

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Wednesday 6 August 2025

The PRESIDENT (The Hon. Benjamin Cameron Franklin) took the chair at 10:00.

The PRESIDENT read the prayers and acknowledged the Gadigal clan of the Eora nation and its Elders and thanked them for their custodianship of this land.

Announcements

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PHOTOGRAPHS

The PRESIDENT: I advise members that a photographer will be present in the Chamber this morning to take photographs of proceedings for use in official publications of the Legislative Council.

Sessional Orders

PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE CHAMBER

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (10:01): On behalf of the Hon. Penny Sharpe: I move:

That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the standing or sessional orders, for the remainder of the current session and unless otherwise ordered:

- (1) The use of electronic devices by members, including mobile phones, to take photographs in the Chamber during proceedings is disorderly.
- (2) Still photography may be authorised by the President for accredited and otherwise approved media or for the purposes of corporate photography, in accordance with the resolution for the broadcasting of proceedings.

Motion agreed to.

Motions

HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI ATOMIC BOMBINGS EIGHTIETH ANNIVERSARY

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (10:02): I move:

That this House:

- (a) commemorates the eightieth anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 9 August 1945, which caused immense devastation and long-lasting human suffering;
- (b) honours the memory and testimony of atomic bomb survivors (Hibakusha) and nuclear test survivors including First Nations communities impacted by British nuclear weapons testing at Maralinga, Emu Field and the Montebello Islands;
- (c) affirms New South Wales support for a world free of nuclear weapons and recognises the 2017 United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons as a vital international instrument to help achieve that goal;
- (d) acknowledges the growing support from cities, towns and councils across Australia for the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons Cities Appeal, including local governments within New South Wales, and encourages further action at all levels of government to promote disarmament and peace; and
- (e) calls on the New South Wales Government to ensure the State plays its part in advancing nuclear disarmament, educating future generations and supporting communities affected by nuclear testing.

Motion agreed to.

CONSUL GENERAL AND DEPUTY CONSUL GENERAL OF IRELAND FAREWELL

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (10:03): I move:

That this House notes that:

- (a) on 17 July 2025 friends and prominent members of the Sydney Irish community gathered at the Gaelic Club to farewell the Consul General of Ireland, Rosie Keane, and her deputy, Lorraine Healy;
- (b) after serving with distinction for many years in the Sydney post, both were recently recalled to Ireland for other duties and will be departing in August 2025;
- (c) the gathering heard speeches from Deputy Consul General Lorraine Healy, Consul General Rosie Keane, Attorney General the Hon. Michael Daley, MP, and Dr Hugh McDermott, MP;

- (d) a video presentation was played with tributes from many members of the Irish community, who expressed their thanks for the great work of Lorraine and Rosie in supporting closer ties between New South Wales and Ireland during their time here; and
- (e) the NSW Parliamentary Friends of Ireland was represented at the event by its co-chairs Dr Marjorie O'Neill, MP, and the Hon. Cameron Murphy, MLC.

Motion agreed to.

ILLAWARRA COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (10:03): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) May 2025 marked the 40-year anniversary of the Illawarra Community Legal Centre;
 - (b) the Illawarra Legal Centre is an independent not-for-profit community legal centre that is dedicated to providing free legal advice to the local community and those who would otherwise be unable to access affordable legal assistance; and
 - (c) community legal centres, such as the Illawarra Legal Centre, are the lifeblood of local communities, providing confidential legal advice and assistance to people living in their catchment area, and they play a crucial role in making the law accessible to those disadvantaged, whether that be due to a lack of finances, education or English language proficiency, or socio-economic background.
- (2) That this House congratulates the Illawarra Community Legal Centre, its chairperson, Michael McGrath; treasurer, Peter Moggach; secretary, Solange Frost; and all volunteers past and present on their 40 years of dedicated community service.

Motion agreed to.

CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD THIRTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (10:03): I move:

That this House notes that:

- (a) 20 November 2024 marked 35 years since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- (b) the convention was the first international treaty to establish comprehensive global standards to safeguard the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of all children irrespective of their nationality, ethnicity, gender or socio-economic background; and
- (c) the Convention on the Rights of the Child has become the cornerstone of the children's rights protection movement worldwide, with 140 signatory nations, including Australia, which ratified the treaty in December 1990.

Motion agreed to.

INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (10:04): I move:

That this House notes that:

- (a) 10 December 2025 marks 50 years since Australia's ratification of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
- (b) the covenant establishes binding legal protections for fundamental economic, social and cultural rights covering areas such as working conditions, social security, living and health standards, education and access to cultural and scientific advancements; and
- (c) the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is a key part of the International Bill of Rights, which obliges states to protect and promote a range of essential human rights and constitutes an obligation for members of the international community.

Motion agreed to.

INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (10:04): I move:

That this House notes that:

- (a) 30 September 2025 marks 50 years since Australia's ratification of the International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;
- (b) signatory nations recognise that racial discrimination and superiority doctrines are scientifically false, morally condemnable and socially dangerous, that racial discrimination violates human rights and threatens international peace and cooperation, and that racial discrimination harms all, with its elimination being a fundamental United Nations goal; and

- (c) there are 182 parties and 88 signatories to the International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Motion agreed to.

UNITED NATIONS EIGHTIETH ANNIVERSARY

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (10:05): I move:

That this House notes that:

- (a) on 24 October 2025 the United Nations will mark its 80-year anniversary;
- (b) the United Nations was born in the aftermath of the Second World War and has since been instrumental in fostering global stability and cooperation;
- (c) the organisation has been dedicated to maintaining international peace and security, providing humanitarian assistance, protecting human rights and upholding international law;
- (d) the United Nations was originally founded by 51 member states and has since grown to encompass 193 states; and
- (e) Australia is a founding member of the United Nations and has been firmly committed to actively participating in and collaborating with the organisation.

Motion agreed to.

Documents

PROCUREMENT BOARD LOCAL SUPPLIER DIRECTION

Tabling of Report of Independent Legal Arbiter

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: I move:

- (1) That the report of the Independent Legal Arbiter entitled *Disputed Claim of Privilege—Procurement Board Direction 2024-02*, dated Wednesday 30 July 2025, together with a submission, be laid upon the table by the Clerk.
- (2) That, on tabling, the report and submission are authorised to be published.

Motion agreed to.

Business of the House

WITHDRAWAL OF BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT: I inform the House that the Hon. Emma Hurst has withdrawn the formal business request regarding private member's business item No. 2185 standing in her name relating to an order for papers regarding a report on the inquiry into Greyhound Racing NSW.

Motions

RICHMOND LIONS CLUB SLEEPOUT

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (10:06): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that the Richmond Lions Club held its annual Richmond Lions Club Sleepout on Saturday 2 August 2025.
- (2) That this House further notes that:
 - (a) the Sleepout is a community led event held to raise awareness of homelessness in the Hawkesbury region;
 - (b) Richmond Lions Club partnered with the HOPE4U Foundation, a local organisation which provides critical support and assistance to people and families experiencing mental health or grief following the loss of a loved one from suicide, as well as supporting those at risk of or experiencing homelessness and domestic and family violence; and
 - (c) the money raised through the Sleepout will be used to support the HOPE4U Foundation to continue delivering frontline services to the community.
- (3) That this House commends Warren Doyle and Scott Hinks from Richmond Lions Club for organising the Sleepout and raising awareness and funds for homelessness in the Hawkesbury area, and all community members who attended, including:
 - (a) Ms Robyn Preston, MP, member for Hawkesbury;
 - (b) Councillor Sarah McMahon, Deputy Mayor of Hawkesbury; and
 - (c) Councillor Mike Creed.

Motion agreed to.

FOUR CORNERS LOGIE AWARD

Dr AMANDA COHN (10:07): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that on 3 August 2025 the *TV Week* Logie Award for Best News Coverage or Public Affairs Report was awarded to the "Betrayal of Trust" episode of *Four Corners*.
- (2) That this House congratulates the ABC and investigative journalist Adele Ferguson on their excellent work as well as Ms Abigail Boyd, MLC, who surely has to be the only serving member of the Legislative Council to be thanked in a Logies acceptance speech.

Motion agreed to.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT WEEK

Dr AMANDA COHN (10:07): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that Monday 4 August to Sunday 10 August 2025 is Local Government Week.
- (2) That this House acknowledges that councils across New South Wales:
 - (a) employ almost 50,000 people;
 - (b) maintain more than 168,000 kilometres of road and bridges;
 - (c) recycle 1.75 million tonnes of waste;
 - (d) operate more than 380 libraries that attract tens of millions of visits each year; and
 - (e) manage more than \$220 billion of community assets.
- (3) That this House recognises and celebrates the range and diversity of essential infrastructure and services councils provide for their communities including libraries, waste services, sports fields, parks, cemeteries, building and development services, pet registration and much more.

Motion agreed to.

Committees

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 5 - JUSTICE AND COMMUNITIES

Extension of Reporting Date

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: I move:

That the reporting date of the inquiry into antisemitism in New South Wales by Portfolio Committee No. 5 - Justice and Communities be extended to 28 November 2025.

Motion agreed to.

Motions

BUSINESS COUNCIL OF COOPERATIVES AND MUTUALS AND EMPLOYERS MUTUAL

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (10:08): I move:

That this House:

- (a) notes that on 19 June 2025 the Business Council of Cooperatives and Mutuals [BCCM] and Employers Mutual hosted the BCCM-EML Resilience Dinner;
- (b) congratulates Dr Gill Hicks, AM, MBE, on an outstanding presentation, which included a moving account of her experience as a survivor of the 7 July 2005 London bombings and her journey of recovery;
- (c) the BCCM is the national industry body representing cooperatives and mutuals across Australia, with members comprising the country's leading cooperatives spanning diverse sectors, including agriculture, financial services, motoring, manufacturing, retail, purchasing, health, aged and disability care, and housing;
- (d) recognises that the BCCM represents a vital part of Australia's economy and community, with eight in 10 people in New South Wales being members of at least one co-operative or mutual; over 750 co-ops and mutuals are based in New South Wales alone, generating a combined turnover of more than \$15.7 billion;
- (e) these organisations play a crucial role in fostering a deep connection between co-ops, mutuals and community resilience—a contribution that was celebrated greatly at the dinner; and
- (f) notes the attendance of:
 - (i) Dr Gill Hicks, AM, MBE, guest speaker;
 - (ii) the Hon. Damien Tudehope, MLC;
 - (iii) the Hon. Susan Carter, MLC;
 - (iv) the Hon. Jacqui Munro, MLC;
 - (v) Mrs Tanya Davies, MP;
 - (vi) Ms Monica Tudehope, MP;

- (vii) Ms Abigail Boyd, MLC; and
- (viii) Melina Morrison, CEO of BCCM.

Motion agreed to.

UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES LASER JOCK EVENT

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (10:08): I move:

That this House:

- (a) notes that on 15 July 2025 the Nobel laureate Professor Donna Strickland delivered "Laser Jock", a public event co-presented by the UNSW Centre for Ideas, UNSW Science, UNSW Engineering and the Australian Institute of Physics as part of UNSW's International Year of Quantum Technologies event series;
- (b) celebrates 2025 as International Year of Quantum Science and Technology;
- (c) recognises the success of UNSW quantum spinout companies Diraq and Silicon Quantum Computing, which are developing truly cutting-edge technology that will lead to awareness in industries from health care to energy to transport;
- (d) recognises Professor Strickland's groundbreaking contribution to physics through her 2018 Nobel Prize-winning development of chirped pulse amplification, a technique now fundamental to modern laser eye surgery, mobile device manufacturing and quantum science;
- (e) acknowledges the public value of events like "Laser Jock" in making cutting-edge science accessible, fostering community engagement and inspiring future generations to pursue education and careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics; and
- (f) notes the attendance of:
 - (i) Professor Donna Strickland;
 - (ii) Tegan Taylor, ABC journalist;
 - (iii) Professor Stephen Rodda;
 - (iv) Professor Bronwyn Fox, AO;
 - (v) Professor Hugh Durrant-Whyte; and
 - (vi) The Hon. Jacqui Munro, MLC, shadow assistant Minister for the Arts, Innovation, Digital Government and the 24-Hour Economy.

Motion agreed to.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR SANJAY WARRIER

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (10:09): I move:

That this House:

- (a) commends Associate Professor Sanjay Warriar for his leadership in breast oncology and oncoplastic surgery at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Mater Hospital and Breast Screen NSW, serving as consultant breast surgeon and chief surgeon for Sydney Local Health District Breast Screen Aged Care;
- (b) recognises his academic contributions as associate professor at the University of Sydney and lead researcher at the Royal Prince Alfred Academic Institute, where he co-founded the world's first Master of Advanced Surgery (Breast Surgery)—a postgraduate degree addressing specialised training needs;
- (c) acknowledges his leadership roles as a past president of BreastSurgANZ, current chairman (co-chair) of Post Fellowship Training, longstanding member of BreastSurgANZ committees, and adviser to the NSW Ministry of Health, Cancer Institute, SLHD Biobanking, Sydney Breast Cancer Foundation and Smith and Nephew Global SCC Prevention Council My Lifehouse;
- (d) celebrates his innovation in surgical technology, being the first surgeon in Australia to use SPY intraoperative imaging for breast reconstruction and the first in the Southern Hemisphere to perform robotic breast surgery;
- (e) recognises his excellence in research and scientific recognition:
 - (i) winning the Patron's Prize (2013) at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital for research on Hedgehog signalling;
 - (ii) presenting at ASCO and the San Antonio Breast Symposium, Sydney Medical Specialists; and
 - (iii) publishing recent studies on surgical outcomes, lymph node mapping, reconstruction cost effectiveness, and oncologic techniques in *Annals of Surgical Oncology*, Sydney Medical Specialists.
- (f) congratulates Associate Professor Sanjay Warriar on establishing a successful, multi-site, self-managing breast practice, and enabling a patient-centred approach supported by strategic business foundations, My Lifehouse;
- (g) acknowledges his unwavering commitment to compassionate patient care, mentoring of future surgeons and adoption of cutting-edge techniques to improve outcomes for women facing breast cancer; and
- (h) acknowledges and commends Associate Professor Sanjay Warriar for his extraordinary service to women's health, medical science and patients.

Motion agreed to.**RON VICKRESS 100TH BIRTHDAY**

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (10:09): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) Mr Ron Vickress recently celebrated his 100th birthday with a gathering of family and friends at the Armidale Ex-Services Club on 28 June 2025;
 - (b) Mr Vickress has dedicated his life to service, creativity and community—serving in the Royal Australian Navy during World War II as a signalman aboard HMAS *Pirie* and witnessing the historic signing of the Japanese surrender in Tokyo Harbour in 1945;
 - (c) Mr Vickress has made significant contributions to the Guyra community, including as:
 - (i) a long-serving member of the Guyra RSL Sub-Branch and trustee of the Guyra War Memorial Hall;
 - (ii) a respected lecturer in English and drama at the University of New England [UNE] from 1972 to 1985;
 - (iii) an advocate for the arts, having performed in plays, stage works and musicals, and helped establish amateur theatre and swimming clubs;
 - (iv) a champion of social justice and Indigenous support services; and
 - (v) the recipient of the UNE Alumni Community Award and Armidale Regional Council's Senior Citizen of the Year.
 - (d) Mr Vickress received tributes from King Charles III, the Prime Minister, RSL NSW, University of New England and local dignitaries in recognition of his extraordinary legacy; and
 - (e) Mr Vickress, through his service with the Guyra Soldiers' Memorial Hall, holds the distinction of being the oldest trustee of any Crown land entity in New South Wales.
- (2) That this House congratulates Mr Vickress on his 100th birthday and thanks him for a lifetime of service to New South Wales and the nation.

Motion agreed to.**GEOFF QUINN**

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (10:10): I move:

That this House:

- (a) congratulates Mr Geoff Quinn on his extraordinary contribution to the Liberal Party of Australia (NSW Division), marking over 70 years of continuous membership, having joined in or before 1956;
- (b) notes Mr Quinn's longstanding leadership within the Liberal Party, including his service in various roles such as branch president, electorate conference president, treasurer, state council delegate and regional president, and his role in supporting and mentoring new members across regional New South Wales;
- (c) recognises Mr Quinn's professional achievements as a respected agriculturalist, policy adviser and entrepreneur, whose work has advanced rural industries and communities across the State;
- (d) commends his innovative contributions as the Founder of ManyBusyHands, a digital platform that connects seasonal workers with rural employers, and as a founding contributor to the UNE SMART Region Incubator, helping foster regional start-ups and agri-innovation;
- (e) acknowledges Mr Quinn's policy expertise in sustainability, livestock breeding and rural development, and his past roles including senior policy analyst at the NSW Farmers' Association, councillor support and policy at the City of Sydney, and various academic and advisory positions;
- (f) pays tribute to Mr Quinn's tireless advocacy for regional excellence, his deep commitment to community and his principled promotion of Liberal values over seven decades; and
- (g) offers the thanks and congratulations of this House, and wishes Mr Quinn continued health, happiness and fulfilment.

Motion agreed to.**NORTHPARKES MINE**

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (10:10): I move:

That this House:

- (a) notes that on 29 July 2025 the Hon. Aileen MacDonald visited Northparkes mine, located on the traditional lands of the Wiradjuri people, 27 kilometres north-west of Parkes, with Mr Mark Coure, MP, member for Oatley, shadow Minister for Multiculturalism, shadow Minister for Jobs, Industry, Innovation, Science and Technology, and shadow Minister for South Western Sydney;

- (b) acknowledges that copper, the primary product of Northparkes, is an essential metal in our daily lives, delivering electricity and water to our homes, powering vehicles and telecommunications and used in everything from coins and mobile phones to renewable energy systems and medical technology;
- (c) further notes that the average family home contains more than 90 kilograms of copper, and that copper properties including its excellent conductivity, corrosion resistance, malleability and recyclability, make it one of the most useful and widely used metals in human civilisation;
- (d) recognises Northparkes as Australia's first block cave mine, operating since 1994 and jointly owned by Evolution Mining (80 per cent) and Sumitomo Group (20 per cent), with current production from the E26 Lift 1 North block cave and processing conducted onsite before shipment via the Port of Newcastle;
- (e) commends Northparkes for its economic contribution to the Parkes region, directly injecting \$60.7 million into the local economy in the last year alone, supporting approximately 2,000 workers and engaging 139 local suppliers—from mechanics to caterers;
- (f) applauds Northparkes' commitment to meaningful and ongoing community engagement, including annual stakeholder surveys, a demonstrated Social Licence to Operate score of 4.19 out of 5, and partnerships that deliver real outcomes in health, education, sport and First Nations engagement;
- (g) celebrates Northparkes' investment of \$100,000 annually into local initiatives and programs, including:
 - (i) \$60,000 per annum to Project Sprouts, providing early intervention support for young children with developmental delays;
 - (ii) \$80,000 for local government capacity through a grants officer and Aboriginal project officer;
 - (iii) \$35,000 for Parkes Sports Grants;
 - (iv) \$17,500 for the Parkes Elvis Festival; and
 - (v) \$5,000 for the Parkes Agricultural Show.
- (h) thanks the Northparkes team for its hospitality and for showcasing a model of responsible resource development that not only drives economic value but also supports local communities and enhances regional prosperity.

Motion agreed to.

TRIBUTE TO FATHER CHRIS RILEY, AM

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (10:10): I move:

That this House:

- (a) extends to the family of the late Father Chris Riley, AM, the deep sympathy of the members of the Legislative Council in the loss sustained by his passing on 1 August 2025, at the age of 70;
- (b) expresses its sincere gratitude for Father Riley's service to the uplifting of underprivileged youth, who during his decades-long, selfless dedication to children and youth, was a beacon of hope for the most vulnerable that continues to inspire and serve as an example in transforming the lives of young people;
- (c) acknowledges the monumental success of the Youth Off The Streets charity founded by Father Riley in 1991 in having lit a path in and transforming the lives of tens of thousands of children and youth, a program that started as a single food van in Kings Cross and turned into a life-saving organisation, providing support, education pathways and crisis accommodation to young people experiencing homelessness across New South Wales;
- (d) pays tribute to and honours his legacy, vision and steadfast belief in the enormous potential of every young person; and
- (e) presents its heartfelt condolences to his family, colleagues and the Youth Off The Streets community.

Motion agreed to.

LOUISA LAWSON AND THE GOLDING SISTERS

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (10:11): I move:

- (1) That this House acknowledges that:
 - (a) on 14 July 2025 the Minns Labor Government paid tribute to four torchbearers of women's rights, unveiling two blue plaques near Mudgee commemorating Louisa Lawson, New South Wales "Mother of Suffrage", and Annie, Belle and Kate Golding, who were teachers turned feminist activists;
 - (b) all four women were instrumental in the campaign to give women the vote at the turn of the century and they remained powerful forces of change and champions of workplace equality;
 - (c) Louisa Lawson was a powerhouse within the feminist, suffrage and Labor union movements, credited as the originator of the suffrage movement in New South Wales; she was also a publisher and writer, an independent and resourceful intellectual, and a single mother to five children, including Henry Lawson;
 - (d) the Golding sisters were true trailblazers who dedicated their lives to bettering all aspects of life for women in our State, and their accomplishments took hold at a time when it was difficult and dangerous to speak up and force change;

- (e) the sisters Annie, Belle and Kate all started their working lives as teachers in country New South Wales in the late 1800s, but they soon moved to Sydney's inner west where they spearheaded women's activism, and all three joined the Womanhood Suffrage League of NSW, then the Women's Progressive Association, where Annie became president, and there they advocated for social and domestic reforms supporting women's rights to vote, work and earn better pay; and
 - (f) these three sisters fought systemic sexism and they were absolutely pivotal in the hard-fought battle to deliver women their fundamental rights and the working conditions they deserved.
- (2) That this House recognises that Louisa Lawson's plaque was unveiled at Eurunderee (near Mudgee) and the Golding sisters' plaque was unveiled at Hill End; these are two of 16 Blue Plaque recipients in the third round of this popular heritage program, which shares the fascinating stories of people and events that have shaped communities across the State.
 - (3) That this House recognises the record spend on heritage preservation under the Minns Labor Government of \$8.65 million in this round of heritage grants.

Motion agreed to.

