partners across the WestConnex three stages and TAFE are making sure that not only are we delivering this fantastic project now but we are also building skills for the future of New South Wales. The new widened section of the M4 is already delivering 17 minutes of travel time savings for drivers on that part of the motorway. The people who live along the M5 corridor cannot wait for the duplication of the M5 tunnel. The M5 tunnel will go from four lanes capacity to 10 lanes capacity. We are already 15 per cent of the way through that and we have currently 15 road headers underground working 24/7 to make sure all those people who live along the M5 corridor finally get the motorway network that they deserve.

WestConnex is not just about the people in Western Sydney. With the announcement of the F6 corridor, we will be building a stub to the F6 to make sure that those people in southern Sydney, who have been waiting 50 years for this, will finally get access to Sydney's motorway network. We are 85 per cent of the way through the M4 East Tunnel. We have 19 road headers underground working 24/7. That tunnel will allow people to travel under Parramatta Road for the first time, skipping all those traffic lights on Parramatta Road to go from Homebush Bay all the way to the City West Link. This project will continue to deliver for people right across New South Wales. The M4-M5 Link, the most important part of WestConnex, will go underneath St Peters and Camperdown and link up with the M4.

We will also be delivering one of the most complex and one of the most important interchanges ever constructed in Australia, that is, the Rozelle interchange. The Rozelle interchange will link the Anzac Bridge, the M4, the M4-M5 Link and the Iron Cove Bridge and it will provide for the first time the connectivity for the Western Harbour Tunnel, so that people across the northern part of Sydney have increased access across the harbour. This will allow more goods and services to be moved around Sydney more freely. It is part of an integrated transport solution right across New South Wales that links in with the Metro rail across north-west Sydney, the expansion of Metro Rail through the city, and out to the south-west. I have noticed the lack of support from the Opposition. In fact, it is not even lack of support, it is just rank confusion about whether they support the project of WestConnex.

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

Mr STUART AYRES: All the people in their communities, particularly in the south-west, are saying they desperately need the M5 duplicated but they do not want to pay a toll. I wonder how Labor would pay for this project. I wonder how the member for Keira— *[Extension of time]*

The SPEAKER: Is the member for Keira awake?

Mr STUART AYRES: I have an image of the member for Keira with his—

Mr Ryan Park: I know you like my suit.

The SPEAKER: Order! We will not go there, member for Keira. The member for Keira will come to order.

Mr STUART AYRES: The member for Keira does struggle between billions and millions.

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

Mr STUART AYRES: The member for Keira has to pull out the abacus to work out where he is going to find all of the money to cover the costs of the M4 and the M5 after telling his Western Sydney members of Parliament to go out and say to the people that they will not have a toll. He will then have to tell the Parliamentary Budget Office that the toll has to stay to keep all of Labor's election commitments. He will have to submit the costings of all Labor's election promises to the Parliamentary Budget Office and say, "Sorry, all those guys in south-west Sydney who have been out saying no toll on the M5" and "Don't worry, Granville, you have had your poster about no toll on the M4. Actually, we're going to have to tell the Parliamentary Budget Office we support the toll too". Opposition members know, as stated by the member for Keira, that the toll is an important part of the funding mix. The tolls will stay because they know that the tolls need to be there to deliver the projects. Unfortunately, Labor over 16 years did not know how to finish the M4, the M5 or complete a link that would allow Sydney to grow into the future.

*Committees***STAYSAFE (JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY)****Reference**

Mr GREG APLIN : As Chair: I inform the House that, in accordance with Standing Order 299 (1), the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety has received a referral from the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight to conduct an inquiry into heavy vehicle safety and the use of technology to improve road safety, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

*Petitions***PETITIONS RECEIVED**

The SPEAKER: I announce that the following petition signed by more than 10,000 persons has been lodged for presentation:

Hunter Public Hospitals

Petition requesting the Government ensure that public hospitals in the Hunter region are publicly operated and kept in public ownership, received from **Ms Jenny Aitchison**.

The SPEAKER: I set down discussion on the petition as an order of the day for a future day.

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**.

Slaughterhouse Monitoring

Petition requesting mandatory closed-circuit television for all New South Wales slaughterhouses, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Fernhill Estate Cemetery, Mulgoa

Petition opposing the development of a cemetery at Fernhill Estate, Mulgoa, received from **Ms Tanya Davies**.

Inner West Bus Services

Petition opposing the privatisation of inner west bus services, received from **Ms Jo Haylen**.

Zone Six Bus Services

Petition requesting Sydney buses in zone six remain in public hands and be publicly operated, received from **Ms Jo Haylen**.

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

Summer Hill Electorate Bus Routes

Petition opposing the removal of bus stops along the 412, 422, 423, 426 and 428 bus routes, received from **Ms Jo Haylen**.

Community Legal Centres

Petitions requesting the Government commit secure and ongoing funding to community legal centres in New South Wales, received from **Ms Jenny Leong** and **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

*Committees***COMMITTEE ON THE HEALTH CARE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION****Report: Review of the Health Care Complaints Commission Annual Report 2015-16**

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

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (15:31): I speak for the first time in my capacity as chair of the Joint Standing Committee on the Health Care Complaints Commission concerning its review of the commission's 2015-16 annual report. Under section 65 of the Health Care Complaints Act 1993 the committee is required to

examine all reports of the commission and this is the principal means by which the committee exercises its oversight responsibilities. This is the committee's second review during the Fifty-sixth Parliament. The commission has continued to see an increase in complaint numbers. There was an increase of just over 15 per cent during the reporting period. Over the past five years complaints have increased by 47 per cent.

We found that the increase in complaints is part of a broader trend. Other national and international health complaints agencies report similar increases. It should be made very clear that we heard the increase in complaints is driven by social factors and does not reflect a decline in health services. With an ageing population greater demand is being placed on health services. In addition, there is growing public confidence as patients and their families are better informed about their healthcare needs and choices. They are now more comfortable questioning medical practitioners and seeking independent assessment when things do not go as expected.

Additionally, complaints are becoming more complex. We heard how a single complaint may involve several health providers or one practitioner who has treated multiple patients. It could also involve new medical techniques or the matter may already be subject to investigation by another agency. The combination of increased complaints and complexity is creating challenges for the commission. It is taking the commission longer to process complaints and it is having difficulty meeting some of its performance targets. We welcome the commissioner's statement that the commission is not sacrificing quality in order to meet performance targets. However, there is a need to ensure the commission can process complaints in a more timely manner.

We have made five recommendations focused on enabling the commission to better meet the challenges posed by its increasing and complex workload. We recommended the commission look at improving its administrative processes. Greater use of technology and the streamlining of administrative processes may improve the time taken to assess and resolve complaints. We also recommended that the commission consider undertaking more detailed analysis of complaints data. We believe that having a better understanding of the data may help the commission to better identify and respond to trends and spikes in complaints. We heard about the commission's strong working relationships with each of the State's local health districts; this has led to improvements in the way complaints are managed at the local level. We also heard that the level of consultation and cooperation between the commission and private hospitals and private health providers is comparatively less.

We believe the commission should have a stronger relationship with the private health sector. For this reason we recommended the commission work more closely with private hospitals and health providers. We believe the commission's knowledge and experience may assist private health facilities with their complaints management processes. Prior to 2015, the commission was limited to issuing a public warning at the end of an investigation. Following the 2015 changes to the Health Care Complaints Act the commission can now issue a public warning at any time during an investigation. It can do this when it identifies a threat to public health and safety.

In 2015-16 the commission issued its first public warning while still investigating a complaint. The warning was about the dangers of cosmetic surgical and medical procedures performed by non-registered health practitioners. The procedures were carried out in non-sterile environments, such as residential and hotel premises, and by people not qualified to perform them or to administer prescription drugs. We heard the commission currently has no formal means of measuring the reach and impact that the warnings may have on the broader community. It is important that the commission is able to evaluate the impact of each warning. We have therefore recommended the commission consider ways to measure the effectiveness of its public warnings.

We heard the increased volume of complaints meant the commission provided just over half of its intended 60 community outreach presentations during the reporting period. These presentations help health service providers and community groups by informing them about the commission's role and functions. Our final recommendation is that the commission maintain a strong commitment to community outreach activities, particularly to vulnerable community groups. This is to help ensure no community group is disadvantaged when accessing the health complaints system.

Despite some challenges in meeting performance targets in the face of rising complaint numbers and complexity, we are confident in the commission's ability to meet those challenges. The commission continues to provide a high level of service and to fulfil its role to protect public health and safety. On behalf of the committee I thank the commissioner and all of the staff of the commission for their hard work, dedication and professionalism. I thank the members of the committee including the member for Seven Hills and deputy chair, Mark Taylor; the Hon. Lou Amato, and members of the Opposition for their support. I thank the previous chair of the committee, the member for Oxley and now Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, for her contribution. I thank all of the committee staff, particularly Ben Foxe, Kieran Lewis and Simon Johnston, who worked so hard on this inquiry. I commend the report to the House.

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (15:40): As a member of the committee I will speak to the report on the Health Care Complaints Commission annual report 2015-16. I acknowledge the endorsement of the report by the committee's chair, the member for Terrigal, and thank him for his role as chair of the committee. I acknowledge the important work that the Health Care Complaints Commission [HCCC] does as the overseer of services provided by health professionals. The majority of people have positive experiences and outcomes when they seek health services, be it dentists, psychiatrists or other health professionals. But if people experience outcomes that are not expected or services that are not delivered in accordance with professional standards they have the opportunity to raise their concerns with the HCCC.

I am mindful of the statistics that show an increase in the complexity and number of complaints being made to the HCCC. Each of those complaints relates to someone who has had a negative experience with their health services. In my previous role as a health lawyer—a nice way of saying a medical negligence lawyer—I met many people who had experiences and interactions with health professionals that led them to make complaints to the HCCC. Each of the statistics that we are given and the Health Care Complaints Commission reports to us is a person who has had a difficult experience and sometimes an experience that will inform their health outcomes for their lifetime. The HCCC does important work. I thank the HCCC Commissioner Sue Dawson for her leadership of the commission. It is a difficult task. The complexity and number of complaints is increasing.

One of the recommendations was for the HCCC to consider ways to measure the effectiveness of public warnings. I welcome that recommendation as I believe greater consideration must be given to the issuing of public warnings. If the effectiveness of public warnings is known, consideration may be given to increasing the number of public warnings that will inform public confidence in the health system. I am aware of circumstances such as the use of the transvaginal mesh that is affecting thousands of women and no warnings were issued. I acknowledge it is one of the most complex cases for the HCCC, which it is still looking at. I acknowledge my fellow committee members and, in particular, the Hon. Walt Secord, for their contributions to the committee.

Report noted.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 45/56

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

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) (15:44): I speak to the Legislation Review Committee digest 45/56 dated October 2017. The committee's most recent digest reviewed a total of 10 bills introduced in the sitting week commencing 10 October 2017. In addition to this, the committee also reviewed a number of regulations, including several remakes of regulations due to the staged repeal of regulations on 1 September 2017. Due to the length of this week's digest, I have reserved my comments for some of the more noteworthy issues contained in the bills reviewed.

I will now turn to some of the key issues that emerged from the committee's review of the bills. A number of bills introduced last week related to the justice portfolio. The Crime (High Risk Offenders) Amendment Bill 2017 sets out reforms to extended supervision and continuing detention orders in relation to high-risk offenders. These reforms arose from a statutory review of high-risk offenders legislation that was conducted by the Department of Justice in 2016-17. One of the main changes contained in this bill is the extended circumstances in which the Supreme Court can grant a continuing detention order in relation to certain offenders.

The current test considers whether there is an unacceptable risk that the offender will commit a further offence and whether they can be adequately supervised in the community. The bill proposes to remove this second requirement due to concerns raised about certain offenders who repeatedly breach supervision orders and cycle in and out of detention. The committee noted that detaining offenders beyond the expiry of their custodial sentence may be seen as a breach of the offender's right to liberty, and may become a more common option rather than a last resort. However, the committee also acknowledged that there might be good reasons for the change in the test, including reasons nominated in the statutory review. In these circumstances, the committee drew the new test to the Parliament's attention.

The committee also reviewed the Crimes (Sentencing and Procedure) Amendment (Sentencing Options Bill) 2017. The object of this bill is to improve the availability and nature of community-based sentencing options for courts when sentencing offenders. As the bill provides for the creation of intensive correction orders, community correction orders, and conditional release orders, it enables the court to impose a number of conditions that impact upon personal liberty. However, the committee recognised that these orders exist as an alternative to imprisonment and that courts have been given appropriate discretion to impose or not impose conditions as they see fit.

The bill also allows the regulations to prescribe the administration of these orders. This enables the regulations, which are not subject to parliamentary scrutiny, to be made in relation to conditions that impact the liberty and privacy of offenders including supervision requirements, home detention, electronic curfews, and community service work. While the committee acknowledged that this delegates legislative power, the committee also recognised that schemes of this nature will require periodic regulations for administrative efficiency. In light of both these issues, the committee made no further comment.

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Sydney Drinking Water Catchment) Bill 2017 makes amendments to clarify the application of the water quality test for certain proposed development applications, and validates the development consent granted on 21 September 2015 for the Springvale mine extension. One of the issues identified in the bill is that it prevents a challenge to any development consent granted before the commencement of the amending Act because it was not granted in accordance with the amendments contained in this bill. The committee notes that the bill makes amendments to the State Environmental Planning Policy (Sydney Drinking Water Catchment) 2011, which covers matters other than the water quality test that may be legitimate grounds for challenge. The committee drew this issue to the attention of the Parliament.

The Health Practitioner Regulation Amendment Bill 2017 gives effect to recent changes relating to the registration of health practitioners. These changes were recommended following a review of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme. One issue identified in the bill is that it requires the Health Care Complaints Commission to publish details of a complaint against a registered health practitioner where the complaint has been proved or admitted in whole or part, or where their registration has been cancelled or suspended due to disciplinary action. The committee notes that this could interfere with the privacy and professional reputation of the health practitioner concerned. However, the committee acknowledged that the integrity of the health complaints scheme rests upon making the public aware of unsatisfactory conduct or professional misconduct in the industry. In these circumstances, the amendments have a greater impact on the public's interest. I thank the committee staff and the committee members for their assistance. I commend the digest to the House.