ALL SAINTS' ANGLICAN CHURCH, CONDOBOLIN

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (10:11): I move:

- (1) That this House acknowledges that:
 - (a) the All Saints' Anglican Church in Condobolin in the Hon. Stephen Lawrence's duty electorate of Barwon, a truly great church of western New South Wales, has been successful in receiving a heritage grant;
 - (b) the All Saints' Anglican Church will be refitted with a new roof, helped by an \$82,825 State heritage grant obtained by Lachlan Shire Council, with heritage and conservation projects prioritised by the Minns Labor Government through a record \$8.65 million grant funding round under the leadership of the Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage, the Hon. Penny Sharpe, MLC; and
 - (c) the church is a stunning and renowned 1879 Edmund Blacket design, with very special stained glass, original wooden pews and built from beautiful local bricks.
- (2) That this House recognises parishioners Sue Thomas, Stella Buckland, Lorraine L'Estrange and Jean Piper for their instrumental contributions in their conservation projects on All Saints Anglican Church and being the driving force behind this heritage grant and championing Edmund Blacket's design legacy at this very special church.

Motion agreed to.

ORANA RURAL FIRE SERVICE

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (10:12): I move:

- (1) That this House recognises:
 - (a) the work of our Rural Fire Service volunteers in fighting bushfires, conducting hazard reduction burns, attending motor vehicle accidents, doing routine checks at the station and assisting the State Emergency Service with storm and flood damage; and
 - (b) that our RFS volunteers embody the best of our communities, protecting the community in challenging conditions, the value of community spirit, the importance of looking out for our neighbours.
- (2) That this House acknowledges that:
 - (a) on 12 July 2025, a RFS Orana Medal Ceremony was held in Dubbo to recognise the extraordinary service and commitment of 35 RFS members and volunteers across the Orana District;
 - (b) in attendance were Acting Commissioner Peter McKechnie, AFSM, Deputy Commissioner Kyle Stewart, APM, Dugald Saunders, MP, Councillor Josh Black, Mayor of Dubbo Regional Council, and various other senior leaders, brigade officers and members of the RFS;
 - (c) RFS Acting Commissioner Peter McKechnie was joined by the Hon. Stephen Lawrence, MLC, attending on behalf of the Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice, the Hon. Jihad Dib, MP, for the presentation of nine National Medals and 27 Long Service Medals, representing a combined 638 years of service;
 - (d) the members recognised had undertaken lengths of service ranging from 10 to almost 60 years, with Rodney Althofer from Dripstone Brigade contributing an impressive 59 years of service and especially in providing vital first aid training for more than 20 years; and
 - (e) there were a number of incredible contributions of family units represented within the Orana RFS brigades as the tradition of service is passed from one generation to the next, including father-and-son duo John and Adam Millington, mother-and-son duo Denise and Craig Whiley, and two husband-and-wife teams: Barry and Lynette Whalan, and Craig and Kerry Walters.
- (3) That this House recognises the members of our community who contribute above and beyond what is expected of active members within their Rural Fire Service brigades and devote a significant portion of their lives to protecting others.

Motion agreed to.

*Documents***PROJECT MAREEBA****Production of Documents: Order**

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (10:12): I move:

That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within nine days of the date of passing of this resolution all documents created since 14 August 2024 in the possession, custody or control of the Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion, or the Department of Communities and Justice relating to Project Mareeba, and any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.

Motion agreed to.

*Motions***LAW AND JUSTICE FOUNDATION OF NSW**

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (10:12): I move:

That this House:

- (a) notes that the Law and Justice Foundation of NSW has been awarded APAC Insider's "Best Legal and Justice Research Non-Profit Organisation 2025"; and
- (b) congratulates the foundation on this prestigious award.

Motion agreed to.

JIM RONIS, OAM

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (10:13): I move:

- (1) That this House congratulates Mr Jim Ronis, OAM, on being awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in the 2025 King's Birthday Honours for his distinguished service to the Greek Australian and Bankstown communities, sport, education and civic engagement.
- (2) That this House acknowledges Mr Ronis' long and varied service, including:
 - (a) over 15 years as secretary and three terms as president of Canterbury Marrickville Olympic Soccer Club (now known as Canterbury Bankstown Football Club in the National Premier Leagues), becoming a life member in 1972;
 - (b) over 20 years as a director of Football NSW from 1987 to 2007, becoming the chairman of the Futsal NSW committee between 2003-2007, and a life member of Football NSW since 2002;
 - (c) as managing director and founder of Ronis Real Estate, which has been operating in Bankstown for over 56 years as a family business;
 - (d) his directorship and founding contributions to St Euphemia College, St Euphemia Greek Orthodox Church and the Kalavryton Society, institutions which have played a critical role in fostering Greek culture and traditions; and
 - (e) his two decades of service as a director of Bankstown Sports Club.
- (3) That this House further acknowledges the steadfast support of Mr Ronis' family, including his wife, Kitty Ronis, children, George, Peter and Joanne, grandchildren and extended family who have always stood by his side.
- (4) That this House commends Mr Jim Ronis, OAM, for strengthening social cohesion, multicultural understanding and youth participation in sport, particularly within Sydney's Greek Australian community, and for his broader civic and business leadership in Bankstown.

Motion agreed to.

TRIBUTE TO KEVIN BOYD, OAM

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (10:14): I move:

- (1) That this House notes with deep sadness the recent passing of Mr Kevin Boyd, OAM, a respected and long-serving official of the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union, a life member of the Australian Labor Party, and respected member of the Birrong community.
- (2) That this House acknowledges Mr Boyd's outstanding contribution to the trade union movement and industrial relations in Australia, particularly his decades of service as general secretary of the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union, where he tirelessly advocated for the rights, pay and conditions of workers in the textiles and clothing industries for more than 40 years.
- (3) That this House notes that in 1993, Mr Boyd was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for his service to industrial relations and the trade union movement.
- (4) That this House pays tribute to Mr Boyd's passion for social justice, his leadership within the labour movement and his deep commitment to improving the lives of working people.
- (5) That this House extends sincere condolences to Mr Boyd's daughter Elaine, his family, friends, and former colleagues in the union movement, and shares in celebrating his life's achievements and lasting legacy.

(6) Vale Kevin Boyd, OAM.

Motion agreed to.

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN MINT STEAM GIANTS COIN SET

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL (10:14): I move:

- (1) That this House congratulates the Royal Australian Mint and the Acting CEO Emily Martin on the release of the 2025 coin set, Steam Giants—Australian Rail Heritage collection.
- (2) That this House notes that:
 - (a) the collection celebrates the iconic history of Australia's golden age of steam with seven distinct coins representing the historical significance of rail from each State and the Commonwealth railway;
 - (b) while humble coins, as the Acting CEO said, they in fact celebrate the engineering, the courage and the vision of a nation that once ran on rails, and that these are not just coins, they are miniature tributes to the steam age, crafted with care and precision by the Royal Australian Mint;
 - (c) the collection was launched here in Sydney at Central station on 5 August 2025, with the Hon. Nichole Overall, MLC, Acting CEO of the Royal Australian Mint, Emily Martin, award winning curator and steam locomotive specialist David Hampton and Andrew Mortiz, CEO of Transport Heritage NSW, among many others, in attendance;
 - (d) the history of our great country has been designed and pressed onto coins by the Royal Australian Mint celebrating its sixtieth anniversary this year since it opened and showing the important role that the mint plays in telling the story of the evolving history and spirit of our nation;
 - (e) this celebratory coin collection reflects the long history of travel across our great country, since it has been 170 years of rail in Australia and 200 years of rail across the globe; and
 - (f) the historical connection between the regions and rail is strong, one example of which is a former train driver from Bathurst named Joseph Benedict (Ben) Chifley, who would go on to become Australia's sixteenth Prime Minister, for whom the historical Benedict Convent in Queanbeyan is named.
- (3) That this House further notes the history of the mint and that:
 - (a) other successful collections include the Dorothea Mackellar collection of three coins celebrating the important role that the poet played in our collective history, writing the now famous and sacrosanct words "I love a sunburnt country"; and
 - (b) the Mackellar collection was launched in Gunnedah as part of the Royal Australian Mint's initiative to host launches of these historic coins in the regions.

Motion agreed to.

Documents

UNPROCLAIMED LEGISLATION

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: According to standing order, I table a list of all legislation unproclaimed 90 calendar days after assent as at 5 August 2025.

PROCUREMENT BOARD LOCAL SUPPLIER DIRECTION

Report of Independent Legal Arbiter

The CLERK: According to the resolution of the House this day, I table a report of the Independent Legal Arbiter entitled *Disputed Claim of Privilege—Procurement Board Direction 2024-02*, dated Wednesday 30 July 2025, together with a submission.

Notices

PRESENTATION

[During the giving of notices of motions]

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Point of order: I know that members are allowed to give notices of motions. However, the notice of motion of the Hon. Mark Latham contains a huge amount of argument and imputations against others that are untested. I believe that some of it should be struck from the record.

The Hon. Mark Latham: To the point of order: It's her man, not mine. The notice of motion deals with serious matters of sexual assault committed in this building—known to them all—

The PRESIDENT: That does not go to the point of order.

The Hon. Mark Latham: —and activity relating to the electoral laws of New South Wales. It is a very serious matter.

The PRESIDENT: That is a debating point. I remind members that they should not make debating points when speaking to points of order. They must speak only to the point of order. I thank the Leader of the Government for raising the point of order. I will not rule now. The Hon. Mark Latham can read the notice of motion in its entirety. I will then consider it and come back to the House with my ruling.

Later,

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Point of order: Mr President, I know you have said you will allow the notice of motion—which makes allegations that are unproved and makes serious imputations against individuals who have no ability to deal with the allegations—to be read in its entirety. However, I believe that the notice of motion should not be allowed to be read in the House on the condition that "We might take it out later." I seek your guidance on how we can stop unnecessary imputations on members in the House.

The Hon. Mark Latham: To the point of order: They are serious imputations because they are true. I would not bring them into this Chamber without checking my facts extensively. A lot of this material is on the public record. Other material has been made available to me through credible sources who were there at that time. If the Leader of the Government—who is representing this man, Minns—has concerns, she can represent him and deal with the matters when the motion is debated in the Chamber.

The PRESIDENT: I appreciate the Leader of the Government raising those issues. As I said, I will consider them. They are serious. I implore all members to consider the words they use in notices of motions and at other times. That said, if a member wishes to move a motion, they can give notice of that motion without reading it in the House. That motion then immediately goes on the *Notice Paper*. Members can also choose to read their notices of motion. Therefore, I will hear the notice of motion in its entirety and consider it accordingly.

Business of the House

POSTPONEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I postpone business of the House notice of motion No. 2 until the next sitting day.

Bills

SUMMARY OFFENCES AMENDMENT (LIMITATION ON OFFENSIVE LANGUAGE) BILL 2025

First Reading

Bill introduced, read a first time and ordered to be published on motion by the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham.

Second Reading Speech

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (10:39): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Summary Offences Amendment (Limitation on Offensive Language) Bill 2025 amends section 4A of the Summary Offences Act 1988 to limit the scope of the offence of offensive language. Specifically, it narrows the offence to apply only where the offensive language is used in a hostile or threatening way. That is the key point: in a hostile or threatening way, in a significant way. This is a vital modernisation of the law and one that retains community protection while removing the risk of arbitrary, racist or discriminatory enforcement. The offence of offensive language, as currently drafted, is overly broad. It captures everyday expressions used by Australians in frustration, grief, protest and, sometimes, humour. But this law has never been about decency; it has been about discretion. Too often that discretion has been exercised at the expense of marginalised communities.

In 2023 there were 564 offensive language charges finalised in New South Wales courts. Shockingly, 45 per cent of those charges were laid against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who make up just 3.4 per cent of our State's population. This is not justice; it is systemic bias codified in law. This amending bill will prevent the use of section 4A as a blunt instrument. It will ensure that only genuinely threatening or hostile conduct and language can be prosecuted. Swearing at the air, venting frustration, or even protesting with strong language will no longer be grounds for a criminal record.

The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody recommended more than three decades ago that minor public order offences like offensive language should not be used to justify arrests. Yet today these laws continue to funnel Aboriginal people and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds into the criminal justice system for conduct that presents no actual harm. Courts have long recognised the fraught nature of this offence. Historically, these laws were never about protecting public order. They were about control. Offensive language offences can be traced back to colonial statutes introduced to discipline and suppress the

convict population. These early laws were tools of authority, designed to enforce moral codes and submission through punitive measures. That legacy has endured.

What began as a means of controlling convicts has evolved into a mechanism that disproportionately targets those already overpoliced and marginalised, particularly Aboriginal Australians. In *Polly v Constable Brown* (2002) 126 A Crim R 316, the court held that the words "fuck off", used by a citizen towards police, were not legally offensive in context. Justice Smart rightly noted that courts must reflect modern community standards where such language, while coarse, is not exceptional. Likewise in *Stutsel v Reid* (1990) 20 NSWLR 661, the Supreme Court found that offensive language can constitute an offence even when no-one is present in a public space to hear it. In that case, an Aboriginal man yelled from a private yard at two police officers, saying, "Why don't you fuck off, you dog-arse cunts?" The charge was upheld, not because anyone in the street heard it, but because someone could have heard it.

The Hon. Mark Latham: That was me.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: He probably was yelling at the Hon. Mark Latham. Justice Loveday confirmed that actual harm or public disruption is not required to satisfy the offence. This case starkly illustrates how the current law criminalises language in the absence of a victim, reinforcing how low the threshold truly is. Leading criminal law scholars—from the UTS Law Faculty to the authors of *Criminal Laws: Materials and Commentary on Criminal Law and Process of New South Wales*—have consistently called for reform of section 4A.

Jo Lennan, writing in the *Current Issues in Criminal Justice* journal in 2007, described offensive language laws as having a Janus face, appearing to protect public civility on one side while enabling discriminatory and inconsistent enforcement on the other. She observed that the ambiguity of what counts as offensive has allowed police to disproportionately target Aboriginal Australians, embedding subjective bias into everyday policing. These laws, Lennan argues, do not reflect a community standard. They reflect a pattern of criminalising cultural expression and dissent. Reform is long overdue to ensure our legal system does not conflate cultural difference with disorder, or frustration with threat. These voices affirm that the law disproportionately targets the poor, the young and Aboriginal people.

This bill answers that call. It retains the offence in a targeted form, preserving public safety and dignity, while removing the pretext for arbitrary and discriminatory enforcement. It also removes any uncertainty for police. Only language that the police deem to be threatening or hostile will give rise to that charge. This is not a radical change. It is a modest, rational step forward. The law should not punish people for the words they use in frustration or protest. It should intervene only when those words are used as a weapon to intimidate or threaten others. This bill strikes that balance. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

WORKERS COMPENSATION AMENDMENT (FIREFIGHTERS' DISEASES) BILL 2025

First Reading

Bill introduced, read a first time and ordered to be published on motion by the Hon. Damien Tudehope.

Second Reading Speech

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (10:48): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Firefighters put themselves in harm's way to serve and protect the community. One of the kinds of harm to which firefighters are subject is a significantly increased risk of contracting cancer. Firefighters face exposure to a variety of carcinogens in their work, including combustion products from fires which may include fine and ultrafine particulates; oxides of carbon, nitrogen and sulphur; hydrocarbons; aromatic hydrocarbons; and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. Additionally, firefighters may be exposed to silica and building materials affected by structure fires, such as asbestos and synthetic fibres, as well as chemical flame retardants from furnishings.

Beside exposure to combustion products, firefighters may also be exposed to chemicals they use during firefighting, such as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, contained in some aqueous film-forming foams. Other exposures include diesel exhaust, heat, UV and other radiation. Routes of exposure include skin absorption, inhalation and ingestion. As with all work health and safety risks, prevention should be a priority. Improvements in personal protective equipment, decontamination procedures and greater awareness of risks can reduce potential exposure to carcinogens. However, some increased risks of exposure to carcinogens are inherent in firefighting and cannot be easily eliminated. Additionally, given the long period between first exposure to a

carcinogen and the identification of a cancer, it will be some years before improved prevention bears fruit in reduced incidence of cancer.

In 2018 the former Liberal-Nationals Government introduced legislation to recognise the increased risk of 12 site-specific cancers faced by firefighters, as demonstrated in the then available evidence base. The Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment (Firefighters) Bill 2018 added section 19A to the Workers Compensation Act 1987 and section 10A to the Workers Compensation (Bush Fire, Emergency and Rescue Services) Act 1987, creating a presumption that employment as a firefighter—or, in the case of volunteer firefighters, fighting a bushfire—was a contributing factor to the firefighter contracting any of the 12 cancers set out in the new schedule 4 to the Workers Compensation Act 1987. For each specific cancer in that list, a corresponding qualifying service period was set based on the available evidence, ranging from five years for primary site brain cancer and primary leukaemia, to either 10 or 15 years for most of the cancers, and 25 years only for primary site oesophageal cancer.

One of the measures in this bill is to reduce the qualifying service period for primary site oesophageal cancer to a more reasonable 15 years. This change was recommended by Dr Tim Driscoll in a 2020 review of the firefighter provisions in the Commonwealth's Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 and adopted by the Commonwealth in 2022 and Queensland in 2024. The previous period of 25 years was considered anomalous, with no scientific basis. One of the new cancers to be added is malignant mesothelioma. In its 2021 review, the International Association of Cancer Research [IACR] found:

There is sufficient evidence in humans for the carcinogenicity of occupational exposure as a firefighter. Occupational exposure as a firefighter causes mesothelioma ...

While, to a layperson, "sufficient evidence" may seem a low bar, I note that the IARC uses "sufficient evidence" when it considers that a causal relationship has been established between exposure to the agent, mixture or exposure circumstance and human cancer. That is, a positive relationship has been observed between the exposure and cancer in studies in which chance, bias and confounding could be ruled out with reasonable confidence. Following an interim review of the Safe Work Australia 2021 deemed diseases list completed by Dr Tim Driscoll in December 2023, which noted the IARC finding, Safe Work Australia updated the deemed diseases list in April 2024 to include work as a firefighter as a high-risk occupation or industry for contracting malignant mesothelioma.

It is unconscionable that, notwithstanding this very highest level of evidence from the relevant international research committee and the action taken by Safe Work Australia, the Minister for Work Health and Safety has been so dilatory in taking action to at least add malignant mesothelioma to the list of firefighters' diseases in schedule 4 to the Workers Compensation Act 1987. While the other eight cancers the bill would add to schedule 4 may not have the same level of evidence as malignant mesothelioma, the weight of the research supports their inclusion. For example, Safe Work Australia's deemed diseases list includes firefighters as a high-risk occupation for contracting skin cancer through exposure to polychlorinated biphenyls.

Just this month, the August 2025 issue of the *International Journal of Epidemiology* includes a report on a recent study by the American Cancer Society that utilised data from a massive cohort of male participants who were cancer free in 1982 and were followed for 36 years until 2018. This cohort included 470,000 male firefighters. The results showed that being a firefighter increased the mortality risk for most cancers, including lung cancer. Three of the cancers the bill would add to the list are cancers of the female reproductive system—cervical cancer, ovarian cancer and uterine cancer.

While the lower total numbers of female firefighters—especially of long-serving female firefighters—make it more challenging to get robust evidence on the risk being a firefighter carries for contracting these female-specific cancers, there are research reports indicating an increased risk. For example, a study published in April 2023 in *Frontiers in Public Health* showed that female firefighters had higher proportions of cervical and ovarian cancers than would have been expected in the general public. New South Wales recently marked the fortieth anniversary of women being permitted to become professional firefighters with Fire and Rescue NSW. It is appropriate to mark their ongoing contribution by ensuring that the presumptive cancer legislation reflects the distinct cancer risks that firefighting exposes women firefighters to.

Prior to the election, both the then Liberal-Nationals Government and the then Labor Opposition responded to a campaign by the Fire Brigade Employees Union [FBEU] by promising to give due consideration after the election to expanding the list of cancers covered by schedule 4. The FBEU had good reason to hope that there would be prompt action. The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham asked the Minister for Work Health and Safety about this in the new Government's first budget estimates hearings in November 2023. He asked:

When will the Minns Government begin to provide New South Wales firefighters with the additional coverage that they're requesting, in line with moves in other States?

The Minister told the honourable member:

I know that you and all of us—again I think we're on a unity ticket here ...

I've sought advice from icare. We've sought options. I'll be working together with my colleagues who have responsibility in this area as well—Minister Dib, Minister Chanthivong and the Treasurer—in a coordinated and collaborative approach to make sure that we get this right and, of course, speaking to the stakeholders. Once we have some of that formal information, I'm happy to come and brief all of you.

Nearly two years later, we are still waiting for this briefing from the Minister. The Hon. Robert Borsak followed up in the next estimates hearing with the Minister in February 2024. He asked:

Minister, in the previous estimates committee from late 2023, you were asked about presumptive legislation protecting firefighters from workplace cancers. As I understand it, the New South Wales firefighters are seeking to add numerous additional cancers to the legislation to ensure coverage equal to firefighters interstate and overseas. Can you advise what the status of this matter is?

The Minister replied:

We have begun this work and we will be able to comment very soon. We are doing the work and I have sought advice from icare as well as, I understand, Treasury and SIRA about increasing the number of presumptive cancers. Together with Minister Chanthivong and the Treasurer, we will be looking at all of that work. That work is currently underway but we will have more to say shortly.

She added, "I can't give you a definitive date." Nineteen months later, we are still waiting. At the budget estimates hearing in March 2025, I asked the Minister, "When will you actually do something substantive in relation to presumptive cancer legislation for firefighters?" The Minister replied:

I know you are sincere about this and you care about this matter. ... To your point about presumptive cancers, the Government is considering all of its options. That is all I am going to say about that matter.

I asked the Minister, "Is that all I can tell the firefighters?" The Minister's reply was:

They are probably watching this and they are probably going to make a video, like they did last time. Hopefully my hair is better this time.

On 13 June 2025 the FBEU informed its members:

Over the past few months, members have been working closely with delegates and organisers to ramp up the campaign to expand presumptive legislation, ensuring NSW professional firefighters are covered for ... additional work-related cancers ...

FBEU officials have continued advocating before the State Government on this matter. However, it is increasingly clear that we must redouble our efforts to secure change.