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (15:50): I make a contribution on behalf of the Opposition to the Legislation Review Digest No. 45/56, dated 17 October. The committee examined 10 bills and five regulations. It commented on all of the regulations and seven of the bills. I will touch on a couple of the bills to highlight some of the work of the committee. The Health Practitioner Regulation Amendment Bill 2017 makes changes to the Health Practitioner Regulation (Adoption of National Law) Act 2009 and adopts, with modifications, the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law set out in the schedule to the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009 of Queensland. The purpose of the bill was to regulate some of the legislation and regulation between the jurisdictions of New South Wales and Queensland. The committee noted:

Schedule 1 of the bill amends the Health Practitioner Regulation (Adoption of National Law) Act 2009 which itself makes a number of references to the Queensland equivalent of that Act. With respect to the health practitioner regulation, NSW legislation refers to Queensland legislation which validly applies to NSW, and where changes to Queensland legislation automatically apply in NSW.

The Committee recognises that the effect of this is that NSW law is being amended by another jurisdiction without the benefit of the Parliament of NSW being able to scrutinise the amending legislation.

The Committee also notes that in order to achieve national harmonisation in some regulatory fields, it is generally required that one jurisdiction hosts model legislation which other jurisdictions will adopt through references to it. In addition, these changes are the subject of a lengthy review process and the nature of cooperative federalism sometimes requires an approach like this for streamlining legislative efficiency.

The committee made no further comment on that point. However, it is a matter of which the Parliament should be cognisant for future reference.

I wish to also comment on the Environmental Planning and Assessment (Sydney Drinking Water Catchment) Bill 2017. The committee's examination of that bill, as sometimes is the case, happened after the bill was passed in this House. It is not an ideal way for the committee to operate. However, that is the way things fall sometimes. I remind the House and members that the work of the committee is subject to an open inquiry which is looking into the work of the committee and the legislation under which the committee works and its scrutiny of bills. Submissions to the inquiry close on 30 November. I encourage members to consider making a submission and to consider inviting submissions from interested members of their electorates on the work of the committee. I thank the staff who support the committee and my fellow committee members. I commend the digest to the House.

Report noted.

*Matter of Public Importance***NATIONAL CARERS WEEK**

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (15:53): My matter of public importance is about National Carers Week. National Carers Week 2017 runs from 15 to 21 October. It recognises and celebrates the outstanding contribution that unpaid carers make to our nation. In New South Wales, I acknowledge the chief executive officer of Carers NSW Elena Katrakis and her team for their advocacy and for the valuable contribution they make to carers. New South Wales has 904,400 carers, 278,700 of whom are primary carers; 1.3 million people have a disability, which is 18 per cent of the population; and approximately 13 per cent of the Indigenous population are carers. Those statistics are real. Government and Opposition members must do all they can to ensure that carers are listened to and protected. My biggest concern is that the majority of carers—approximately 80 per cent—are women who are not paid, therefore they will have limited savings for retirement.

In 2015, it was estimated that carers saved taxpayers \$60.3 billion annually. Carers assist people to remain living in the community for longer and therefore make a substantial saving on premature admission to costly residential care or supported accommodation options. Carers also experience benefits from caring, particularly in terms of their relationship with a person being cared for. Carers often miss out on important social relationships, including associating with people at work, and in recreation and leisure pursuits, which leaves them feeling isolated. They are disadvantaged financially. Caring responsibilities can adversely affect the financial situations of carers. People who have to give up work to become a full-time carer will receive a drop in income. In New South Wales, 32 per cent of all carers of workforce age and 46 per cent of primary carers are not in the labour force compared to 20 per cent of non-carers. Carers in this State have a lower median gross personal income per week of \$575 than non-carers of \$755. The median personal income of primary carers was even lower at \$420 or 56 per cent of that of non-carers.

I acknowledge the work of young carers. Young carers are less likely than their non-carer counterparts to complete their education and participate in employment. Young carers often have a lack of time to participate in social and recreational activities. Young carers are a hidden group under the age of 25. Many carers are as young as 12 years old. A child's parents may have been in an accident or have major issues with their mental health and their children look after them. I urge the Government to ensure that additional funding and resources are provided for young carers.

The Government must also ensure that while most Ageing, Disability and Home Care [ADHC] clients are people with a disability, some ADHC programs work directly with the family carer as the main client. For example, the Older Parent Carer Support Coordination Program—which Carers NSW delivers in some areas of the State along with nine other service providers, and provides case management, information, referral and National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] transition support—and a number of other programs will disappear after July 2018. I urge the Government to continue funding those programs. They are important programs for our carers. I urge the Government to protect and strengthen the NSW Carers (Recognition) Act as we move forward to next year's budget. I congratulate, commend and thank all carers across New South Wales for the work they do.

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (15:58): I thank the member for Canterbury for raising National Carers Week as the matter of public importance and acknowledging it in the Parliament today. National Carers Week is an annual national awareness week when we highlight and celebrate carers. In New South Wales approximately 905,000 people are carers. Carers are family members, friends, neighbours and work colleagues who provide unpaid support to people with a disability, chronic illness, mental illness or dementia or who are aged. In my community of North Shore I have had the pleasure and privilege of meeting with local carers, in particular the North Shore Support Group, which is a One Door schizophrenia support group that participated alongside me in the One Door Wellness Walk across the Sydney Harbour Bridge last weekend. I also pay tribute to the Mosman Carers Group that is accessible and open to anybody who needs support in Mosman and North Sydney. They service all of my electorate.

Across the State approximately 110,000 carers are young people under the age of 25. People who care for parents are under a lot of pressure. A need for caring often comes about because of mental illness. The work of carers is essential to the wellbeing of our society and our economy. The NSW Carers Awards are just one element that we can put in place to recognise and acknowledge individuals and groups during Carers Week. I note this year the NSW Carer of the Year Award was given to Alan Gravalin from Epping. I know that Alan's wife, Lyn, suffers from younger onset dementia. Alan has supported Lyn to live a normal life, enjoying time with their friends and family. Through his care, he encouraged and enabled her to continue her painting and drawing for as long as possible.

Alan also volunteers for Alzheimer's Australia NSW, and with BaptistCare, where as a carer coach he supports other people who are caring for someone at home. I mention Alan not only because he won the Carer of the Year Award but also because his involvement and support is indicative of the work that many carers do across our society. They care not only for a family member, friend or neighbour; they are also often the most generous people in our community and are involved in other voluntary organisations. Carers like Alan make an enormous contribution to our communities and their caring roles are valued at \$60.3 billion annually across Australia.

In addition to the Carers Awards, the Government also supports local celebrations for carers across the State. We proudly supported 535 events in New South Wales for carers in 2017. The Government is also continuing to implement the NSW Carers Strategy 2014-19. This year we are reinvesting more than \$5.6 million in carer grants to support carers and ensure that they enjoy the same rights, choices and opportunities as other members of the community. While the primary focus of the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] is to provide reasonable and necessary supports to individuals with permanent or likely to be permanent impairment that affects their ability to undertake daily activities, the NDIS also aims to better support carers in their roles. Although carers do not have individual packages of funded support, they benefit when the person they care for is better supported.

The Government is committed to improving support for carers in New South Wales, including through the preparation for, and implementation of, the NDIS. For example, carers may now have more time and opportunity to participate in the paid workforce. We know that this is a priority for many carers. The plans of participants in the scheme also benefit carers through supports that sustain the carer in their caring role or improve the caring environment. Recently the Minister for Disability Services and I met carers at the Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre. Many of them were caring for people with a mental health issue. I know how much pressure is put on them and how much support they need. The Government will continue to monitor outcomes for carers through the NDIS, and be supported by the advice of the NSW Carers Advisory Council. I have heard feedback in my community about that. On behalf of this Government and the Minister for Disability Services, I thank all carers across New South Wales for their wonderful contribution to the people they care for and to our community. I thank the member for Canterbury for raising this matter of public importance.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (16:03): I thank the member for Canterbury, and shadow Minister for Disability Services, for bringing this matter of public importance to the Chamber. I know only too well that the member for Canterbury deals with carers on a daily basis and knows precisely how important their contribution is to our community. She therefore knows what support we as parliamentarians must give to them. Millions of Australians dedicate their days to caring for someone who, for whatever reason, has a limited capacity to care for themselves. I am pleased that Carers Week gives us an opportunity to recognise those people and thank them for their dedication and selflessness.

We know that the dollar value of unpaid care work is currently an amazing \$1.1 billion per week. We also know that this unpaid care work is overwhelmingly done by women and that they sacrifice a great deal in order to care for their loved ones. This year's theme for Carers Week is "Carers Count". It reminds us of not just the sheer number of people who undertake unpaid caring work throughout their lifetime but also the enormous contribution they make to the lives of the people for whom they care and to our community more broadly. Of course, it would be remiss of me to ignore the needs of carers themselves. At the end of the day, we need to make sure that carers are getting the support and assistance they need to help them look after others. Carers Week not only acknowledges the work that carers do but also encourages carers to access the support systems that are currently available in our community.

It is easy for a person to become socially isolated when they care for someone else. Accessing support networks can often be daunting, difficult and disjointed. This week is an opportunity to find out what is out there and how to tap into those services to help carers continue to support others. It is also a good opportunity for those with the capacity to help carers to reflect on the services that are available and ensure they are meeting the needs of the people who need it most. Finally, I give a special thanks to carers in my community. I thank them for the sacrifices they have made and continue to make. I thank them for their advocacy to ensure that their loved one continues to receive the best possible services and for all they do in our community.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (16:06): In reply: I thank the member for North Shore and the member for Swansea for their important contributions. The member for North Shore spoke about carers in her community and mentioned the 110,000 young carers across New South Wales, a number of whom live in her community and support people with mental illnesses. I know she has an interest in this area and I acknowledge her advocacy and work. I acknowledge my colleague and good friend the member for Swansea, who I know organises many forums in her electorate for older carers. She is a passionate advocate for carers, particularly in regional New South Wales. As we move to the 2019 election the member for Swansea has raised issues with me in order to develop policy that strengthens the supports and rights of carers in New South Wales.

This week is very important for carers across New South Wales and Australia. But action has to meet the words that have been spoken today. That is why I have brought this matter to the attention of the House. As we transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS], which was a Labor initiative and which we absolutely support, we also have to consider the carers and family carers in particular who provide support to people with a disability or mental illness. Since 2008 the New South Wales Government has been provided funding support for a number of programs that help carers, particularly those who are older parents. I urge the Government to reconsider its cut to that funding. As the NDIS is rolled out the Government should continue the funding and look at other programs so that parent carers do not fall through the cracks, which is our concern. It does not matter what political party we are from, this is a major concern. As we go forward we need to make sure that people do not fall through the cracks. I urge the Government to reconsider and look at continuing funding for those family carers.

Community Recognition Statements

PACIFIC PALMS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (16:09): Amazing work is occurring at Pacific Palms Primary School in my electorate. We live in a world where it seems sometimes impossible to keep up with changes in technology and innovation. I am pleased to report that principal Melissa Merchant and assistant principal Lyn Woods are preparing the next generation at Pacific Palms for the ever-changing world. The school leadership has developed the concept of "collective genius"—a research-based approach of teaching based on a long-term strategic plan to improve performance. The *Educator* magazine shortlisted Pacific Palms Primary School as one of 40 of Australia's innovative schools. I congratulate it on this award and on the amazing work done by all at the school.

BLUE MOUNTAINS CROQUET CLUB

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (16:10): Earlier this year I had the pleasure of attending the official opening of the Blue Mountains Croquet Club's new independent lawn at Peter Carroll Field in Leura. The lawn represents the completion of a very difficult stage for the club, and was based on a 2014 Community Building Partnership Grant. I commend the president, Adrian Rowland; former president Barry Moray, who oversaw the building of the lawn; and vice president, John Siccardi, the major driving force behind the project. I commend treasurer Gail Siccardi for her financial management, and Blue Mountains Cricket Association chief executive officer Ian Strudwick for his cooperation and assistance in sharing the oval and clubhouse. I also commend Blue Mountains City Council for its support. I congratulate everyone involved in this fantastic project and club.

NATIONAL CARERS WEEK

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Disability Services) (16:11): This week during National Carers Week the New South Wales Government recognised seven carers from diverse backgrounds. Yesterday I had the pleasure of meeting Alan Gravalin, the 2017 NSW Carer of the Year. Alan is an outstanding carer who is an advocate and mentor. His commitment to his wife, Lyn, who has younger onset dementia, allowed her to remain at home for as long as possible and pursue her interest in art. I am also proud to recognise six other carers and organisations. Gladys Panoncillo is committed to supporting her 10-year-old son who has a severe intellectual disability, moderate to severe autism spectrum disorder and is non-verbal. Lauren Mott is a young carer providing support to her mother and younger brother. Incredibly, she is also working towards her Higher School Certificate, is part of the student leadership team and coaches AFL. Maree Brindley cares for her 21-year-old son and has been his primary carer since birth. Kim Pow cares for her daughter who suffered a series of strokes as a young adult. Finally, I commend Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra and Sutherland Shire Carer Support Service for its support for carers. These are only a few of the incredible carers providing support in New South Wales. There are more than 905,000 carers who provide unpaid support to members of our community with a disability or dementia or who are of frail age. I acknowledge them all in National Carers Week.

SAMUEL GOVENDER STATE CROSS COUNTRY TEAM SELECTION

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (16:12): It is always a pleasure to be able to present a NSW State Representative Award to people in the Swansea electorate. Last month I was delighted to attend Valentine Public School's end of term assembly to present Samuel Govender with a NSW State Representative Award, after he travelled to Tasmania earlier this year to compete in the National Cross Country Championships. After competing in the local cross country competition for Valentine Public School, Sam went on to become the Eastlakes Zone Champion and then the Hunter Regional Cross Country Champion. After competing at a State level, he earned a spot on the New South Wales State Cross Country team. Sam's hard work and dedication paid off, winning gold in the national road relays, and a bronze medal in the New South Wales team's overall performance. I congratulate

Sam on his outstanding achievements and say a big thank you to all at Valentine Public School who helped with fundraising to get him to Tasmania.