I commend the FBEU for its advocacy for its members. In her response to the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham, the Minister stated, "I've sought advice from icare. We've sought options." In her response to the Hon. Robert Borsak, the Minister stated that she had "sought advice from icare as well as, I understand, Treasury and SIRA about increasing the number of presumptive cancers". In an order for papers passed by the House on 25 June 2025, we asked for all documents relating to the expansion of schedule 4 to the Workers Compensation Act 1987 created since 25 March 2023 in the possession, custody or control of the Minister for Work Health and Safety, Treasury, the Department of Customer Service, icare, or the State Insurance Regulatory Authority.

The PRESIDENT: Order! According to sessional order, proceedings are now interrupted for questions.

Questions Without Notice

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SPECIAL ADVISER

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (11:00): My question is directed to the Leader of the Government. Noting that the recent remuneration determination for public service senior executives approved payment of an annual salary of \$679,050—that is, \$30,000 more than all the departmental secretaries—for the special adviser on domestic violence, former police commissioner Karen Webb, at a total cost of \$212,086.85 to the taxpayer for the 114 days of that appointment, in what way are the responsibilities of that role so much more onerous than those of a departmental secretary to justify that \$30,000 higher salary?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:01): I thank the member for the question. I assume he is asking me on behalf of the Premier. This is not directly in relation to my role, but I am happy to provide an answer. I am just seeking if it is on behalf of the Premier?

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: You represent the Government.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I understand that I represent the Government, but I am also the Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage. I have no determination in relation to the way in which the Statutory and Other Offices Remuneration Tribunal operates.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: I am not asking you in that capacity.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Just checking. To be honest, I am not aware of the discrepancy and the issue that the member has raised. I am aware that these proposals have gone through the tribunal process, and they have been recommended. I am very happy to take on notice the reasoning behind the discrepancy. The one point I would make—and I am sure other members in the House would agree—is that the work that we need to do to tackle domestic violence is ongoing. In fact, it is never-ending. I wish for a day when it is no longer an issue that we have to talk about or that women have to worry about every single day. That work will continue. However, I am not across the details of the question. I will endeavour to get an explanation and answer the question as soon as I can.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (11:02): I ask a supplementary question. Given the Minister's acknowledgement that important work is done to combat domestic violence, will she elucidate her answer where she refers to the important advice that the special adviser will be providing and the special work that she is doing? Will the Minister inform the House on the specific key performance indicators for the special adviser and what specific work has been done by the special adviser to date?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:03): As I said, I am not across the details of the matter. I will take it on notice and get an answer for the member.

BIOSECURITY RESEARCH

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (11:03): My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales. Will the Minister update the House on the New South Wales Government's world-leading research program?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:03): I thank the member for that very important and very good question. There is some really great news coming out of the research program that is operating in my department, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development [DPIRD]. World-leading researchers and scientists are doing incredible work to protect the biosecurity of New South Wales. Their incredible research is important for the ag industry and, more broadly, for New South Wales.

This week I had the opportunity to stand with Dr Peter Kirkland, a scientist with the department, to announce a breakthrough foot-and-mouth vaccine which was developed by scientists and researchers with the New South Wales Government. Foot-and-mouth disease, or FMD, is a highly infectious viral disease that affects cattle, sheep, goats and pigs. It is a very significant issue for many countries and their cattle industries around the world. Thankfully, at the moment Australia is free from FMD, but it is a constant threat, particularly given how close we are to Indonesia, where there are significant issues with the disease. We are currently free of the disease, but it is a significant threat to our beef and dairy industries.

I am pleased and delighted to have announced this week that the New South Wales Government and those incredible scientists and researchers, in partnership with industry, have developed that incredibly important vaccine in New South Wales. The new vaccine, which is produced on an mRNA platform, is a fantastic solution to a terrible scenario. Because it is an mRNA vaccine, it is a synthetic vaccine made without the need for a live virus and it will be fast to produce in an emergency. We will be ready to produce the vaccine in New South Wales. It is owned and managed in New South Wales. If the virus were to come into Australia, the vaccine will protect the beef and dairy industries in New South Wales and Australia, which means that our meat and dairy products can stay on supermarket shelves in the case of an outbreak.

FMD is a significant threat, not just to New South Wales but to the world. Again, this incredibly important research program, which is being run through the department, is delivering really important, world-leading results, and we now have a solution that addresses our State's and our nation's security and resilience. It enables us to be self-reliant in relation to a significant threat. It is great work from DPIRD and Tiba Biotech, with the support of Meat and Livestock Australia. Australia is one of the few nations in the world that will be able to produce and vaccinate cattle in the case of an FMD outbreak. [*Time expired.*]

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (11:06): My question is directed to the acting Minister for Education and Early Learning. Recent media coverage has revealed that alleged paedophile David James was first reported to authorities following an incident at a Sydney childcare service in June 2024. Will the Minister advise what specific action the Department of Education, in its role as the New South Wales regulatory authority for outside school hours care, took after that incident was reported?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:07): I thank the honourable member for that really important question in relation to some terrible allegations that have been receiving a lot of media coverage. I will take the substantive part of the question on notice because it is an active case. I am going to be very careful about what I say because we absolutely do not want to jeopardise that investigation and that case in any way. I know it has been extensively reported in the media. I have received a number of briefings on the issue, and I would not want to jeopardise that case in any way.

More broadly, I said yesterday in question time—and I take the opportunity again to reassure parents—that as shocking as these allegations are, the vast majority of our childcare centres and our outside school hours care centres in New South Wales are offering fantastic care for our children and a wonderful learning experience. We have excellent educators across the State. I take this opportunity to say that the New South Wales Government has a program of reform in relation to early childhood regulation. That is one that I outlined in the House yesterday. It was announced in response to the Wheeler review, which was commissioned by the Deputy Premier.

There is a long tail to this work that dates back to the very early days of this Government. The Deputy Premier has been on this for a long time, making sure that our regulator and our regulatory system is robust to protect our littlest learners. That is so important. We are rolling out that reform process. That reform process is occurring at both a State and national level because it is a complex area of law. It is not a Federal piece of legislation that governs this. It is actually a national law that is passed through each of the State parliaments, and each State then has regulatory authority.

It is very complex, but we have been really clear: We will pursue this through the national framework and the national places that we can in order to do this. But if that is not up to our standard, we will go it alone here in New South Wales because parents need to have trust and confidence that every time they drop their child at an early childhood centre or an out of school hours care centre they are going to be cared for and they are going to be learning. This is a really important question and area of reform, and it is certainly one the Deputy Premier and I are working on very closely.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (11:10): I ask a supplementary question. I thank the Minister for her answer and I understand the reasons for taking it on notice. I appreciate that. Would the Minister, either now or on notice, provide any information as to why that individual was able to continue working with children following the report of the incident in June 2024? Has the department made any procedural changes following that specific issue?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:10): Again, I am going to come back with the specifics on notice. I can say that a range of reforms has been implemented since the Deputy Premier took on that portfolio. Indeed, that started with a ministerial statement of expectations that she issued to the regulator. I am not going to give the date because I might mislead the House, but that statement of expectations led to an increased number of compliance visits from the regulator which, concerningly for her, saw an increase in the number of breaches.

That is why the Deputy Premier commissioned the Wheeler review. We are in the process of setting the regulator up as a separate regulatory agency that reports directly to the Minister. We will have more to say on that, but these are important reforms that are being pursued here in New South Wales in response to the Wheeler review and at a national level as a result of the National Child Safety Review. As I said, we are pursuing a broad range of reform in this area. Changes have been brought into place since 2024. I would not like to say that they are in direct response to that, but I would say that we are constantly looking for ways we can be improving the system and making it safer for our children.

From our Government's perspective, a key part of that is more information for parents and more transparency for the community. I referenced yesterday the call for papers of this House, which is what is required under the current national law in order to produce information about complaints that are made. That is not appropriate, and we have been really clear about that. Parents and the community should have more information as complaints are made at particular centres and more broadly about the rating system. We are going to have a lot more to say in this area of reform.

The PRESIDENT: Before I call the Hon. Mark Latham, I welcome to the gallery Ms Pascale Helyar-Moray, OAM, a guest of the Hon. Jacqui Munro. I am advised that she is an author, entrepreneur and advocate for women's financial security. She is very welcome here today.

VIRTUAL STOCK FENCING

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (11:13): My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Agriculture. Why on 30 April did the Minister announce the Government's intention to legalise zapping cows in the neck under so-called virtual fencing when it earlier opposed that policy in the Legislative Assembly in response to a private members' bill from the member for Orange? Why did the Minister's announcement on 30 April coincide exactly with Brent Thomas joining the Halter company, which has a near monopoly on that product, given that Mr Thomas is in the Chris Minns inner circle and now stands to make a lot of money from that surprise career move?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:13): I acknowledge the question from the member. There are a couple of things I would say at the outset, particularly in relation to the last part of the question, which is a pretty outrageous thing to be raising here. That is a really significant policy announcement that the Government and I, as the Minister for Agriculture, made. Very transparently and openly, after working with people across agriculture for the over two years that I have been in this role on how to modernise and work better with farmers to farm in a more effective way, I went to Orange and announced that we would be allowing virtual fencing to become legal in New South Wales.

It currently is not; it is banned under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. After much consultation and interest from members from regional communities, including the member for Orange and the member for Barwon, advocating for their constituents, we announced that this is a way to modernise farming. It is a good tool for farmers to use if they so wish, and I announced that we would be changing the law to allow that product to be available and used in New South Wales.

I also announced at that time that, rather than making the change immediately, we would go through a period of consultation. I want the regulation to be changed this year so we can deliver on the commitments that we have made to farmers, but I announced that we would go through a process to make sure that animal welfare matters are properly dealt with and biosecurity matters are properly considered. The Government is currently going through a whole consultation piece with industry. My department is working with industry groups and interested parties at the moment, and there are open consultation sessions happening around the State for people to properly consider that policy change which, again, is for farmers in New South Wales. As it wraps up, I look forward to hearing the feedback from that consultation with stakeholders who have an interest in this particular area of policy.

More than one company offers the virtual fencing product in New South Wales. I have met with a number of companies that offer that product in New South Wales, as would be expected of a Minister who is proposing to change the law by regulation. I have met with stakeholders, farmers and the industry about this, and I have met with a number of companies who supply virtual fencing in Australia and other places around the world to discuss what options might be available for the use of that product and what restrictions we might put in—all of those things that people would expect of a proper law change process. Any other allegation that is being made here should be withdrawn and properly considered. We are going through a proper process. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (11:16): I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elaborate on her consultations and inform the House of the companies she has met with that do provide this service and what meetings she has had with Halter and Mr Thomas?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:17): I thank member for the supplementary question. As I said in my previous answer, I have met with a number of companies that provide this product in other parts of Australia and the world. The company that he has mentioned is one of them. There are others. I would encourage the member to check my diary, which is disclosed as is required, for meetings that I have been involved in in relation to this and many other policy initiatives that the Government is undertaking to support agriculture and modernise the offering for farmers.

The Hon. Natalie Ward: Name one.

The Hon. Mark Latham: Name one, other than Halter.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I am answering the question. To deal with important policy questions—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Natalie Ward will cease interjecting. The Hon. Mark Latham will cease interjecting.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: As I have outlined in this answer, we have properly considered a change to the law to modernise practices and allow this type of product to be available in New South Wales. Again, a

number of companies provide the product here in Australia and around the world, and I have met with a couple of them. Check my diary. It is online. People can see who I have met with. I will continue to engage with the companies who provide it.