TRIBUTE TO FERDI DOMINELLI, OAM

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (16:13): I congratulate Ferdi Dominelli, OAM, of Sylvania, who was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to the community in a range of roles. Ferdi has gone from working in his family's market gardens at 4.30 a.m. before school, to running a successful motor vehicle company. He even gave nine years of dedicated service to Hurstville council. He has raised nearly \$15 million for multiple charities and causes, including the Cerebral Palsy Alliance, Children's Cancer Institute of Australia and the Caps for Cancer Foundation. He also serves on the fundraising committee for the Cancer Care Lodge at St George Hospital. Ferdi believes that God gives certain people the talent to fundraise so they can help those who are less fortunate. He has lived his life by that principle—helping as many people as he can. I once again congratulate Ferdi on his years of dedicated support to local charities, and on continuously and selflessly giving back to the shire community since the early 1970s.

NSW LAW REFORM COMMISSION FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) (16:14): I recognise the NSW Law Reform Commission, which has recently celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. The celebration occurred in this building on the fiftieth anniversary of the assent of the Law Reform Commission Act 1967, which was the legislation establishing the commission. That event was held on 25 September. By providing advice and reports to government on references by the Attorney General, the commission has played an invaluable role for five decades. Speaking for myself, its reports have been of invaluable assistance to the Opposition, as self-evidently they are to the Government. The commission seeks to improve and modernise the law, repeal unnecessary or obsolete law, provide improved access to justice and remove defects and inefficiencies in the law. The commission pursues these aims with considerable intellectual rigour and a very real commitment to consultation. The current chair is Alan Cameron, AO, and the deputy chair is the Hon. Justice Paul Brereton.

NORTH SHORE ELECTORATE FUNDING APPLICATIONS

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (16:14): A number of organisations in my electorate have put forward funding requests in support of some of their activities. The wonderful staff, students and parents of Middle Harbour Public School have welcomed me along to many of their classes and performances. They have applied for funding for a performance platform and outdoor learning area. I encourage the Government to support this application. The Mosman Public School Parents and Citizens Association is seeking funding to replace and improve the current play area to include new play equipment and the creation of an open classroom. I had a great time visiting the school with relieving principal Nadia Tobia and Parents and Citizens president Kate Blunden. I also urge the Government to support this funding application. The Mosman Cricket Club is seeking funding to replace the junior cricket nets with new and improved synthetic nets. It is a successful and dynamic local club. I recommend that the Government also support its funding request.

MARRICKVILLE STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (16:16): I pay tribute to the excellent work of State Emergency Service [SES] volunteers in my electorate of Heffron. On the weekend of 18 to 20 August, residents in my electorate and across Sydney were struck by hugely damaging winds. Fortunately, the volunteers of the Marrickville SES were on hand to respond to any calls for help. Over that weekend the Marrickville unit responded to 24 requests for assistance, mostly on the evening of 18 August, varying from fallen trees to damaged roofs. As I have previously told the House, the unit recently progressed to a State Disaster Rescue Competition. Last weekend that competition was held in Bathurst. Marrickville placed fourth. That is a spectacular result and a testament to the huge effort they have put into their training and preparation. I congratulate the entire Marrickville SES unit. I thank them for all that they do for our community.

AUSTRALIAN BANGLADESH SPORTS AND CULTURAL ASSOCIATION

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (16:16): I congratulate the board and members of the Australian Bangladesh Sports and Cultural Association on another year of serving the Australian Bangladeshi community, particularly the Bangladeshi cricketing community in this country. The Bangladeshi community, although comparatively small, contributes so much to Australian society. It is appropriate that we recognise this and celebrate all of its achievements. Many Australians know little of Bangladeshi culture and language, but they do know Bangladesh is a cricket-loving nation, and a successful one at that, particularly in one day internationals. At Cricketers Night 2017 that love of the game, and the enthusiasm of Bangladeshis and Australians to continue playing cricket, was celebrated. I am a cricket lover and I was pleased to be able to attend that function. I pay special tribute to the champions, runners up, officials and all those who participated in the past cricketing season.

TRIBUTE TO BUDDY SALHAB

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale) (16:17): I congratulate Mr Buddy Salhab of Your Nutrition Coach for promoting healthy living and wellbeing in my electorate of Rockdale. Mr Salhab runs a fitness studio with a focus on low rates and no lock-in contracts. He centres his fitness programs around his clients' nutrition. Mr Salhab has a strong belief in making a difference in people's lives, and started working in training and nutrition in response to the growing obesity epidemic in Australia. While the fitness industry receives a great deal of criticism, Mr Salhab brings an incredibly positive attitude and a client-focused approach to his business. He has achieved growth and success as a result. I am always encouraged when I see people with an entrepreneurial spirit start businesses in my electorate. I wish Mr Salhab success as he continues to expand his business to other locations. I congratulate Mr Salhab and his clients, many of whom have achieved substantial weight loss through his fitness and nutrition program.

MARINE RESCUE ULLADULLA

Ms SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast) (16:18): On Sunday I joined with Marine Rescue NSW Commissioner Stacey Tannos, the Marine Rescue Ulladulla unit and other units in the area to commission a new vessel, the Ulladulla 20 or *Rex Pymble*. The new 7.5 metre ocean cylinder represents a \$300,000 investment in the safety of our volunteers and the many thousands of local and visiting boaters who will take to the waters over summer. The vessel was named in honour of the late Rex Pymble, who was a long-time member of Marine Rescue Ulladulla and the unit's former treasurer, serving with them for more than 34 years. The Ulladulla unit and its responsibilities are steadily growing, with membership increasing by 15 per cent over the past year. They responded to 48 incidents on the water, handled 7,500 radio calls and wrote logs on 2,100 vessels with 5,800 people on board. For the safety of the volunteers and the boating community, they need the best equipment and facilities. I am proud that the New South Wales Government is supporting Marine Rescue NSW and investing in new and refurbished vessels on the South Coast. I congratulate Marine Rescue Ulladulla and thank them for keeping us safe on the water.

YERIN ABORIGINAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (16:19): This week Yerin Aboriginal Health Services celebrated a big milestone with the signing of the second collaborative partnership agreement between Yerin Aboriginal Health Services, the Primary Health Networks and the Central Coast Local Health District. The major aim of joining forces is to improve health outcomes for the local Aboriginal community and help close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people on the Central Coast. Collaborative partnerships are vital in our health system as they allow ongoing interconnectivity and support between local health districts and specialised primary health care providers. A lot of hard work, dedication and effort goes into ensuring that the health and wellbeing of our Aboriginal community remains a top priority for the region. I congratulate all those involved in the partnership on this win for the community. I mention in particular Belinda Field, the chief executive officer of Yerin Aboriginal Health Services, and the board of Yerin Aboriginal Health Services.

RESILIENT AUSTRALIA AWARDS

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (16:20): This morning I was delighted to attend the New South Wales 2017 Resilient Australia Awards ceremony at Parliament House. St Ives North Public School from my electorate won the schools category for its Project FireStorm. Project FireStorm highlights the ability of young people to investigate the impact of bushfires on people and places, identify problems and issues related to bushfires and propose solutions. These awards are aimed at inspiring communities to withstand and recover from natural disasters. The project is also a great example of community and government working together at a local level. St Ives North Public School students learned about preparing for bushfires through a partnership with the NSW Rural Fire Service. I am pleased that the Department of Education is now actively promoting this program to other schools. I congratulate everyone involved in this wonderful project and wish St Ives North Public School the very best at the national level awards in November. I thank the Attorney General for his address and encourage all awardees.

CRICKETER CLARA IEMMA

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (16:21): Supporting young women's participation in sport is a hugely important initiative in breaking the glass ceiling in traditional male-dominated areas. On this note I acknowledge and congratulate the achievements of young Clara Iemma. Clara is an outstanding ambassador for young women in cricket, and a role model for all young girls striving for a professional career in sport. Clara was part of the under 18 New South Wales cricket team for the past two years and was the number one player at the Australian National Championships, leading run scorer, second highest wicket taker and she scored a century at the nationals. As a result of this impressive career, she has been invited to the Cricket Australia National Academy

in Brisbane and left yesterday. Clara has been awarded two professional contracts with the Sydney Sixes to play in the Big Bash and with the ACT Comets to play in the national league. She is also a full-time university student. I know her family are proud, especially her mum and dad, Morris and Santina. We are proud of her and wish her all the very best.

ATHLETE CELIA SULLOHERN

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (16:22): I congratulate Celia Sullohern, who has demonstrated her prowess as an athlete by being the first woman to cross the line in this year's City to Surf in August and followed it up by winning the women's Melbourne Marathon. Celia grew up running, doing cross country runs and athletics and has recently been doing triathlons to improve her strength and endurance. This has obviously assisted her to win in her third ever marathon event and to take five minutes off her personal best. It also enabled her to place fourth in the 2017 Australian rankings. This is a wonderful achievement and I wish Celia all the best for her future endeavours.

CENTRAL COAST MARINERS FOOTBALL CLUB

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (16:23): Go the Mariners! I love them on the field and I love them off the field. I am a true believer in all they do for the beautiful Central Coast. The Mariner games are my favourite thing that connects all the diverse community groups on the coast. United for one cause, "We sing for Yellow!" I praise the work the great Mariners team does off the field with the Run all Day the Mariners Way healthy lunch box program. Supported by the New South Wales Government and rolling out in primary schools across the coast, we hear stories of lunch boxes springing to life and kids being encouraged to eat well so that they are fit to play all day. I also love the pressure the Mariners are placing on the new Central Coast Council to deliver inclusive sport for all—women's sport. We are now building women's changing rooms for next year's W-League team. There is nothing better at promoting active women and girls in sport than our own team of superheroes, televised live, inspiring us to get off the couch all season long. Yay for the Matildas! If I could do a backflip right now for Sam Kerr winning the Women's Health Sportswoman of the Year award last night, I would.

MID NORTH COAST QUEEN'S BATON RELAY

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (16:24): I recognise the 12 Port Macquarie community representatives who have been named in the mid North Coast contingent to participate in the 2018 Commonwealth Games Queen's Baton Relay. The runners will join the Kempsey community celebration when the Queen's Baton makes a stopover on 1 and 2 February 2018. In the lead-up to the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games, the Port Macquarie Hastings crew are among 3,800 Australians who will carry the Queen's Baton on its 100-day journey across the nation. The baton bearers were selected through a community nomination program and are considered to be a diverse reflection of what it means to be Australian. Bearers selected from across Australia recognise the achievement and aspirations of people from all walks of life and collectively will take more than a million steps across every State and Territory. The Queen's Baton arrives on the Gold Coast for the twenty-first Commonwealth Games opening ceremony on 4 April. I congratulate David Chapman, Alani Cockshutt, Glenys Cummings, Louise Currey, Charlie Maher, Alyssa Pensini, Caleb Scott, Isaac Sanderson and Jade Wyndham of Port Macquarie, and Wendy Hudson of Kew, Melissa Hunt of West Haven and Stan Law of Bonny Hills. I congratulate each of them on their selection to the 2018 Commonwealth Games Baton Relay.

LONDONDERRY ELECTORATE SOCCER ASSOCIATIONS

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (16:25): I congratulate the Blacktown District Soccer Football Association and the Nepean Football Association, which recently held their presentation award dinners that I attended. Both nights were a tribute to another cracker season for football in the electorate of Londonderry, which is one of our most popular sports. In particular, I congratulate the Henry Lawson Club from Werrington, who was the winner of the Nepean Football Association's Horley Perpetual Trophy for the junior club championship. I also make a special mention of all soccer clubs within my electorate that play such an important role in giving people and young children an opportunity to play sport and keep active in our community, getting up off the couch. I thank the board of directors from both the Blacktown District Soccer Football Association and the Nepean Football Association for organising their respective presentation dinners. I look forward to another fantastic season in 2018.

GO FOR BROKE CHARITY BIKE RIDE

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation) (16:26): I congratulate everyone involved in the charity bike ride Go for Broke. Raising awareness for depression and mental health issues, 70 riders rode the 180-kilometre trek from Berowra to Broke in the Hunter Valley. They have raised an impressive \$38,000 for Lifeline this year alone. The two outstanding individuals behind this race are Wayne Gretch and Ed Kirk, who worked tirelessly to organise this fantastic ride. This year the ride was started

by Emma Bagley and Wendy Carver from Lifeline and last year's highest fundraiser, the great Kim Warwick. Some of the riders included Justin Berry, Richard Magson and Jo Magson. Principal Steven Dodd at Berowra Christian School and his son Angus were also involved in ensuring the success of this event. The top individual fundraisers were Steve Kick, Barry Brummer and James Hickey, who is the chief executive of Main Com, one of the events major sponsors. The top fundraising team was Michael Parker and Andrew Gartner from the Berowra Postal Service. With October being Mental Health Month, it is important that we recognise groups such as Go for Broke and the amazing men behind it, Wayne and Ed, who do so much amazing work for our community and the thousands of people who suffer with mental illness throughout Australia.

NSW PUBLIC WORKS STONEMASONS

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (16:27): When people think of Sydney they often think of our beautiful harbour and our precious sandstone. Our public stonemasons and heritage workers play a vital role in preserving our unique heritage. They restore our beautiful sandstone buildings, from Parliament House to local schools, hospitals, courthouses and police stations across the State. I recently visited the Alexandria stone yard, where I saw our heritage workers in action: cutting stone, carving and sculpting, and restoring precious architectural artefacts, including the coat of arms from the Supreme Court of New South Wales. These stonemasons are rightly proud of their work. They are also very grateful that heritage services have been kept for the time being within NSW Public Works, thanks to a concerted campaign from stonemasons, heritage experts, community members and unions. I congratulate and thank Paul Thurloe and all at the stone yard. They are at the coalface of preserving and protecting our heritage. I congratulate them on working so passionately to protect what we love about Sydney and New South Wales.