We want proper competition. If the product is to become legal, I want a market that is open so that farmers do not have to pay exorbitant prices for it. I will engage with anybody who is interested in discussing the issue. As I outlined in my previous answer, we are going through a full consultation period now. The department is consulting with industry groups. It is consulting with all interested parties in relation to this topic, and I would remind the House that this is something our Government flagged before the last election. We have given proper, long-term consideration to amending that law in the interests of farmers.

The Hon. WES FANG (11:19): I ask a second supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate the part of her answer where she said she has consulted widely with industry and a number of companies that provide this technology for implementation? What work is the Minister doing to ensure proper competition in this space? Which companies are being engaged to look at this technology in New South Wales? Will the Minister detail the briefings she has received from those companies about this technology?

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Point of order: This question is just a different way of restating the original question, which the Minister has answered. She said that a consultation is currently in place, that any meetings she has had are in her diary and that work continues. This question does not seek elucidation. It is just a way to repeat the original question.

The PRESIDENT: I do not uphold the point of order. There were some similar elements in both questions, but the fundamental thrust of the second supplementary question is on what the Minister is doing to ensure competition. The second supplementary question is fundamentally different to the original one. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:20): I thank the member for his second supplementary question. There are a number of countries in Australia and around the world that provide virtual fencing options for consumers. I want there to be competition, but the Government will not be providing virtual fencing materials for farmers to use. We are consulting and properly considering what legalising this will look like as an option for farmers. I am consulting widely as a part of the work of considering making this product legal for people in New South Wales. That includes talking to some of the companies that provide this product. I am sure there are a number of others that provide this product around the world. Once it is legal in New South Wales, I am sure there will be interest from people who provide the product. I look forward to there being competition in the market.

As I said, the Government has considered this over a long period of time, including before the previous election. We are currently in a consultation period with interested stakeholders and parties about what the regulation change will look like. The role of the Government is to work out whether this will be legal. It is currently not legal in New South Wales. We have announced that we want to make it legal. We want it to be available to farmers in New South Wales. Our role is to ensure that the regulation provides for the things I made clear in the announcement, including animal welfare concerns and biosecurity concerns. We are consulting on that now. We will then move to make this product legal. It will be up to the market and suppliers to determine whether they want to operate in New South Wales.

The PRESIDENT: I welcome to the Parliament students from Marrickville High School who are undertaking the Legal Studies and the Legislature program conducted by the Parliamentary Education unit. I also welcome Hash Palaparthi, who is an intern in the office of Dr Amanda Cohn.

INVESTMENT DELIVERY AUTHORITY

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY (11:22): My question without notice is addressed to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer update the House on how the 2025-26 budget supports private sector investment and boosts long-term economic growth in New South Wales?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (11:23): I thank the member for his question. I also take the opportunity to welcome the students from Marrickville High School. As it turns out, this is the high school in my zone that my kids will attend in a few years time. The 2025-26 budget is about laying the foundations for long-term economic growth. One of the most important initiatives we have announced is the creation of the Investment Delivery Authority.

When we came to government, so many businesses were telling us that they want to invest in New South Wales, but the system makes it too slow, too hard and too uncertain. That is why we created the Investment Delivery Authority [IDA]. This is what business leaders are saying: Dan Hunter, the CEO of Business NSW,

called the IDA "a game-changing step forward for New South Wales". He also said it is "exactly what New South Wales needs to turn ambition into action". He is right. We are laying the foundations for long-term economic growth by investing in what matters: infrastructure, education, innovation and regulatory reform.

The Hon. Jacqui Munro: What about AI?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: We'll get to that. One of the biggest barriers to investment right now is not money but time.

The Hon. Jacqui Munro: It doesn't exist in your strategy.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I can hear the Hon. Jacqui Munro asking about AI, and I am happy to reply. I will not use my words; I will use the words of Craig Scroggie, the CEO of NEXTDC, whose company is planning over \$15 billion of AI infrastructure across New South Wales. He said that the "authority creates a faster path from planning to execution". He added:

It reflects a deep understanding of the five pillars now shaping global AI infrastructure: speed, scale, security, sustainability, and sovereignty.

If the Hon. Jacqui Munro is not persuaded by one of the biggest investors in AI in the nation, then I will tell her about the other big AI investor in the nation. Carly Wishart from AirTrunk is one of Australia's great success stories. She says that "speed to build is the critical factor". I want the Hon. Jacqui Munro to hear this. She also said that the Minns Government has recognised that "the race to build AI infrastructure is a global one".

We have been asked about what we are doing to make sure that we land this new technology in New South Wales. We have been asked about what we are doing to create more business here in New South Wales. Don't take my word for it. Take it from some of the biggest investors in the economy right now. Those who are ready to deploy capital are looking forward to working with the IDA at a time when we need private investment to increase. The members opposite should welcome this initiative.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Point of order: I am concerned for the Treasurer's health. He is clearly very excited by this issue. Concern for his health should be pre-eminent, and I ask him to calm down.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I thank the member for his concern about my health. My concern is the health of the New South Wales economy, which the IDA is making stronger.

OFFSHORE WIND FARMS

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN (11:26): It is good to see such concern for psychosocial risk from the Leader of the Opposition. My question is directed to the Leader of the Government. Media reports have suggested today that Equinor, the Norwegian oil and gas giant behind the last remaining offshore wind proposal in New South Wales, will abandon plans to build an offshore wind farm off Port Stephens. This comes after the recent abandonment of the Illawarra plan. Does the New South Wales Government have a backup plan should all offshore wind proposals be dumped by the end of this month, as is likely to be the case?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:27): I thank the member for his question. The offshore wind plan was driven by the Commonwealth. Our plan relates to the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap, so we do not need a backup plan. We are executing plan A. I am honestly disappointed that it has been a challenge to get some of these projects up here and across the world. Offshore wind has a real opportunity to drive very large amounts of renewable energy, which would support our manufacturing sector and our low-carbon export sector. I do not think anyone should be dancing on its grave if it is actually gone. Exploring and making it work is important. To answer the member's question, we do not need a backup plan. We have got plan A, which is well underway. The rollout of the road map in New South Wales is going very well. We are over halfway to our target of generating 12 gigawatts by 2030.

The Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone is literally starting to be built. It has all of its approvals. Money is going into supporting communities through legacy funds. We have a network operator. We are also working very hard on the South West Renewable Energy Zone, and the HumeLink is being built. We are also working through what happens next in New England. The Government is working across a range of different areas to deal with the challenging reality that our coal-fired power stations are retiring in the next 15 years. We have to make sure that we have something that is not only adequate but also outstanding for the future wealth and prosperity of New South Wales. That is exactly what we are doing.

I again reiterate the words that I said yesterday. One of the strengths that New South Wales has in relation to this has been the strong bipartisan support for this road map and the commitment to reduce emissions over time. There is an acknowledgement that coal-fired power stations are coming out and that if we do not replace them it

will be very challenging. In relation to offshore wind, there are real challenges there. There are cost challenges in New South Wales. There have always been challenges around the readiness of the technology, given the depths of the ocean we have. The floating technology has proved to be challenging. Obviously, all of those issues are on the minds of the developers. I hope they are able to work through those challenges and come back with solutions.

Offshore wind is an enormous opportunity for decarbonisation, particularly in hard to abate sectors, such as our manufacturing industries. If we are serious about hydrogen and other renewable fuels—aviation fuels, all of those kinds of things—having the scale that offshore wind provides is something that no-one should be turning away from. I hope that we will be able to continue to talk about offshore wind into the future. But New South Wales does not need it. We will continue with our plan A.

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN (11:30): I ask a supplementary question. I thank the Minister for her answer and wish to bring her back to the start of it, regarding the State Government working with the Federal Government. In a media release from quite a while ago, the Minister indicated that the State Government's involvement would "develop over time, with greater involvement in the process of linking offshore wind projects to the existing network". If those projects fall over by the end of this month, does the State Government no longer intend to work with the Federal Government on offshore wind?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:31): I thank the member for his supplementary question, but I think the point is pretty clear here. Offshore wind is a new technology that is being considered. It has been challenging. The New South Wales Government has always stood ready and willing to accept it. What I said, whenever that media release was, remains true. If there are projects that are coming, of course, we will work with them, because we are going to want that renewable energy going into the grid. But we just have to accept where it is at this point in time. I do not think there is any challenge. I again reiterate that the Government has its own plans, and they are well underway.

The Hon. WES FANG (11:31): I ask a second supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate that part of her answer where she said there is a potential loss of offshore wind farms? How many hectares of prime agricultural land will need to be ripped out of New South Wales to replace the capacity that will be lost by those offshore wind farms not going ahead?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:31): I thank the member for his supplementary question. I do not think he listened to my answer. Maybe he did not understand it. But the point here is—

The Hon. Wes Fang: Point of order: If the Minister wants to cast aspersions like that against me, she should do so by way of substantive motion. She is not addressing the question. She is sledging me. I ask that you call the Minister to order and bring her back to the question. It is a very valid question, and the people of regional New South Wales want to know the answer.

The PRESIDENT: Obviously, there has to be a certain amount of rough and tumble in this place in terms of language. I do not think the Minister was being particularly provocative on this occasion. There is no point of order. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: It was more a comment about the member needing to have his "listening ears" on and actually listen to the answers. The question that the member asked does not make any sense, and so it is very difficult for me to answer it. I can tell him that, as we are rolling this out, it involves less than 1 per cent of all agricultural land in New South Wales. That does not mean for a minute that I do not understand the challenges that there are and the issues that we are working through with local communities and farmers.

In relation to the connection to offshore wind, our targets were passed by this Parliament when the member was in government last time. The targets are clear, and we have no target for offshore wind. This is not a replacement. We are meeting those targets, which we set with support from across the Parliament. Certainty is very important for investment. There is \$32 billion-plus of private investment going into regional New South Wales. The member for Dubbo has been very keen about that. I do not know what the non-member for Wagga thinks about it. But the point is that bipartisanship is important. We have a plan that is rolling out and we are working through all of the issues. There is no link to offshore and onshore wind.

SECRETARY OF TRANSPORT FOR NSW

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (11:34): My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. At the explicit direction of the Premier, the recent remuneration determination for public service senior executives approved a massive 10.2 per cent pay rise for 2025-26 for Transport for NSW secretary Josh Murray. Was the

Minister consulted by the Premier as to whether Mr Murray's performance to date warranted this massive pay rise and whether it was appropriate in the face of the decision by Mr Murray to cut 950 jobs to meet a savings target?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (11:34): I would discourage the Opposition from attacking the public service. It is so easy to do. I absolutely recommend the good work of the tens of thousands of people who are part of the professional teams working in Transport, including the secretary.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Minister will resume his seat. There are too many interjections from Opposition members today. It is getting very difficult for Hansard, as well as me, to hear what the Ministers are saying. There will be fewer interjections. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I am on the record about what I think about the performance of the secretary and senior Transport staff, and I am on the record thanking all Transport staff for the work they do, including those people running the heavy rail network. I am glad we have landed an agreement with them—an agreement that the Opposition was hoping might not occur, that it might fall over. That has not happened. We are seeing already some of the dividends from that agreement, as on-time running starts to improve.

Of course, the shadow Minister is entitled to ask about pay. I inform her that the Statutory and Other Offices Remuneration Tribunal [SOORT] made a determination for a 3.5 per cent pay rise for senior executives. That is consistent with the Government's submission. There were also some pay equity issues dealt with between the senior ranks of the public service. That is not unusual. But the actual SOORT determination is in line with the approach that we have taken with other workers. I draw that to the attention of the House. I think that is an important matter. But I place on record, again, my thanks to the secretary and the Transport team for their work. There are big challenges in transport. There are big challenges in rolling out the peak of the build, on the capital side, particularly in the metro area, but also in rail reliability and improving on-time running. It was good this morning. There was 98 per cent reliability on the heavy rail network this morning.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: You ought to celebrate that, mate.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: It was good this morning, but we are not celebrating that. That is one good spot, but we have to do more. That is why the Government has reached agreement with the rail workforce. It is why we are looking forward to receiving the rail review shortly, to improve reliability. It is why we are looking to invest in train reliability as the weeks roll on, because we have got the message about how important it is to people's daily lives.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (11:37): I ask a supplementary question. I ask the Minister to elucidate his answer in respect of his comments about the performance of Mr Murray and the good work being done by the secretary, specifically in relation to rail reliability. Will the Minister explain to the House how he is going to hold the Secretary of Transport for NSW to account in relation to on-time running of the train network? How bad do trains need to get before Mr Murray will get the sack, or at least a pay cut?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (11:38): The mechanism by which we will operate is the same as what Ministers in the former Government would have used: the regular systems of accountability in the public service. That should be of no surprise to a former Minister of the Crown in New South Wales. As to the public's expectations, we do have expectations of the secretary and of Transport, but I can tell you that those expectations set by the Premier are of the Government. The Premier's expectation is that the Government will deliver. His expectations of me as a Minister are that I will deliver. That is where accountability lies. There are some promising signs. We are starting to return to a more reliable rail network following the settlement of the rail dispute. But I indicate to members opposite and also to the public, so it is clear, that it will not be immediate. It takes some time to catch up on the maintenance gap we were left with to lift reliability after the agreement. That could take six months after the rail dispute has settled.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: It is always someone else's fault.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I am making the exact opposite point to the point that the Leader of the Opposition is interjecting with in quite a—

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: What? It is your fault?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: We accept responsibility for reliability. We have got the message about how important that is. We are working flat chat on rail reliability. The Government accepts that that is the role of government—to run the trains on time—and that is what we are working on. It will not get better by the Opposition attacking the public service. It will not get better by attacking rail workers. It will not get better by attacking the

Secretary of the Department of Transport. It will not get better by hoping things fail, because that is not what the public is hoping for, and that is not what we are working for.

OFFICE FOR YOUTH

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (11:40): My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Youth. Will the Minister update the House on how the New South Wales Government is ensuring young people are heard in government decision-making?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Youth) (11:40): I thank the member for her question. It is a shame that the students in the gallery are leaving. It is a walk-out because they are disappointed at how the previous Government was representing youth voices in Parliament. It is probably good that they are leaving because, had they remained, I may have been tempted to engage them in some audience participation, which is not allowed in question time. I may have asked the young people to raise their hands if they felt heard in government decision-making. I suspect very few of them would have, because "Do you feel heard in government decision-making?" was a question we asked at the first ever New South Wales Government Youth Summit last year. We asked that question and, alarmingly, 76 per cent of young people answered no. It probably does not surprise a lot of people that young people felt as though the New South Wales Government did not have a proper mechanism to engage them, listen to them or hear their voices.

That all changes with the launch of the New South Wales Government Office for Youth. In Parliament last night it was an absolute pleasure to launch the new office, which is a new central agency to bring together youth voices within the New South Wales Government. It is important for me to do a couple of things. The first is to acknowledge the fabulous team at the Office for Youth, led by the Advocate for Children and Young People, Zoë Robinson, who spoke brilliantly at the event. The second is to note that it was fabulous to have that opportunity for young people to gather in the Parliament for the launch of the new office. To be perfectly honest, having that number of young people in the Parliament brought down the average age in here by decades.

The message that we have to young people, coming out of the Youth Summit and with the creation of the Office for Youth, is this: This is not lip service, this is not box-ticking and this is not tokenistic. The Office for Youth is now a permanent structure within the New South Wales Government that brings youth voices centrally into government decision-making. I have always been clear: Young people do not lack passion. They have been leading on their own. They have been making their own campaigns, whether the School Strike 4 Climate or for youth mental health. They have been leading their own efforts and they have been raising their voices.

They have not lacked passion; they have lacked power and access to decision-makers and the structures that make calls about the future that they will inherit. It is not even just about asking them to sit at the table anymore; it is about asking them to set the agenda. Having the Office for Youth launched and led by the advocate, with youth voices front and centre, is an important and powerful message to young people. I welcome the young people in the gallery to the Parliament. We have a powerful message for them: We hear them and see them. We are building structures within the New South Wales Government— *[Time expired.]*

The PRESIDENT: Before I call the Hon. Tania Mihailuk, I take this opportunity to welcome students from the senior campus of Cammeraygal High School, who are here today to undertake the Legal Studies and the Legislature program conducted by the Parliamentary Education and Engagement unit. They are all very welcome.

PREMIER'S DEPARTMENT AND CABINET OFFICE STAFFING

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (11:43): My question is directed to the Leader of the Government, representing the Premier. The Government recently sacked a thousand public servants from Transport for NSW and 165 from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. The Special Minister of State was quoted as saying that Labor promised to prioritise the frontline services that help people across the State get around every day and that the cuts are part of a funding rebalance. Under machinery of government changes implemented by the Government on 5 April 2023, the former Department of Premier and Cabinet was split in two, which, according to official annual reports, resulted in an increase from 809 staff in 2022-23 to a combined 922 staff across both agencies in 2023-24, and from 68 senior executives to a combined 84. Will the Premier apply the same standard to the increase in non-frontline service staff in his two departments and sack them just like he did those other public servants?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:44): I thank the member for her question. Yet again it contains a lot of argument, but I am happy to answer it. There was a lot in it. It is pretty clear—and the Government has made it clear—that when we came to government, we inherited higher debt, higher deficits and frontline service worker wages that had been stagnating for a very long time. We were very clear that we were going to support

and deliver essential services, particularly those on the front line. We continue to work through that, and I think we have worked through those issues with over 70 per cent or 80 per cent of the workforce. They have all had a real wage rise for the first time ever. Our teachers have gone from being the lowest paid in the country to the highest paid in the country. As we work through that, we have also looked at the back end.

[Opposition members interjected.]

The PRESIDENT: I remind all members of my ruling about interjections. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: It is pity we constantly get interjections, but here we are. The point is that essential workers have had a real wage rise. It means that we have fewer vacancies in teaching, it means that we have more permanent staff and it means that we are turning around the fleeing of many from frontline work in this State. We need all of those workers, and this Government has been serious about that. On top of that, we have also had a large public service that was built on and was particularly added to, with little restraint, via COVID. Sometimes that was necessary. But we have done the hard work working through those matters and making sure that we have got the right people in the right place. It is a challenging thing to do, but it is also part of the commitment that we undertook to repair the budget. We also need to understand that, when those opposite were in government, the blowout of consultant costs and the very large—

The Hon. Natalie Ward: You've done five reviews in Transport. Allan Fels was paid a million bucks.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: If you think 3,000 extra people for Transport over a very short period of time was relevant, you can defend that, but we are not going to.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: A lot of those were cleaners on trains. What are you talking about?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You don't like—

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: You merged the two agencies to reduce them. I remember that; it was meant to shrink.

The PRESIDENT: The Minister has the call.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Let's be clear—

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: You ended up hiring more senior executives after you merged it.

The PRESIDENT: I will be clearer: The Minister who is at the dispatch box has the call.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am happy for the Hon. Tania Mihailuk to ask the Treasurer or the Minister who is sitting next to me, because I am sure they will be able to answer. But it is clear: Dealing with debt and deficit, actually affording what we can spend to build sustainability into the long term, means making sure the public service is fit for purpose and can do its extremely important job. Supporting frontline workers is our priority. *[Time expired.]*

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (11:48): I ask a supplementary question. I thank the Minister for her answer. Could she, as the Leader of the Government, please elucidate on the critical frontline services being undertaken by the expanded bureaucracy in the Premier's Department and the Cabinet Office, and explain to the House why those highly paid non-frontline service staff deserve their jobs more than the 1,000 public servants at Transport for NSW and the 165 biosecurity officers at the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:48): First of all, I would say that there are frontline staff involved in those agencies—not so much in the Cabinet Office, but in the Premier's Department there absolutely are and there is a lot of frontline work. I will take on notice the question about the frontline staff. It is simply incorrect to suggest there are not frontline staff doing a lot of work in the way this Government has set up the governance and arrangements across the State, which is fine.

The other work that we have had to spend a lot of time doing is basically picking up and dealing with the messes that were left to us, which require policy responses and legislation. We are working through those. We need specialised staff. They do a very important job. We do not shy away from the need for those staff as we are dealing with issues that were ignored for more than a decade. We work through that. It requires different policy. It requires different legislation. We have had record levels of legislation coming through this place.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Damien Tudehope will cease interjecting.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: He is still grumpy about being in opposition. I understand that; it is hard. He does not like sitting in that chair, and I am sad for him. I have sat there. The point I simply make is that we do not move away from that. We have worked methodically and carefully on budget repair, working through the issues in the public service and making sure that this State has the policies, programs and laws needed to make life better for every person in New South Wales.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: No-one believes you.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Let's just see how we go in Kiama, shall we?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (11:50): I ask a second supplementary question. After giving six secretaries, including his Cabinet office secretary, a 10.2 per cent pay rise for 2025-26, will the Premier lift his offer to nurses from 3 per cent for 2025-26?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:50): I think that is a new question. We are working through those issues and will continue to do so. The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones might have missed some news that there is interim agreement that nurses are currently considering. I thank her for following closely the work that we are doing. This morning I was very pleased to be with the health Minister at a press conference where he talked about an interim offer that is being considered by nurses and has been worked through very carefully. That shows a lot of progress.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Leader of the Government will be heard in silence.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: All I say is that we are making very good progress. Let us remember that the guys opposite offered nurses zero. Absolutely zero. They can try to explain it all they like; they offered zero. We have already given them a pay rise. We are working through the issues and we are pleased—

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: During COVID, when people were going broke.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So when nurses were working the hardest they ever have, you offered them zero. Thank you, Comrade Tudehope, for your support of nursing. It is not there. I wish that members would listen to the answers that are being given and perhaps read the newspaper so that they also know the updates regarding the matter. Some other parts of the question probably are inaccurate, but I will take those on notice and get an answer as required.

DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL (11:52): My question is directed to the Minister for Regional New South Wales. At the explicit direction of the Premier, the recent remuneration determination for public service senior executives saw approved a massive 10.2 per cent pay rise for 2025-26 for Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development secretary Steve Orr. Was the Minister consulted by the Premier before he made that direction, including about whether it was appropriate to award Mr Orr this massive pay rise in the face of his decision to cut 266 jobs in the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development to meet savings targets?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:52): I thank the member for the question. There is a process that occurs as to how pay determinations are made for MPs and for senior executives. I am not involved in that process. A panel deals with it or a person makes recommendations. That is a matter for that process. I am not involved in it, I am not consulted on it and I do not know the details of how it works. There is a whole process in place for how senior executive pay is dealt with and, in answer to the question, I am not involved in that process.