BARINGA BUSH COMMUNITY GARDEN

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (16:28): Today I recognise the Baringa Bush Community Garden group in Manly and update the House on its spring gala being held this Sunday at the garden in Seaforth. Since the group was formed in early 2011 on a model of creating sustainable and accessible fresh produce for local residents, it has grown to become a centre for community collaboration and the sharing of knowledge, skills and love for permaculture and gardening in the electorate of Manly. Supported by local businesses and nurtured by a committed core of volunteers, the spring fair will showcase the best of living and eating sustainable produce, complete with garden tours, planting of seedlings and even a potato harvest. I give my thanks to the many committed volunteers and wish them the greatest success for their spring fair and for the year to come.

TRIBUTE TO MEL HALL

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (16:29): I acknowledge the tremendous work being done in the Lake Macquarie area by Mel Hall. The words "colourful character" get thrown around too often these days when they should be reserved for people like Mel, who brings great joy to many people. Mel, from Teralba, was a panelbeater by trade and is now a part-time musician in his retirement, a man of great energy, and young of heart and mind despite being aged in his late seventies. In many parts of Lake Macquarie, Mel is simply known as a treasure who dedicates his days to making people happy. His love of music is a gift he shares with many. With musical friends in tow, Mel regularly entertains the residents of nursing homes and retirement villages, without charge and with a whole lot of love. His music is therapy to many and a welcome friend to many more. Lake Macquarie is a much richer and stronger community for having people like Mel in it. I welcome this opportunity to acknowledge and applaud his and his friends' efforts.

Petitions

ILUKA AMBULANCE STATION

Discussion

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (16:30): It gives me great pleasure to speak to this petition. Iluka is a small coastal community in my electorate. It has only 2,000 people, but it deserves to have high priority health services and emergency health services. I thank John and Ann McLean for instigating the petition and for roaming around the streets of Iluka, Maclean and Lismore—in fact, right across the Northern Rivers area—to get 11,500 signatures for Iluka, which is a community of only 2,000 people. However, Iluka is a coastal town whose population swells over Christmas. It has a high proportion of older people, it is remote, it is a holiday destination, it is a beachside village and it deserves to have an ambulance station.

Not only are there older people in the area suffering from heart disease and heart attacks, but recently there was a shark attack. It is in a remote corner of the electorate. The local rugby union team is known as the Cossacks, because they come from Siberia—that is how far it is from the rest of the community. There have been numerous NSW Ambulance incidents for Iluka and Woombah. For example, for Iluka in 2015-16 there were

314 call-outs for ambulances and in 2016-17 there were 270 call-outs; and for Woombah in 2015-16 there were 66 call-outs and in 2016-17 there were 74 call-outs. Woombah is a small community not far from Iluka, which also has an elderly population. John and Ann McLean have done a fantastic job. In fact, I promised to support them even though I said they had a hard battle ahead of them given that Iluka is such a small community.

I reminded them of Jim Agnew's effort to get the ambulance station for Yamba, which had a population of 6,500 at the time. Jim came to me when I was mayor of Maclean Shire and asked me for support. I said I was happy to support him, but I thought he was barking up the wrong tree—it was just going to be an impossibility. He went to the local member, who was Harry Woods at the time. Harry told him the same thing, but Jim went on relentlessly to get people to sign his petition. He got the media onside and eventually he got an ambulance station for Yamba. I am saying the same to John and Ann: Do not despair. The Minister has replied to the petition, although the reply is not supportive because the Maclean ambulance station has been upgraded, which is only about 30 minutes away from Iluka. An additional seven paramedics have been stationed at Maclean in 2017 and it is now able to operate as a 24-hour station, which means it will be able to meet the capacity of Iluka. Yamba is about 30 minutes from Iluka by ambulance and capable of servicing Iluka.

The Minister advised me that the township of Iluka has been identified as highly suitable for the establishment of a community first responder service. NSW Ambulance will seek partnership with other emergency services for this purpose. This is a terrific opportunity for Iluka and our small communities to have a first responder service possibly in our State Emergency Service [SES] sheds or the Rural Fire Service [RFS] sheds. Someone who is trained and lives in town would certainly give a quicker response than an ambulance. Even if we have an ambulance in town, it will not respond immediately. Ambulances do not stay parked in the ambulance station waiting for an incident to happen in town. They are on the road, where they should be.

I conveyed the Minister's response to John and Ann and they were disappointed, but not disheartened. They will continue to fight for an ambulance station for Iluka. I promised them that I would continue to support them in their quest. To start, I would love to see a community first responder service for Iluka. It would help allay the fears of the elderly residents and of the beachgoers who arrive over the Christmas and other holidays when the area swells to about three times its normal population. I thank John and Ann for their efforts in collecting petitioners for this petition.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (16:36): The shadow Minister for Health, who sits in the other place and is unable to speak on this petition, has asked me to make the following remarks on the petition calling for funding for ambulance services in Iluka. Our State system is under enormous pressure. Our paramedics, health workers and hospital workers put in an enormous amount of work every day, but they are being let down. As I am sure the petitioners are aware, our paramedics and patients have been let down by this Government. They have seen that the health system is under pressure. Yet rather than providing the desperately needed resources, they have sat by and watched on.

In the last quarter alone, 274,228 ambulance responses were recorded in New South Wales. That is up 2.3 per cent or 6,071 calls in a single quarter. The latest Bureau of Health Information [BHI] data shows that ambulance responses are taking longer. The pressure on our paramedics and patients is part of the New South Wales health system and hospital system under enormous pressure, the massive numbers of patients presenting to emergency departments and elective surgery lists continuing to grow. During the most recent reporting quarter, April to June 2017, 36.3 per cent of priority 1 emergency incidents did not have an ambulance arrive within the prescribed 15 minutes and 5 per cent waited longer than 30 minutes. For priority 2 urgent incidents, 24.6 per cent were forced to wait longer than 30 minutes and 4.7 per cent waited longer than an hour for an ambulance.

The BHI data also includes data on ambulance operational measures such as response time, which is measured from when the 000 call is placed in a queue for vehicle dispatch to the time when the first paramedic arrives on the scene. Incidents classified as priority 1A are the highest priority in the emergency category and are considered life-threatening cases such as cardiac or respiratory arrests. There were 2,097 priority 1A life-threatening cases during the quarter. Response times were within 10 minutes for 72.8 per cent of priority 1 cases and within 15 minutes for 90 per cent of priority 1A cases. This means that 27.2 per cent of priority 1A cases waited longer than 10 minutes and 10 per cent waited longer than 15 minutes. This is compared to a national benchmark target of 10 minutes.

Overall, 146,483 patients arrived at New South Wales public hospitals by ambulance. Of these, 8.2 per cent or 12,000 patients waited longer than 30 minutes to be transferred to hospital staff. This is known as "bed block"—waiting in an ambulance before being taken into hospital. Overall, almost 664,000 patients presented to an emergency department in the most recent quarter, April to June 2017, compared to 637,000 for the same period in 2016. That is 26,735 more patients, and the highest ever for an April to June quarter. Over the past five years the number of emergency presentations in the April to June quarter has increased by 18 per cent overall. In New South Wales patients wait at every stage: They wait for an ambulance, they wait outside the

hospital to get into the emergency department, they wait for a hospital bed and then they are rushed out of the hospital before they are fully recovered—resulting in readmissions.

The reality of this petition is that, as with all concerns with the health and hospital system in New South Wales, The Nationals will just ignore it. This Liberal-Nationals Government will ignore it and pretend that everything is perfect with our health system. Despite the petitioning of complaints from people in Iluka, The Nationals members of Parliament from the mid North Coast and North Coast will watch on as the Liberals cut health services in the regions to fund tunnels to Sydney's north shore. I thank the people of Iluka for their hard work in bringing this important issue to the Parliament's attention and I encourage them to continue to hold this Government to account for their lack of regional health services. They were the words of the shadow Minister for Health.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (16:40): I support my colleague the member for Clarence. He works extraordinarily hard to provide services to his local community, and he should be applauded for that. I praise the good people of Iluka for raising this issue and for signing the petition. The Ambulance Service of New South Wales monitors factors such as changes in demographics and population growth when planning for future service provision. Proximity to existing services and general ambulance coverage are also significant factors in the planning process. Iluka has not at this time been assessed as a priority location for the introduction of a full-time paramedic service based at a new ambulance station in the town.

As the member for Clarence stated, the area has been identified as highly suitable for a qualified Community First Responder [CFR] service, which will be seeking to establish a partnership with other emergency services. A CFR service will support the paramedics from nearby locations in the delivery of high-quality emergency mobile care to the local community. The Ambulance Service operates a range of service models across New South Wales, and at many locations services are provided by Ambulance Service qualified CFR volunteers, who support fully trained paramedics and their local community. The Ambulance Service CFR services are staffed by local community and emergency services members who are trained, qualified, equipped and clinically supported by paramedics.

In 2015-16 the Ambulance Service responded to a total of 314 incidents in Iluka, and in 2016-17 it responded to 270 incidents. The Ambulance Service has advised that Maclean continues to have sufficient capacity to meet current and projected demand in the surrounding area to 2031. A CFR service would improve immediate responsiveness of trained and qualified Ambulance Service staff in that area. The 2016-17 New South Wales budget included funding for the recruitment of more than 100 new paramedics across New South Wales, with \$12.8 million allocated to employ 85 extra paramedics to work in metropolitan and regional centres and \$5.1 million for 35 specialist paramedics, two years earlier than promised at the 2015 State election.

In May 2017 the Ambulance Service implemented 24-hour cover at Maclean Ambulance Station, incorporating an additional seven paramedics. This more than doubled the number of local staff and will provide an increase in relief coverage over periods of leave and training. It will also assist in reducing fatigue by not requiring paramedics to undertake on-call duties, which require them to respond to emergencies from their homes after completing day shifts. In addition, there is a \$122 million investment in the Rural Ambulance Infrastructure Reconfiguration [RAIR] program. The RAIR program is delivering 22 upgraded, rebuilt or entirely new ambulance stations across regional and rural New South Wales. The people of Iluka should be complimented on their petition and the member for Clarence should be commended for his ongoing efforts in supporting them.

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (16:43): I thank the member for Clarence for bringing this petition to the House and for being very honest that he has been unable to deliver what the residents of Iluka have asked for. But, all credit to him, he has admitted that and he has brought this petition on behalf of his constituents. As the member for Clarence mentioned, getting those 10,000 signatures to have an issue debated in Parliament is quite difficult, and I believe there are 11,500 signatures on this petition. I also pay tribute to his constituents, John and Anne McLean, and thank them for the work they have done, which is quite significant when one considers that the town of Iluka has just 2,000 residents. I pay tribute to the work that they have been able to do to make sure that this petition is brought to the New South Wales Parliament—the oldest Parliament in Australia.

I noted what the other speakers said about the popularity of Iluka as a fishing village. I have been to Iluka. It is, indeed, a very special place. Given that it is about 40 minutes drive from Maclean, I can understand that there is some concern in the community about ambulance response times. I also note that the age of the population in that community—an average age of 60-plus years—is mentioned in the petition, so I can certainly understand the level of concern about ambulance response times. But that concern is felt by communities across New South Wales. The response from the Minister has been an emphatic no, but he has indicated that there is the possibility of a Community First Responder service. He says that that would be highly suitable, but there is no commitment about that at this time. What the Minister has said is important in understanding why the ambulance service will not be going ahead. The Minister says:

Maclean and Yamba ambulance stations continue to service the community of Iluka. Seven additional paramedics commenced at Maclean Station in May 2017, which has enabled Maclean to operate as a 24-hour station. Maclean and Yamba ambulance stations now have sufficient capacity to meet current and projected demand in the area, including at Iluka, to 2031.

However, I note that the community does not feel that that is so. In essence, that is the reason for this petition by 11,500 people, who have worked hard to put their signatures to paper and to ensure that the member for Clarence brings their concern to the House. My response to that is to thank them and to indicate that it is a shame they have not been able to achieve what they set out to do. The member for Clarence has certainly done what he wanted to do in bringing this matter before the House. I thank the member for Clarence for his work.

Community Recognition Statements

RESILIENT AUSTRALIA AWARDS NEW SOUTH WALES SECTION

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General) (16:46): Today I had the pleasure of presenting, at a ceremony at Parliament House, the New South Wales section of the Resilient Australia Awards 2017. Among the recipients in the schools award category was the highly commended Kurnell Public School. I congratulate Kurnell Public School, whose citation reads:

During the response and recovery following the tornado in Kurnell in 2015, Kurnell Public School staff performed an invaluable central communications role—providing a trusted source of information for school children and their parents as well as the wider community. The school liaised with emergency services and community organisations to provide emotional and physical assistance to the people of Kurnell during the recovery—with particular attention to the wellbeing of children following the disaster. A key output saw parents and staff working together to review and update the school's emergency management plan.

I congratulate principal Jo Graham and assistant principal Nicole Lanham. Also joining the presentation this morning were school chaplain Cassie Romberg; parents and citizens president Clair Sawyer, and school captains Leah Adams and Brayden Ward. I congratulate the Kurnell Public School on the pivotal role it played in Kurnell's recovery from the 2015 tornado.

PAL BUDDHIST SCHOOL

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) (16:47): In June of this year I had the pleasure of attending the Pal Buddhist School annual gala dinner in Cabramatta. Pal Buddhist School is the only dedicated Buddhist school in New South Wales, taking in students from years 7 to 12. With a limited staff and plenty of dedication, principal Panha Pal and deputy principal Helen Lam and their team have built a strong reputation for the school and their students. Although small in size, the school is academically strong, and 78 per cent of students in years 7 and 9 scored above the national average in literacy, and 88 per cent scored above the national average in numeracy. The school instils four key values in their students: to be academically successful; to be wise; to be virtuous; and to be calm and mindful. The gala dinner was a success and I wish Pal Buddhist School further triumphs in the future.

TRIBUTE TO ANTHONY DIPROSE

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Tourism and Major Events, and Assistant Minister for Skills) (16:48): The Moree community has been left devastated and greatly saddened by the loss of a well-known community man, who sadly passed away last month. I recognise the life of Anthony Diprose—or "Dipper", as he was better known. Dipper was involved in all aspects of the Moree community. A young man, still in his forties, he was involved in everything that opened and shut. Any time the community was fundraising for a local cause or involved in a local sporting organisation he was the first to put on his cap, roll up his sleeves and act as an emcee or auctioneer, or simply give his time to help out a local team or a local charity event.

In 2012 Dipper polished his dancing shoes and became a Gwydir Industries' Dancing With the Stars entrant, winning that year and helping to raise \$40,000 for the local disability organisation. He was also involved with Moree on a Plate and the Pally Gatsby Charity Ball, to name just some of the things that he was involved in. I pass on my condolences to his wife, Bec, and his three daughters.

KHMER COMMUNITY CELEBRATIONS

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) (16:49): Recently I joined the Khmer Community of NSW and the Cambodian Buddhist Society of NSW to celebrate an important religious occasion on the Khmer calendar, the Pchum Ben celebration. During this time the Khmer community commemorate the souls of family, ancestors and friends who have gone before us. It is tradition that the spirits of loved ones are offered food and materials that they need to complete their journey into the next life. I was also pleased to be able to attend similar celebrations organised by the Khmer Krom Buddhist Association. I extend my best wishes and respects to the Khmer and Cambodian community as they observe this important cultural festival.

MIDCOAST COUNCIL

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (16:50): I inform the House of the visit yesterday by the MidCoast Council Mayor, David West, and Deputy Mayor, Katheryn Smith. We had productive meetings discussing a range of issues affecting the MidCoast Council region with the Deputy Premier, Minister Adam Marshall, Minister Paul Toole, Minister Tanya Davies, Minister Sarah Mitchell, Minister Niall Blair, Minister Stuart Ayres and Minister Melinda Pavey. I look forward to working collaboratively with Mayor West and the newly elected council to protect our local environment, to secure jobs and economic growth for the mid coast region and build the community infrastructure and services our community needs. To quote Mayor West:

We are MidCoast hear us roar, we are too big to ignore.

OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL FESTIVAL

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) (16:50): It was an honour for me to be present at the fifty-seventh Our Lady of Mount Carmel Festival, an annual festival that celebrates the richness of culture and spiritual faith of the local Italian-Australian community. Every year Our Lady of Mount Carmel Festival committee at Mount Pritchard puts on a dazzling array of entertainment, Italian food and cuisine and the always highly anticipated fireworks display. The parish and school have always been a great friend to my local community and I am proud to say a great friend to me. I congratulate festival committee president Francesco (Paul) Marchesano and his team for once again putting on this festival and for all the hard work the committee does behind the scenes. I congratulate all the helpers and the volunteers.

NORTH SHORE ELECTORATE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (16:51): I speak about the largest uplift in transport services that Sydney has ever seen and the benefits for my community of North Shore. I welcome new bus, train and ferry services, with ferry customers getting an additional 85 weekly services, including the brand new F4 cross-harbour ferry route and F7 Double Bay ferry route, which for the first time will connect the North Shore ferry wharves with the eastern suburbs, the Sydney central business district and the inner west. New Emerald class ferries also have been introduced into service and I recommend to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure that he look to retiring the Lady class ferry service to tourist or other services. The new B-Line bus service will start next month and the M30 route is being extended all the way to Taronga Zoo, which is an important transport extension. I acknowledge the Parliamentary Secretary for Transport, Mark Coure, who has spent considerable time in my electorate, meeting with constituents to talk about the importance of transport.

Mr Clayton Barr: Point of clarification: I draw the attention of the member for North Shore to the fact that community recognition statements are supposed to recognise people in the community as opposed to being a broader private member's statement.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): I note the member's comments.

KING GEORGES ROAD WIDENING

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (16:52): Recently the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight and I announced funding to begin planning for the widening of King Georges Road. An amount of \$2.9 million was allocated in the 2017-18 State budget to plan for the widening of King Georges Road between Stoney Creek Road and Connells Point Road. This work will help the flow of traffic and provide motorists with a smoother and faster journey. The work is vital to keep the traffic moving along King Georges Road. This funding is most welcome and will provide major benefits to people moving across the city or heading just around the corner. The section between Stoney Creek Road and King Georges Road has the highest level of congestion in the A3 route with an above average crash rate. The funding is part of the New South Wales Government's Gateway to the South Pinch Points Program. Recently I launched a petition in my community to obtain this funding to continue the widening of King Georges Road to three lanes each way.

NEW SOUTH WALES NATIONAL PARKS

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (16:53): Earlier this month I was privileged to represent the Government at an event in Ku-ring-gai National Park marking 50 years of New South Wales national parks. In a rapidly changing world it is important to preserve our local environment and built heritage for future generations. Mindful of this, I congratulate the Friends of Lane Cove National Park who recently received a \$100,000 New South Wales Government Heritage Near Me grant to protect the Jenkins Cottage kitchen. Built in 1855, Jenkins Cottage kitchen in Lane Cove National Park is located near the Lane Cove River at the end of Lady Game Drive, on the edge of my Davidson electorate. The grant will go towards the building's restoration and repurposing as a cultural and natural heritage information hub, featuring stories of the former homestead and farm in the

context of the broader park's cultural and natural values. I hope that many people soon enjoy learning more about our local history through this valuable heritage project.

PORT HACKING LITTLE ATHLETICS CENTRE

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General) (16:54): On 7 October, as one of the patrons, I attended the opening of the season for Port Hacking Little Athletics Centre at Sylvania Waters. Every year several hundred young people engage in healthy activity on a Saturday morning in track and field events, which is terrific. I congratulate the 2017-18 executive: Rene Goschnik, president; Daniel O'Donoghue, vice president; Malin Brandt, secretary; Cameron Burne, treasurer; Karen Goschnik, registrar; Heather Mitchell, championships and centre competition; Jenny Blanch, records and ranking; Ray Russell, coaching; Mark Lavarence, officials; Brett Mathison, publicity/public relations; and Darren Bauer, equipment. I wish the little athletics centre and its constituent clubs, Cronulla, Endeavour and Taren Point, the best for their fortieth season of competition.

INDO-AUSTRALIAN BAL BHARATHI VIDYALAYA HINDI SCHOOL THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation) (16:55): I acknowledge the Indo-Australian Bal Bharathi Vidyalaya Hindi School at Thornleigh West Public School and 30 years of outstanding community building by all involved in the school. The school was established in 1987 by a group of mothers who migrated from India to Australia and wanted their children to learn about the Indian culture and Hindi language. It was the first Hindi language institution in Sydney, and today the school has grown to 13 classes with more than 140 students in total. It offers tutelage for language units in the Higher School Certificate. I congratulate the school on reaching such a momentous milestone and I thank the volunteers and teachers who run this school for their dedication to preserving the Indian culture and Hindi language. In such a multicultural community this organisation works hard to develop strong community ties and does a fantastic job of enriching the overall appreciation of Australian multicultural heritage. I particularly acknowledge the remarkable Mala Metha, the inspiration and heart and soul of the school. She represents what is best about our community and what is best about our country.

CUNDLETOWN JETS SOCCER CLUB

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (16:56): I congratulate the Cundletown Jets Soccer Club on a successful 2017 season. The Jets fielded teams in the six competitive age divisions in the southern league junior competition, with three making the grand finals. In a first for the Jets, the club won the women's premiership beating Foster-Tuncurry in the grand final. But the wins have continued off the field, with the Jets winning Community Club of the Year at the Football Mid North Coast presentation night, and club secretary Michelle Kelly being announced Volunteer of the Year. Michelle became involved with the club nine years ago, when her son William started playing. I look forward to working with Michelle and the Jets committee in supporting their plans for ground improvements and to the 2018 season and beyond.

NORTHERN SUBURBS FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (16:57): As many people are currently following Australia's qualifying journey to the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia, it is appropriate to acknowledge the local grassroots organisations that produce passionate players and fans of the world game. In just a couple of weeks I will be privileged to attend the 2017 President's Dinner for the Northern Suburbs Football Association, which celebrates its sixtieth, or diamond, anniversary this year. The Northern Suburbs Football Association was founded in 1957 and it administers community football in northern Sydney, with 31 participating member clubs. The association also encourages player development through representative programs, with teams in competition such as the Men's National Premier Leagues NSW 2, the Women's National Premier Leagues NSW 1 and the Youth National Premier Leagues. The Northern Suburbs Football Association aims to make football simple, fun and rewarding for people of all abilities. I commend the association and all involved in its long and valuable history, particularly noting 60 years of community football.

Private Members' Statements

TOLL ROADS

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (16:58): I speak about a matter that is presently occupying much of the public discourse, that is, this Government's policy on road tolling. In particular I am referring to the M4 toll, the M5 toll, truck tolls, the sale of the Sydney Motorway Corporation, the toll on the Sydney Gateway and the management of tolls by the Government. The level of community concern, particularly in Western and South

West Sydney, is at a level that should not be ignored by the Government, but it is. The M4 toll will be in place for 43 years and rise by 4 per cent each year. What is so offensive about the toll is that it is on a road that is not new.

Despite strong opposition from the people of Western Sydney, the Government arrogantly pursues this tax on Western Sydney. The member for Penrith, as the Minister for WestConnex, has the power to stop this toll—he alone can stop this toll—yet he continues to advocate for a toll that will impact particularly the people of the Penrith electorate. Labor understands that tolls are part of the road funding mix, but will not and cannot support a toll on a road that is not new. The Government has spent \$500 million widening the M4. Even if you take into account the \$500 million and you toll the road to cover that cost that road will be paid off within two years.

On the M5 the toll is supposed to end in 2026. During budget estimates it was discovered the Government is including the M5 South-West in the sale of WestConnex and the Sydney Motorway Corporation, which means that the toll period will be lengthened. That was not conveyed to the people of south-west Sydney. It is being done to sweeten the deal on the sale mid next year of the Sydney Motorway Corporation. That sale is a dud deal, which is why the Government feels it has to include the M5. It is offensive to the people of south-west Sydney to extend a toll that they have progressively paid off. The toll will be extended until the 2060s and it will rise by 4 per cent each year, not by the consumer price index [CPI].

Local residents will pay tolls for 30 years beyond what was originally planned. The true cost of that decision is approximately \$9.20 per day in tolls to commute to and from work, which equates to just over \$2,000 annually—and that does not account for annual increases. Communities across Sydney are rallying in opposition to this Government's management of the tolling policy. Communities are now paying the price for the Government's mismanagement of the \$17 billion WestConnex project. The Sydney Gateway is the link between St Peters and the airport. It was always part of WestConnex. It was the reason for WestConnex: to move the people of Western Sydney to the airport more quickly. It suddenly disappeared from WestConnex and is now a separate project.

On the website and in every document, the Sydney Gateway was included as part of WestConnex and was not to be tolled separately, but now it will be. In separating the project the Government is able to toll the road independently of the M5 and the M4-M5 link. I have spoken a number of times about the sale of the Sydney Motorway Corporation. Once it is sold the concession agreements for WestConnex will disappear. The Government has every opportunity to stop the toll on the M5 and to give the people of south-west Sydney a guarantee that it will not lengthen the toll on the M5 beyond 2026.

It was revealed recently that the Government has no evidence base to triple the toll on trucks. It is understood that they cause wear and tear on the roads, but the toll has been set to meet a trend. The Government's approach is causing concern across Sydney, but it remains deaf to the cries for fairness. There must be transparency in tolls and the involvement of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] in setting tolls. Tolls should not be determined in secret with the private sector. As with transport fares and water fares, there should be an independent umpire. The involvement of IPART will go some way towards restoring fairness to this tolling system. It is a broken system that is exploited by a Government seeking funds to pay for a dreadfully unpopular project that is ripping thousands of dollars from the pockets of motorists across Sydney.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (17:04): WestConnex has already widened the M4 between Parramatta and Homebush, creating an even faster way to bypass more than 28 sets of traffic lights on Parramatta Road, created a smoother road surface and created new access points to the new M4 between Parramatta and Homebush.

Ms Shelley Hancock: And they opposed that.

Mr MARK COURE: They opposed that—exactly right. It will extend the M4 between Homebush and Haberfield with an underground tunnel, build a new M5 tunnel to double the capacity between St Peters and Kingsgrove—opposed by Labor—and join the routes underground together with the M4-M5 Link tunnel. This is one of the biggest pieces of infrastructure developed and built by any State Government at any time. It has delivered more than 10,000 jobs and it will provide much-needed relief for those using those roads by easing traffic congestion.

INVEST PROGRAM

Ms SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast) (17:05): I inform the House of an exciting, unique and innovative South Coast education program called inVEST—which is an acronym for in Vocational Education Skills Training. The program is a Vincentia High School senior school pathway program developed at the school by Foty Loupos and others in response to the national implementation of the 17 years school leaving age and the consequence of students dropping out of school at 17 before completing their Higher School Certificate [HSC] and with a Record of Student Achievement [ROSA] credential that has not yet achieved recognition by skills councils, industry or employers. Numerous reports and studies link early school leavers with restricted work

prospects and limited further educational opportunities over their lifetime and also find that they are more likely to experience longer periods of unemployment.

inVEST is a school-to-work program designed to increase retention and meet the needs of students seeking to enter the workforce through a job-readiness pattern of study exposing students to the world of work, TAFE or college, vocational studies and on-the-job learning. It adopts the principles of flexible progression from a vocational perspective and maps core outcomes to 20 carefully selected students towards the end of year 9 to deliver three years in two, allowing them to graduate with a non-Australian Tertiary Admission Rank HSC in their seventeenth year. The alternative pathway involves completing two days of schooling, one day of work, one day of vocational education and training industry immersion, and one day attending an andragogical learning environment with a TAFE or community college. Students are able to opt out of the program and complete a mainstream HSC after the first year.

A number of key stakeholders coordinate the different facets of the program, the legal and policy requirements that must be met, and the annual contracts and memoranda of understanding that must be negotiated and renegotiated. At the end of the program students of the inVEST course have their own unique graduation ceremony, with parents and staff, to celebrate their achievements. The aims of the course include: seeing students complete the HSC and a combination of four certificate II and certificate III qualifications; students completing more than 100 days of industry work experience; engaging students in meaningful education experiences that build positive self-esteem, maturity and a trustworthy disposition; raising awareness of student achievements in the Vincentia High School community; building a positive image of Vincentia High School within the community and with employers; growing an employer database for student work experience and employment possibilities; and increasing links in the form of business-sponsored scholarships, traineeships and apprenticeships for students in the vocational sector.

On average, the project costs between \$30,000 and \$40,000 initially per school for a cohort of 40 students. Costs reduce as expertise and capabilities develop within the school, and the program eventually becomes cost neutral or the cost is negligible. The amazing program boasts a success rate of 95 per cent, and in southern New South Wales already eight schools are keen to take steps to implement it. A correlative relationship demonstrates that increasing completion of schooling raises the level of economic growth, reduces poverty and can improve health and crime outcomes of individuals, families and their community. Although 20 students per year and 40 students per school might not appear statistically significant, considered nationally across approximately 2,000 secondary schools this equates to 40,000 and 80,000 students respectively—and comparing those numbers with unemployment benefit costs reveals an annual saving to the economy of more than \$4 billion.

I will invite the Minister for Education to Vincentia High School to introduce him to this wonderful school and program, and ask him to consider replicating the initiative elsewhere in schools across the State. InVEST has made an incredible difference to local South Coast students and employers by linking young people in need of training and jobs with employment opportunities. I commend the staff of Vincentia High School for pioneering this successful education initiative, which has seen 90 students graduate from the program who otherwise were at risk of becoming early leavers.

I note the contributions of principal Steve Glenday, not just to this program but also to the school generally; deputy principal Foty Loupos, who is a fantastic advocate of Vincentia High School and the Gonski reforms; Paul Taylor and Holly Pastor, who have also worked very hard for the inVEST program, although Holly has now moved to Bomaderry High School; and the local colleges and more than 40 local employers who participate in the program.

This innovative program has worked for the South Coast. We have high youth unemployment, which remains stubbornly high. This program is not only about training at TAFE but also about training in schools, starting with students in year 9. I ask the Minister to take note of what I have said, to visit Vincentia High School and to meet with Foty Loupos and others to hear firsthand what this program is all about. I commend Vincentia High School for the work that it does on behalf of students in the area.

CONTAINER DEPOSIT SCHEME

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (17:09): The container deposit scheme is a great project designed to reduce litter in the environment. It is widely supported in the Myall Lakes electorate and I commend the Minister for introducing the scheme. However, some small to medium beverage manufacturers in regional New South Wales are being impacted by the scheme. I call on the Government to consider an adjustment package to assist those businesses that are able to show hardship. The program is being conducted by the scheme coordinator, Exchange for Change. It is an international conglomerate of Coca-Cola Amatil, Asahi, Carlton United Brewing, Lion Nathan and Coopers. Some of the small to medium manufacturers have received a letter stating that they have to pay an amount of money in the first week of November, plus additional payments in November,

to help fund the scheme which does not start until December. Those companies are being required to pay up-front when normally businesses pay 30 days or 60 days after the due date.

One of its customers, Woolworths, which is one of the large companies in the duopoly that is ruining many parts of the economy in Australia, is not required to pay until 90 days after the due date. Woolworths will not pay the invoice due in November until March or April next year. Small businesses paying this large amount of money in advance will have their cash flows disrupted and it could mean the end for some of them. I speak in particular about Saxbys, which is a small manufacturer of soft drinks in Taree. It employs 40 people and has been in existence since 1864. I put on record that some may say I have a conflict of interest in that I have a great love for Saxbys diet ginger beer. I drink far too much of it but it is the nectar of the gods. With summer coming, there is nothing better to quench one's thirst than Saxbys diet ginger beer. I encourage everybody to try it.

Saxbys has received an invoice for \$300,000, payable by 8 November, to enter into the supply agreement. If it does not pay the money, it is not allowed to sell beverages in New South Wales. I have raised this issue with the Minister, the Deputy Premier and the Small Business Commissioner. They understand the issue and I am confident they will come forward with a package. I call on them to support Saxbys. The Coastal Brewing Company in Forster is also affected by the container deposit scheme. It started business earlier this year and had no idea that participating in this scheme would incur such a large cost. I call on the Minister and the Government to introduce an adjustment package. I will fight for businesses in my electorate and for jobs. The last thing we want is to lose 40 jobs in Taree because of such a package. We all support a package and a program for reducing litter, protecting our environment and getting plastics off the streets, but not at the cost of businesses and jobs.

GOSFORD ELECTORATE

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (17:14): I congratulate our Labour colleagues across the ditch and the new Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern. People are suffering due to the rising cost of living and cuts to services in rural and regional New South Wales. The concerns of people of Gosford are similar to the concerns of people in Cootamundra—concerns that they expressed to me during the Cootamundra by-election. People in New South Wales want the Berejiklian Government to listen and deliver for those who live outside Sydney, not just for those who live in the city. On a visit to Cootamundra I spoke with residents who are horrified as the cost of living is spiralling out of control, with service cuts, electricity price increases and cuts to TAFE under the Berejiklian Government.

Like the people of the Central Coast, they say that this Sydney-centric Government is delivering nothing to rural and regional areas. Last weekend the people of Gundagai made it clear that they did not support the undemocratically merged councils, with a 43 per cent swing against the Berejiklian Government. The people of Cootamundra made it clear that they are not happy with the proposed mergers of police local area commands. They say that this Government is not listening to the people of rural and regional New South Wales. I call on the Berejiklian Government not to amalgamate the Brisbane Water and Tuggerah Lakes local area commands, which is what is happening to other police commands across New South Wales, and to deliver more police officers to the great team in the hardworking Brisbane Water Local Area Command.

The Gosford community knows that the privatisation of electricity by this Liberal-Nationals Government is making our household bills skyrocket. As our electricity bills rise, I am speaking with more people who are giving up activities such as swimming lessons or time out with their families in order to pay their electricity bills. A constituent who wrote to my office said, "Our electricity supplier sent us a letter in June this year that prices would increase by 16 per cent to 19 per cent from 1 July 2017." My constituents do not want to see their next electricity bills and they keep asking me when the first reduction will show up in their bills. Not enough renewable energy is being delivered to people on the coast or in the country. All that they have had is increasing prices and a rising cost of living.

I support local charity groups who are helping people in need in the Gosford electorate. Tomorrow I will attend the St Vincent de Paul Help Fight Poverty on the Coast day in the park. I have also attended Peninsula Link Day at the Peninsula Community Centre. I thank all those charities and support groups on the coast who regularly provide support for our wonderful community. The Government should not be walking away from its responsibility. It should be looking after our communities, not leaving it to the not-for-profit sector to pick up the pieces. I thank the Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul for food assistance, no-interest loans, bill help, legal advice and much more. I thank MasterFoods for its food packages. I thank all those who donate clothes and provide free haircuts and tenancy support. The list goes on.

People on the Central Coast, especially tradies and young people, are horrified by ongoing cuts to TAFE. Yearly enrolments are down by more than 175,000 compared with the figures for 2012. Frighteningly, 14,567 fewer students with disabilities were enrolled in TAFE in 2016 compared with the figures for 2012. What does the future look like? I commend the students and the teachers who battle on and who believe in TAFE.

I commend the TAFE teachers who have been requested to cut hours—even years—off their courses whilst delivering the same material. I send condolences to those expert teachers who were on the panel to approve the skills prerequisites of people moving into New South Wales. I spoke to tradies who were horrified when the Government voted to take those teachers off that panel. I thank and praise all the tradies who are taking on apprentices, despite having to teach more on the job as the education-based skills of students are being eroded as a result of pressure by the Government to diminish TAFE hours and courses. This Government should listen to the people of New South Wales, stop the cuts, restore TAFE funding and restore TAFE NSW to its former glory.

This is a real problem in our electorate that already has a way too high youth unemployment rate of 17.6 per cent. We want jobs and infrastructure on the coast, not cuts to local services and growing youth unemployment. On the Central Coast and in the electorate of Gosford, we listen to the ongoing announcements of more than \$2 billion to knock down and rebuild Sydney stadiums. What is the Government giving for maintenance or growth of our Mariners stadium—the one big thing that unites the people of the Central Coast at every game? Nothing. Where is our full Service NSW office on the peninsula? It has gone.

I call on this Sydney-centric Government to let us see an equitable distribution of resources for the people of Gosford and our unique Central Coast community. We did not ask the Government to shut down our Roads and Maritime Services. We did not want its merged councils. We do not want TAFE cuts. We do not like the massive waiting lists in our public hospitals. We hate the rising cost of electricity prices and ongoing cuts to government services in rural and regional New South Wales.

ICE EPIDEMIC

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (17:20): I bring to the attention of the House the increase in incidents of methamphetamine use and possession, particularly the increasing prevalence of the use of the drug ice. Crystal methamphetamine, or ice, is a stimulant drug that works by speeding up the messages travelling between the brain and the body. It is stronger and more addictive and therefore more harmful than other forms of methamphetamine. It is incredibly concerning to see the growing figures of amphetamine use, particularly ice, across the State. Over the past five years, the offence of possession and/or use of amphetamines, which includes ice, has recorded an average annual percentage change of 17.8 per cent across New South Wales. Figures provided by the NSW Police Force for the 11 months from June 2016 to July 2017 relating to the use and/or possession of amphetamine incidents for New South Wales were 123.3 per 100,000 of the population, whilst for the Sutherland shire area the rate was 92.4 per 100,000 of the population.

Just last week, during a visit to Miranda Local Area Command, I was spoken to by local officers about the detrimental and long-term effects of ice on individuals. Prolonged use of ice can lead to long-term mental health problems and users may suffer from anxiety and/or depression. Aside from the physical health problems caused by this drug, including increased risk of stroke, heart problems, kidney problems, malnutrition and a weakened immune system, it is the permanent neurological damage and psychological issues that concern me the most. The psychological effects of ice means users are 11 times more likely to exhibit symptoms of psychosis than the general population, whilst one-quarter of users exhibit overtly hostile and violent behaviour.

Ice is an addictive, destructive and incredibly dangerous drug. Ice addiction is considered to be the hardest to treat and relapse amongst users is common. People who regularly use ice can quickly become highly dependent on the drug and begin to rely on ice just to go about daily activities like working, studying, socialising or simply getting through the day. Prolonged usage of and addiction to the drug often results in the breakdown of families and social relationships, unemployment, poor health, financial hardship and legal problems.

A story that sticks with me most relates to a family from my electorate. During the 2015 campaign I first became aware of a young man suffering from a severe addiction to ice. At a function recently the father of the young man approached me and informed me that, 2½ years later, his son is still addicted to ice. He is in and out of rehabilitation facilities and remains consistently unemployed, which is now having a detrimental impact on his family and home life. During my visit to the Miranda Local Area Command, police alerted me to the fact that in the Miranda area ice remains one of the three most popular drugs used. I was alarmed to read from Beaver Hudson, a psychiatric nurse at St Vincent's Hospital, that about 90 per cent of methamphetamine presentations are handled in the behavioural emergency rooms.

Despite all commitments made as part of the 2015 New South Wales election ice package being completed, the number of methamphetamine-related emergency department presentations and hospitalisations in New South Wales has increased. Between 2009-10 and 2015-16, the annual total number of unplanned overdose, drug and alcohol and mental health presentations to 56 participating emergency departments by people aged 16 years and older where methamphetamine use was recorded increased more than tenfold from 470 to 4,771.

We should imagine a future in which we can continue to socialise at events freely and happily, in which people can socialise on weekends without fear or threat of drug-induced violence or crime, in which there is not constant strain on the economy, and in which our children can grow up less dominated by the presence and effect of drugs. The ice epidemic is a scourge on our society. While I am glad that the Government has implemented some measures designed to tackle this incredible problem, there is clearly much more to be done.

TRIBUTE TO MATT HAZELL

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (17:24): I pay tribute to a veteran of the Penrith branch of the Labor Party who recently left us. My private member's statement is based on a eulogy that I was honoured to deliver at his recent funeral. I speak of the wonderful Matt Hazell, who gave years of his life to many Australian Labor Party members who have come into this Chamber and into Federal Parliament to represent their constituents in Greater Western Sydney. Much has been said by many great men and women in the Labor movement about people we identify as the "true believers".

In 1993 on election night, former Prime Minister Paul Keating famously said that they were the people who kept the faith in the most difficult times. Years later, when he accepted his Australian Labor Party life membership at Sydney Town Hall, he spoke about people getting to the right spot at the polling booth on election day, putting up signs, and taking others down; putting pamphlets in letterboxes, and removing others; people who stood in the rain and in the sun and who came back at night to celebrate or commiserate, burnt to a crisp. He could have been speaking about our Matt Hazell. Matt was one of the truest of believers, a servant of our great cause, and a loyal warrior of a movement that he knew was bigger than anyone on any how-to-vote card he handed out.

Matt was a great friend. I first met him and his wife when I joined the party at the tender age of 15 in 1997. Since then he has been an ever-present fixture in every election campaign. I knew him only in the latter part of his four decades of service and commitment to the party. Whether it was as a branch member, a Young Labor enthusiast, a Labor candidate or, as I am now, a member of Parliament, I have never known anyone other than Matt Hazell who handed out how-to-vote cards at every election, who letterboxed in every campaign, and who never missed a branch meeting. It was Matt Hazell who was not afraid to tell us what he thought, whether it was that the branch meeting room was too small, or that we should work harder. He kept people like me on our toes because he knew that those of us he had supported in having the honour of wearing the Labor flag in public did so with a heavy responsibility in pursuit of a serious mission.

For most of his years, Matt was synonymous with Cambridge Park; in fact, he wrote a book about it with the Penrith City Council historian. In the 1960s, he was a foundation member of the Cambridge Park and Districts Sports Club, which lasted only two years. However, in the late 1960s he was a founding committee member of the great Cambridge Park Junior Rugby League Club, which still operates today. Matt had a long association with the historic Cambridge Park Hall on Oxford Street. In fact, it was the venue for the first meeting of the local Labor Party branch, which met there until 2015. In the 1970s, Matt was the secretary of the hall committee, and as president he oversaw the official opening of the redeveloped hall on 11 September 1993.

Over the years, Matt's tireless commitment to the Australian Labor Party saw him develop long and lasting friendships with Labor councillors, mayors and local members. I will always be grateful for my friendship with him. I make special mention of his support for the current Mayor of Penrith, John Thain; our highly respected former member for Lindsay, David Bradbury—who said some touching words at the funeral; and my predecessor, the one-of-a-kind late Jim Anderson, whose impact on the community Matt lived in should not be underestimated.

To Matt's family at this very difficult time the simplest thing I can say is, "Thank you, from a very grateful party." Matt made a difference. Over the years thousands and thousands of Labor votes have been cast because Matt gave how-to-vote cards to thousands and thousands of voters walking up the winding ramp at Cambridge Gardens Public School. He supported and befriended us. Matt kept us going. Above all, he was always there. Vale Matt Hazel, a seeker of what we call that great light on the hill. He was a true believer in every sense. Rest in peace, mate. We will miss you so much.

ST GEORGE HOSPITAL

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (17:29): As a member of Parliament I have always worked hard to secure better health services for the local community not only in my electorate but also in the St George area. I have always been determined to see improvements made to St George Hospital and better support given to its hardworking doctors and nurses. During the 2011 and 2015 election campaigns we promised to upgrade the hospital. I am happy to announce that the redevelopment of St George Hospital, stage two, has now been completed. The new acute services building, which has been completed six months ahead of schedule, will improve the ability of the hospital to meet the needs of our local community. That is great news. In January 2016 the New South Wales Government announced that it would fast-track the construction of the acute services

building. As I said, it has been delivered six months ahead of schedule, with a \$30 million saving to taxpayers, without any reduction in the scale of the project or the clinical services it delivers.

Last Saturday the new acute services building was opened. What is the new acute services building? It was constructed on top of the \$41 million emergency department opened in 2014. The new acute services building includes a new intensive care department, eight new operating theatres, 128 new inpatient beds, two cardiac catheter laboratories, a new sterilising service department and a new helipad on top of the seven storeys of this building. The \$41 million emergency department and the new acute services building will ensure that state-of-the-art facilities are available to patients at the hospital. Funding has been allocated in this year's budget for construction of a further two storeys on top of the current multistorey car park on Gray Street to provide an additional 130 car parking spaces. Strengthening works are currently underway to prepare the car park structure for those additional levels. This is a huge win for the St George and surrounding communities, including the community of Temporary Speaker Evans in the Sutherland shire.

Since coming to office the Government has provided funding to the St George Hospital for a new emergency department, a new mental health unit, \$1.5 million for the Cancer Care Centre and \$277 million for the stage two redevelopment. That shows the determination of those on this side of the House to provide the funding that St George Hospital so badly needed. Indeed, this is one of the biggest redevelopment programs this hospital has seen since the Liberal-Nationals Government came to office under the leadership of Nick Greiner and John Fahey, with the seven-storey construction at Gray Street and the existing car park. Unfortunately, we did not see that level of redevelopment at St George Hospital in the 16 years Labor was in government. But the good news is that we are getting on with the job and money has been set aside in this year's budget for the stage three redevelopment of the outpatient services building. Planning has begun and this will see almost \$300 million spent over the next few years.

CENTRAL COAST NBN SERVICES

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (17:34): For the second year in a row the Central Coast is one of the areas with the highest number of complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman [TIO]. Figures from the TIO released recently and given to me by my Federal colleague the member for Dobell, Emma McBride, show a 159 per cent increase in complaints against NBN-related services. I have been fighting in my electorate and across the Central Coast to encourage enabling infrastructure and incentives to bring business and investment into the Central Coast. Situated halfway between the two biggest cities in our State, with beautiful beaches and a lifestyle to be envied, it should be a simple proposition to attract investment from the private sector.

In fact, during the last Federal Labor Government, parts of the Central Coast were test sites for fibre-to-the-premises technology. Within a short time of the rollout occurring in Gosford, NIB opened a new call centre and created 200 jobs. This is because Labor invested in the best infrastructure available. Now, after four years of mismanagement under the Federal Liberal Government that beggars belief, the biggest infrastructure project of our generation is in a shambles. For the first time, internet services are the highest source of complaints to the TIO, overtaking mobile and phone complaints. NBN complaints are growing 37 per cent faster than the number of new NBN services being activated, a pattern not observed in previous years.

Recently the shadow Minister, Michelle Rowland, visited my electorate with the member for Dobell and called in on residents in Wyreema Road, Warnervale. Those residents had been told that they had to be serviced by something called "micronodes", which are deployed when the NBN's fibre-to-the-node connection cannot deliver minimum speeds. Despite the Federal Government promising that these residents would be connected from February, they are still waiting. Ms Rowland said at the time that micronodes are sitting around the country collecting dust and that "micronodes are the Government's bandaid solution" when all else fails. Unfortunately, the experience of these residents is being repeated across the Central Coast.

One of the highest areas for complaint is in one of our newer suburbs, Hamlyn Terrace. Local internet experts tell us that the Central Coast is a good model to look at because it was one of the first areas to get fibre to the premises, so it is a bit of a case study for the rollout of the NBN, and the news is not good. They have had a chance to iron out problems, but that has not happened. Of the top 10 areas in New South Wales for complaints made to the TIO this year, more than one-third came from the Central Coast. The member for Dobell has received more than 450 complaints in the past year alone just on this issue.

Australia cannot afford to keep spending billions on an NBN that is not delivering. Many of the people in my electorate that have connected used to get 20 megabits per second with ADSL. They now get 21 or 22 megabits per second. For all of the money that has been spent rolling out this new technology, there is no real improvement. Complaints commonly fall into four categories: poor experience getting connected; slow internet speeds; being stuck between the retail service provider and NBN—the "NBN ping-pong", as it is known; and technology not meeting consumer expectations.

The results of a recent Central Coast NSW Business Chamber survey showed that Central Coast businesses, including businesses in my electorate, are losing money because of the poor rollout of the NBN. This is from the same Federal Government that talked about Labor wasting money when the initial NBN was promised. That Government went with a cheap version and we are now experiencing poor outcomes that are costing businesses and families. As I said at the start of my contribution, we want to attract new businesses into the area. In contrast, some private businesses have installed their own internet broadband, and they are getting speeds faster than 100 to 150 megabits per second. They have had to do that themselves. The Federal Government is failing on this and needs to fix it quickly.

ARC ATTACK ENGINEERING

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour) (17:39): Today I raise a matter on behalf of a constituent that is the subject of an article in today's edition of the *Daily Telegraph*. The article is about an accountant stealing money from Arc Attack Engineering. Arc Attack Engineering has since made an arrangement with the Australian Tax Office [ATO] and agreed to pay the money back. As far as I am concerned, the main issue in this story is not the thieving of the accountant who stole the money in the first place but the fact that the accountant recommended Mr and Mrs Whitten enter into an arrangement with a liquidator called Cor Cordis. I have made representations to the Minister for Fair Trading in relation to Cor Cordis. I will read some information that has been provided to me:

About a week later things were not adding up my husband Warren rang the liquidators stating he was concerned about our accountant. Cor Cordis provided us with print outs from the ATO tax portal, I couldn't make neither heads nor tails out of them and then I realised why; the payments that were made on our behalf were just random amounts. Both my BAS statement and my monthly PAYG statements were being altered and a much lesser amount was being paid. There was no fine, the \$60,000 has been applied to our debt by our accountant. For the past few years we haven't received any personal tax refunds and we were told by the accountant that the ATO automatically applied them to our debt, which was a lie.

We had been in contact with Susie Bernell from the SR Group to act on our (personal behalf) as we realised something wasn't right and the Cor Cordis was actually working to wind us up not hand us back our company. By Wednesday September 13, we knew Stephen Douglass was stealing from us and I started to collect the evidence to prove it.

On Friday September 15, I received an email from Stephen Douglass stating he had a gambling addiction and had been stealing from us since 2003. The email was also sent to Jason Tang, who failed to notify the ATO. He made just a passing comment stating that there may be some as yet unproven fraud.

Monday September 18, we went to a meeting with Cor Cordis with our reps from the SR Group and our solicitor, Mr Douglass then stated in front of witness (including 2 solicitors) that he has stolen from us since 2003 and that he kept a 2nd set of books to hide his fraud. He then stated he was guilty and was willing to co-operate to clear our name and he would sign anything he needed to.

I will state that our only debt is to the ATO which our solicitor has been speaking to, they are sympathetic to our plight and are willing to work with us. We are more than willing to pay the tax debt. We have spoken to our creditors and they are willing to stand beside us and continue to support us, we have always paid them within our agreed trading terms. Our staff are all on board, none are owed any money and their super is all paid up to date. They like their jobs and working for us.

It is the liquidation fees that are quite frankly killing us, they are increasing at a rate that can only be described as insane. Jason Tang's sole objective is to drive us into liquidation, he is constantly ringing my husband urging us to go into liquidation. Their fees are currently sitting around the \$200,000 mark. They are pushing us into liquidation purely for their fees. We would never have been in this position if it wasn't for the fraud committed against us by our accountant. We take pride in paying everyone on time, in fact my BAS & PAYG were always paid early and in good faith.

We have built our business from the ground up, 20 years of challenging work. We have been extremely active in the local community especially with the local surf clubs. We have a reputation built on providing quality workmanship, on time, on budget. Warren has gained a reputation as an honest hardworking man ...

I can vouch for that. The letter continues:

As you can imagine this has been devastating for us and we just need to get it cleared up.

This company is paying bills and wages out of savings and from investment properties. At the end of the day, in one month this firm—Cor Cordis—has decided to liquidate the company. I suggest it will liquidate Arc Attack Engineering purely for the money it can make out of it. How anyone can justify charging \$200,000 in fees for a month's work to liquidate anyone—even if it is BHP—is beyond me.

In the liquidations I have seen over the years, every time the company or the firm is bled the liquidator walks away with a heap of money and anyone who is owed money is left with 10¢ in the dollar—or less. I am unsure whether this is a Federal or a State issue, but I have written to the Minister for Fair Trading and asked that Cor Cordis join Mr Douglass in being denounced as a thief because, as far as I can see, it has stolen \$200,000 in a month. Mr Douglass is under police investigation and I think Cor Cordis also needs to be investigated by the police or by the Minister and the Parliament.

TWEED ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE AND EVENTS

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (17:45): I give a state of the Tweed address—as the Chamber knows, I am 100 per cent committed to the Tweed. Some events have occurred recently in the Tweed, probably the biggest of which was the announcement by the Minister for Health and the Treasurer of \$534 million for a brand-new hospital. Twenty expressions of interest have already been received for a greenfield site for the hospital and I believe an announcement will be made on that shortly. Because it will take a number of years to build a new hospital, the existing hospital has received funding of \$48 million for temporary pop-up theatres, and I am pleased to announce that, as of yesterday, the pop-up wards have started to arrive on site. It is a great credit to the Government that it committed to building this hospital and it is delivering on that commitment.

On 8 September the new \$25 million police station in Tweed was opened. The Minister for Police and the New South Wales Commissioner of Police attended the official opening, and it was a great day. The new police station will greatly enhance the police and law and order operations in the Tweed. But it does not stop there. Recently the Minister for the Environment was in Tweed to announce the purchase of 100 hectares of land for koala habitat. This is an important initiative because we are in partnership with Currumbin Sanctuary. It is a first for New South Wales: not only are we growing food trees for koalas in the area but we are also commencing vaccinations of koalas against chlamydia. Chlamydia is a devastating disease for koalas, particularly on the North Coast. The koala population has declined by 60 per cent and if we do nothing they will all be dead in the next 10 to 15 years. As an aside, the reason chlamydia is so devastating to the koala population is that it is quite common during the breeding season for koalas to have up to four or five sexual partners in 24 hours.

Also, the surf is up in Tweed. We have had two great announcements in recent times. The first was a commitment from this Government of \$3 million and the Federal Government of \$2.5 million for Surfing Australia. The headquarters of Surfing Australia are in Tweed and that funding will enable it to commence an aerial training facility. Surfing will be a sport in the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games and 50 per cent of the points to be awarded will be for aerial surfing. I am sure that our competitors will bring home gold medals. Also on surfing, the Glass Lab is a significant surfboard manufacturer in Tweed that recently received a grant of \$300,000. That will enable the company to employ 17 new workers as well as three apprentices—surfboard shaping is a course offered at TAFE. As a by-line, we have heard a lot about TAFE in this place, and I am pleased to say that on the North Coast, particularly in the Tweed region, our apprenticeships are up 40 per cent on previous years.

Also within the great electorate of Tweed, I attended a function on Sunday celebrating the fortieth anniversary of Landcare. Tweed Landcare has received grants from the Government totalling more than \$140,000 to continue its great work. I had the pleasure of meeting a number of volunteers in Landcare's rehabilitating river banks and bushland project. Some of the volunteers have been working for Landcare for 40 years. That is a great tribute to the local volunteers and I was pleased to meet them.

The Tweed Coast Tigers Australian Football League [AFL] team recently received \$100,000 from the Minister for Sport for lighting. That will result in the number of teams growing, which is great. We have been managing a number of significant grants for sporting organisations—including for soccer, the National Rugby League, AFL, netball, touch football and karate—in the electorate. This Government is moving on with some great activities. Very shortly I will be attempting to swim to Cook Island to conduct a survey of rare Antarctic terns there. The National Parks and Wildlife Service conducts the survey every three years. Once again, I am 100 per cent committed to the Tweed.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (17:50): Local communities want local champions, and there is no bigger or better local champion than the member for Tweed. He is 100 per cent committed to his Tweed electorate. He has had some significant wins for his community over the past 20 years, including upgrades to Tweed Hospital—with the expansion of the portable parts of the hospital—and the opening of a \$25 million police station, which will enhance law and order in the area. It was a great win for the Tweed. The Tweed has never had a better representative than the present member for Tweed.

LAKE MACQUARIE ELECTORATE SPEED LIMITS

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (17:51): Road safety is often spoken about in this House, and it is a positive reflection on many that the road toll in this State has fallen significantly over the past few decades. The good news is that roads are generally better, cars are safer and drivers are better educated, particularly our younger drivers. We know that all these things combine with suitable speed limits to save lives. I would not be so silly as to argue that speed limits do not save lives, but I think that we sometimes seem to get too obsessed with lowering limits in areas where the status quo suffices. In that regard a situation in Lake Macquarie is eroding the confidence of the community in the bureaucracy which sets speed limits, Roads and Maritime Services [RMS].

Marconi Road runs for 1.9 kilometres from Bonnells Bay to Morisset. It is a local road managed by Lake Macquarie City Council and is generally in a reasonable condition. It is lined predominantly by rural properties, with two minor roads intersecting it. Some years ago, the 80 kilometres an hour speed limit was reduced to 70 kilometres an hour. It was not a popular move among the local residents and road users at the time, but they adjusted. Certainly, the nature of the road and its surrounds are enough to give drivers the sense that it is an 80 kilometres an hour zone, but generally speaking motorists have kept to the 70 kilometres an hour limit and the road is not widely regarded as a regular speedway. While wilful exceeding of the limit may occur, one would expect that that would occur whatever the speed limit was.

I was informed by the RMS two weeks ago that a speed zone review of Marconi Road—instigated by a single request from a neighbouring resident—had been completed and it had been recommended that the speed limit along the entire stretch be dropped further to 60 kilometres an hour. The RMS regional manager, Anna Zycki, said that the review was completed in accordance with the New South Wales Speed Zoning Guidelines, which take into account a number of things, including adjacent land use, crash history and other environmental factors. I would like to test that against other examples, but the one thing I know the review does not take into account is the views of the people who actually use the road.

I took the matter to the local community myself via social media, asking for feedback on whether people supported the speed reduction or retaining the status quo. In less than two days the message reached 28,000 people, actively engaged 8,300 people, and attracted comment from more than 430 people, who overwhelmingly supported the retention of the current speed limit. In fact, only two comments of the 442 supported the proposed 60 kilometres per hour limit. These comments from road users generally reflect those of the vast majority:

Reducing the speed limit is misguided and highlights the arrogance of the RMS in not being the least bit interested in community consultation.

Another comment was:

Lowering the speed limit isn't going to stop the occasional hoon but it will greatly agitate the regular users.

Another person said:

I travel this road every day and see no reason why the limit should be lowered. I have taken that feedback back to the RMS, and I am awaiting a response. I was also told by the RMS that Lake Macquarie City Council and New South Wales police had supported the planned lowering of the speed limit. However, it seems there is some doubt about how that consultation occurred as I was subsequently told that council tends to remain neutral on such matters. I later received information from Sunshine Progress Association which was provided to a Lake Macquarie city councillor by a council officer, which stated:

A review of Council's records has indicated that no consultation was undertaken by the RMS with Council about any proposed changes to the speed limit along Marconi Road.

It may well be that the position of the police was similarly sourced but, regardless, it seems unlikely that police would argue against a speed reduction and would perhaps be more inclined to remain neutral on the issue. As I said earlier, no-one would argue against speed reductions in areas that have long histories of accidents and complex conditions. That is not the case here. Some in the RMS appear to be taking an ultra-conservative approach to road speed in our area and by taking such decisions seemingly unilaterally without a clear good case, they lose the confidence of the community. I certainly believe that is the case in this instance. I have asked the RMS to review this decision and I have since raised the matter with the Minister; to her great credit she has offered to look into it. I also expect a call back from the RMS regional manager, Anna Zycki. I hope we can have a constructive conversation about the matter so that it can be sensibly resolved for the benefit of the community while maintaining the requisite need for safety on our roads.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (17:55): I have listened to the private member's statement of the member for Lake Macquarie. I am more than happy to take on board his concerns and I will provide any assistance I can as Parliamentary Secretary for Transport and Infrastructure. I urge the member to email any correspondence to my office so that we can try to liaise directly with Roads and Maritime Services or the Minister.

SYDENHAM TO BANKSTOWN URBAN RENEWAL CORRIDOR STRATEGY

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (17:56): I acknowledge Labor Deputy Leader Michael Daley, who confirmed last night at a public forum at Parliament House that the Labor Opposition would rip up plans for the mass rezoning this Government has proposed for the area along the Sydenham to Bankstown urban renewal corridor. This announcement was made in relation to the Government's ill-conceived priority precinct plans. My colleagues the member for Summer Hill, Jo Haylen, the member for Bankstown, Tania Mihailuk, the member for Lakemba, Jihad Dib and our candidate for East Hills, Cameron Murphy, have worked very hard with the community and its leaders to fight this gross overdevelopment.

The community has lost confidence in the Government, and it did so a long time ago, mainly because of the mess surrounding the Government's planning and infrastructure in Sydney. The member for Baulkham Hills, the member for Ryde, the member for Drummoyne, the member for Epping and other Liberal members have spoken to me of their great concerns about these priority precincts. The priority precincts were announced on 1 June because the Government was embarrassed about its fire and emergency services levy, which was abandoned because it was ill-conceived. It therefore announced another ill-conceived plan that is causing enormous anxiety in the community.

The communities we represent are multicultural and new communities are coming into the area. There are elderly people who bought their homes 40 or 50 years ago and some of the homes accommodate service men and women. The Government is seeking to destroy our communities. The consultation process has sidelined the community; it seeks only to benefit developers, who know exactly what the Government is doing before the community does. Developers are out in the community doorknocking and putting advertisements in newspapers urging people to look at the new suburb of Canterbury, with all its thousands of developments. That is happening now. The community is very concerned at the lack of consultation.

Thousands of people have signed petitions and many organisations, such as the Lebanese Muslim Association and the Islamic Women's Welfare Association, have made submissions because of their concerns about what this Government is doing. Suburbs on the Government's development agenda include Campsie, Riverwood and Belmore. About 60 per cent of the residents of these suburbs were born overseas, and yet the Government has not considered the diversity of languages and cultures in drafting its mass rezoning plans. Many of the residents are also elderly and not tech savvy, so their voices have been ignored. Residents do not want to be priced out of their suburbs; they worry about the future of their multicultural communities. In the past these suburbs have housed many of our service men and women and have also been the sites of industries, so in part they consist of workers cottages alongside semi-industrial areas.

We all know that the State needs to grow and there must be sustainable development. However, this development has to be done properly. We must accommodate the needs of children as well as the elderly. Labor is listening to the community, and we will work hard to protect our communities. I have read many of the submissions and they are very reasonable. They call for consultation because nobody from the Government has spoken to the organisations that represent the affected communities. The submissions talk about housing affordability, and the lack of funding and development plans for schools and hospitals. The Minister for Health tells us about the Government's funding for hospitals, but there is no funding for hospitals in Canterbury where 60,000 new dwellings will be built. The submission of the Southern Sydney Region of Councils reminds the Government about the infrastructure gap. The councils call on the Government to revisit section 94 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and address the huge infrastructure gap. I call on the Government to rip up its priority precincts.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (18:01): I thank the member for Canterbury for raising those concerns. Development across Sydney is a fine balancing act. It is about appropriate development, not inappropriate development. There is a massive supply problem in Sydney because of those opposite. But we must get the balance right. We need development in appropriate rail corridors, and within access of freeways and highways. This Government is consulting with affected communities to make sure that everyone gets a say on the future of their street and gets support. We need reasonable consultation. We must ensure that there is an adequate supply of all housing, which has been a major issue in Canterbury-Bankstown and in my electorate of Oatley. We must ensure that any future uplift caters for affordable housing. I am sure that under the Greater Sydney Commission and regional plans, that will be the case.

THE HILLS ANNUAL CHARITY GALA BALL

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Disability Services) (18:02): The Hills Annual Charity Gala Ball is a wonderful event hosted by my good friend Raj, the owner of Biviano's Italian Restaurant at Dural. The ball is attended by between 200 and 225 community and business leaders of The Hills shire and raises much-needed funds for a different worthy cause each year. Last year, the event raised \$14,000 for the Sanctuary, a newly established women's shelter in The Hills to protect victims of domestic violence. This year the ball is raising money for the Grace Centre at Westmead Children's Hospital. The ball committee recognised the financial plight of the Grace Centre at Westmead Hospital and decided on its being the worthy recipient for 2017.

The Grace Centre is a unique intensive care unit for newborns where a team of experienced and specifically trained doctors, nurses and allied health professionals care for babies—some less than one month old, or neonates—with complex medical conditions, and serious cardiac or surgical disorders. The Grace Centre is a specialised unit providing dedicated treatment for premature newborns and critically ill infants. When a baby is transferred to Grace, it literally makes the difference between life and death. The Grace Centre does emergency

surgery on newborns. The "warmer bed" that keeps them at birth temperature is now more than 20 years old. The centre had only one bed, when at times there has been demand for five beds. This year's event was all about raising money to purchase at least one bed, which costs \$24,000.

The Panda Warmer GE Healthcare open transport bed is essential for newborns, not only to maintain temperature, but also for use during surgery. GE Healthcare received an award at the Medical Design Excellence Awards for the Panda warmers innovative features. The gala was heavily promoted throughout western and north-western Sydney, and attracted numerous donations and sponsorships including an amazing pendant necklace from the multi-award winning Robert Cliff Master Jewellers, interstate flights, accommodation, and even a motorbike. Carlos Velazquez, who appeared as C Major on the reality TV show *The Voice*, entertained us throughout the evening. He shared his personal insight into the aim of the evening. I believe he had a child who had stayed in the Grace Centre.

The event was held on Thursday 24 August 2017 and the room was full of wonderful people from The Hills and the Sydney metropolitan area, all ready to help the cause. Nadia Badawi was the keynote speaker at the ball and I assure members that her speech made an impact on all who attended. However, the biggest impact was made by a former patient who attended the night with her parents. Her mother's account of the experience left no-one in the room with a dry eye. The doctors and nurses attending from the Grace ward were visibly touched as they recalled the experience they had shared with that family. It was truly powerful. As the auctions began so did the bidding wars and the generosity of all present was displayed. Some attendees who lost in the auction pledged their last bid as a donation. It was quite an extraordinary sight to see, but that is how we are in The Hills. There is a unique sense of community, volunteerism and philanthropy. We support each other and we band together to support great causes, and this night was a prime example.

I congratulate Biviano's Dural on its ongoing commitment as a venue that gives back, not just locally but also for worthy causes across the State. I thank Jim Taggart, OAM, and The Hills Shire Council Mayor Michelle Byrne for joining me to make this event a true success. I congratulate the Grace Centre. The work the facility does for approximately 600 newborns each year is outstanding. The level of care surpasses all others. It was truly an honour to be a part of an event that raised much-needed funds. On the night the donations reached a level that funded not only one bed warmer but two. The people of this small but generous community raised more than \$44,000 on the night.

Parents attended the ball with children who had used the facility at Westmead. With the funds available we purchased two Panda Warmer GE Healthcare open transport beds. I thank the providers and my community. Without community commitment we cannot achieve these vital outcomes. Westmead Children's Hospital is not in our area, but we know it is vital. This Government is providing \$1 million to upgrade that facility and now it will have two new Panda Warmer GE Healthcare open transport beds for infants. I congratulate my community.

GRAFFITI REMOVAL DAY

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (18:07): The Parliament is about to have a three-week break, and during that time Graffiti Removal Day will occur. Sunday 29 October 2017 is an important date in the calendar for community groups because on that day we attack the scourge of graffiti. The catchphrase this year is calling all locals to "love where we live" and get involved in Graffiti Removal Day. On that day I encourage those who have a strong interest in their local communities to roll out with a paint roller and volunteer to help remove graffiti in their community, including in the electorate of Davidson.

People who volunteer on the day at their local site will be supplied with cleaning material, paint, safety equipment and training in how to safely remove graffiti. Last year volunteers across New South Wales removed more than 20,000 square metres of graffiti from some 460 sites in 57 local government areas—an area larger than each side of the Great Pyramid of Giza.

Mr Ray Williams: Outstanding.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: I note the interjection of the member for Castle Hill, who said that was outstanding. It is an outstanding effort from our local communities, an example of grassroots action. Graffiti vandalism costs the New South Wales Government, councils, local businesses and households more than \$200 million each year. I acknowledge and encourage locals who help address this issue. Those who cannot volunteer on the day can support the event by promoting it on social media using hashtags such as #lovewherewelive.

The New South Wales Government is proud to be working on this great community event with community organisations such as Rotary Australia, Scouts Australia, Girl Guides, Surf Life Saving Australia and sponsors such as Dulux, Selleys and Smart Graffiti. Further information is available, and there is also the capacity to register for the day, on the website www.graffitiremovalday.org.au. Members should encourage people in their

electorates to get involved, sign up for the day and make a contribution to our communities. I particularly acknowledge groups in the electorate of Davidson. I am glad to bring to the public's attention the importance of Graffiti Removal Day.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Disability Services) (18:11): As the Minister with responsibility for volunteering, I acknowledge the contribution of the hardworking member for Davidson. In the context of Graffiti Removal Day, I also acknowledge that we will once again draw on the wonderful volunteering spirit of our community. There are 2.1 million volunteers across New South Wales who do a wonderful job each and every day in myriad different capacities, but there will never be a more important day to see our volunteers in action than Graffiti Removal Day. I encourage everybody to help on Graffiti Removal Day. If they cannot, they should commend our volunteers for the great job they do in removing graffiti—a stain on our environment and a blight that should be cleaned up.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 18:12 until
Tuesday 14 November 2017 at 12:00.**