NATIONAL PARKS

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (11:53): My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment. Will the Minister update the House on additions to the New South Wales national park estate?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:54): I thank the member for his extremely important question. I have some exciting news to share. First, I congratulate the Nature Conservation Council on its seventieth anniversary, which I attended last week, as did the Hon. Rose Jackson and former Premier Bob Carr. He told the important story of protecting land across New South Wales and gifting it to future generations through the highest level of protection we can give, via our national park estate—a jewel in the crown of our most precious public assets. It is also important to acknowledge the history of voluntary conservation and working with governments to achieve that type of nature goal. That includes things like the protection of the rainforest that was undertaken by Wran and the 350 national parks that were established by the Hon. Bob Carr.

I take this opportunity to give an update to the House on how we are going in New South Wales, 2½ years into this Government. Since coming to office, the Minns Government has created or added 40,000 hectares to 20 national parks. It has also purchased another 520,000 hectares of land that will be added to or establish another 32 reserves. I acknowledge that the previous Government started the process regarding one of the very big parks that will be created in the Western Division in New South Wales. The people who gathered 70 years ago with the Nature Conservation Council had very modest goals in protecting the environment. They were looking at bushland and a range of issues. When the National Parks Association came along two years later—it will be celebrating its sixty-eighth anniversary—it made very modest asks for the creation of national parks. Recently, I talked to someone who said they were aiming for 5 per cent.

After we add the new lands to the national park estate, for the first time ever New South Wales will have 10.5 per cent of its lands in protected areas for perpetuity for future generations. That is a huge win. That does not include our key election promise regarding the Great Koala National Park, which will be an incredible addition. It also does not include four recent announcements that we have made. That is the purchase of 36,000 hectares across Innisfail station near Bourke, Iona station north-west of Cobar and Bellenbar station north of Bourke and, importantly, one of our election commitments, which is the creation of the Warranmadhaa National Park around Campbelltown, which is about saving koalas. We are so fortunate to have beautiful creatures that live amongst us, on the edge of our city, in habitat that will survive into the future. We have ensured that occurs in perpetuity through the creation of the Warranmadhaa National Park. There is more to do, but there has been great progress and we are proud of the Labor legacy that we will leave behind. [*Time expired.*]

HUME HYDROGEN HIGHWAY

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (11:57): My question is directed to the Leader of the Government in her capacity as the Minister for Energy. I refer the Minister to the March 2022 NSW Climate and Energy Action announcement of the Hume Highway hydrogen refuelling network initiative that was allocated \$10 million of taxpayer money and slated to open to the public in 2025. Will the Minister update the House on which month of this year the completed network will be operational?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:57): March 2022 was a long time ago. I also was not the Minister then.

The Hon. Rod Roberts: You are now, though.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, and I can give an update. I have recently provided a bunch of answers to questions on notice from the honourable member's colleague. The hydrogen highway has not been delivered to date. Some \$10 million was allocated to it, and it was a joint project between Queensland and Victoria. We continue to work through the issues. My note does not provide the answer I need—

The Hon. Wes Fang: No!

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I know the answer; I am trying to provide additional information. The galah on the other side can keep talking, or he can let me answer the question. The hydrogen highway was a plan to install hydrogen refuelling stations along the highways as we try to decarbonise the heavy truck sector. As the member would be aware, I have been very honest and open in saying that it has been a challenge to meet the time frames that we want. To answer the question, nothing has actually started with that. There is \$10 million allocated to it. We continue to try to make it work, but it has not come to fruition at this time.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (11:59): I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate her answer where she says \$10 million has been allocated? Has any of that \$10 million been spent and, if so, where?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:59): I will take the detail on notice. The short answer is I believe the answer is no, but let me check.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PROGRAM

The Hon. WES FANG (11:59): My question is directed to the Minister for Regional New South Wales. What justification is there for the 10 per cent of funding from the \$50 million Regional Economic Development and Community Investment Program to be allocated to a \$5 million superyacht service facility in the Newcastle Cruising Yacht Club? Why is 10 per cent of funding for regional economic development going to a project in metropolitan Newcastle?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (12:00): I thank the member for this question. It is a great

opportunity to outline the announcements that I have made so far out of the Regional Development Trust, which is a fantastic program that our Government has set up to be a different way of investing in regional communities that does not include pork-barrelling, like what the National Party did across New South Wales. I have talked a lot in this place about the fact that I think they were voted out of office because they rorted—

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Point of order: This has happened the entirety of question time today. When a Minister attempts to answer a question, there is a barrage of noise from Opposition members. They will not allow the Ministers to answer the questions and they keep peppering them with other questions. If members opposite have other questions to ask, they should get them on their question time list. Constant interjections are disorderly. They either want answers from the Ministers or they do not.

The Hon. Natalie Ward: To the point of order: First, in my respectful submission there has been noise coming from members on both sides of this Chamber throughout the course of today. Secondly, provocative remarks made by Ministers tend to inflame and incite comments in response. I encourage you to take that into consideration in your ruling.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Hon. Natalie Ward. The first point she made is not particularly valid. It is quite clear that members on one side of the Chamber are interjecting far more consistently. Her second point is valid. When incendiary comments are made it is understandable that they will inevitably elicit some response. However, I agree with the Leader of the Government. Frankly, it has been a bad question time. There has been too much audible conversation.

The Hon. Wes Fang: In so many ways.

The PRESIDENT: I call the Hon. Wes Fang to order for the first time. There have been too many interjections and too much commentary. It will not continue. Tomorrow members will be called to order in question time. I am trying to allow the free flow of debate in the Chamber and not call members to order, but there is a limit and that starts now. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: As I was outlining, the National Party and the Coalition rorted funds when they were in office, particularly in relation to bushfire funding.

The Hon. Wes Fang: Point of order: Mr President, in relation to the second part of the Hon. Natalie Ward's point of order, you acknowledged that Ministers are inciting comments. The Minister attempted to incite a response from members on this side of the Chamber. Her answer was irrelevant and had nothing to do with the substance of the question. I ask that you instruct the Minister to be directly relevant to the question as per the standing orders. I also ask that you call her to order for flouting your previous ruling.

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: To the point of order: The question specifically asked the Minister to provide—I think the word was—justification for a decision. As you ruled yesterday, while being clear in providing a justification, a Minister is entitled to explain motivations, background and context, which is what this Minister has done.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: To the point of order: Justification does not require the Minister—

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: Doesn't require?

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: The justification process does allow the Minister to make an allegation that the National Party was rorting funds.

The PRESIDENT: The final part of the Hon. Wes Fang's point of order is not valid. The Minister was not flouting my ruling. The first part of his point of order was irrelevant. The second part, which was in fact about relevance, was relevant. The response by the Treasurer that the Minister was asked for a justification and that then allows an extraordinary discussion of whatever the Minister likes is a bridge too far. The Hon. Wes Fang is correct in that the Minister was not being relevant to the question. The Minister will come back to the question asked. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: Let me outline all of the fantastic initiatives that this Government has been funding through the Regional Development Trust, including the one that was asked about in the question. The question was not correct. We have invested a number of funds from the Regional Development Trust so far in this term of Government, including starting in western New South Wales, where we have a \$10 million workforce activation program investing in childcare to help people get back to work, and it will help the economy. Last week I announced funding for a number of projects on the north coast of New South Wales and in the Hunter.

Specifically in relation to the project that was asked about, money towards the building of a servicing facility for superyachts is great for the Hunter. That is a fantastic investment in tourism and jobs in the Hunter region, based in Newcastle. There is no facility like this in New South Wales. This will be a really good project

for the community across the Hunter region. Superyachts are often operated by people who have a lot of money who want to come to New South Wales. When they come to New South Wales, they will have the opportunity to have their boats serviced by skilled workers in Newcastle. They will also have the opportunity to engage in tourism activities across the Hunter.

Again, there is no place like this in New South Wales. This is the first time we will have a facility like this in New South Wales and it is great for the economy of the Hunter region. In relation to other investments from the Regional Development Trust, which is investing in regional New South Wales based on projects that have merit—not pork-barrelling like the previous Government did—I also announced last week that we are funding the expansion of a cold storage facility for beef in Casino. That is fantastic for that local economy, for agriculture and for the entire North Coast region. Out of this trust we have announced funding for an athletics facility in Lismore, which is fantastic not just for the Lismore community but also for that entire region. This Regional Development Trust is a fantastic new way of properly investing in regional New South Wales. That is what regional New South Wales wants.

The Hon. WES FANG (12:07): I ask a supplementary question. I would like the Minister to elucidate that part of her answer where she spoke about the facility in Newcastle. Can she outline whether any other more regional locations were considered, and does she consider Newcastle to be regional?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (12:08): As I outlined in the answer, the trust is supporting a project that will be a great project for the Hunter region. I have outlined a number of announcements that we made last week in terms of funding that are designed to support regional New South Wales. We are looking at the people, businesses, community organisations and councils that applied for funding—

The PRESIDENT: Opposition members will cease interjecting now. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: —for the projects that we were interested in funding as part of the Regional Development Trust, again, through a proper merit-based process. There is a committee in place, and an advisory council that looks through applications and gives advice to Government. I then choose the projects that are of benefit to regional New South Wales. As I have outlined, this project is great for the Hunter region. It will create jobs in the region and that is a good thing for the broader community.

Announcements were also made about other projects in the Hunter region, including money to invest in the improvement and expansion of the Hunter Regional Livestock Exchange. Again, that investment is great for the Hunter region. It will be good not only for that facility, which people move livestock through, but also for the agriculture industry in that area and the entire economy. We have proper processes in place to consider applications for funding that will stretch taxpayer dollars further to benefit regional communities. It is a very good process. The Regional Development Trust is investing in proper processes and projects for regional New South Wales. Again, it is a contrast to the pork-barrelling that occurred under the previous Government. Regional communities are celebrating the announcements. Some of the projects are in National Party electorates and they are welcomed by National Party MPs. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: It has been a very long question time. The time for questions has expired. If members have further questions, I suggest they place them on notice.

HUME HYDROGEN HIGHWAY

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (12:10): Earlier in question time the Hon. Rod Roberts asked me a question about the Hume Hydrogen Highway initiative. None of the \$10 million has been spent on that project.

Supplementary Questions for Written Answers

VIRTUAL STOCK FENCING

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (12:10): My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Minister for Agriculture. Having taken her advice to check her ministerial disclosures, will the Minister confirm that she has had a grand total of two meetings with electric fence providers? She met with Gallagher Animal Management, a very small provider from Queensland and, of course, Halter, the dominant market player. That confirms a duopoly in the industry. Will the Minister confirm that some seven days after she announced the legislation for virtual fencing, and seven days into Brent Thomas's employment at Halter, she met with him?

PREMIER'S DEPARTMENT AND CABINET OFFICE STAFFING

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (12:11): My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Leader of the Government. I ask the Minister to provide the following breakdown for both the Premier's Department and the Cabinet Office as of 1 June 2025 for:

- (a) the number of senior executives employed at each agency, showcasing their band, grading and their average remuneration;
- (b) the number of non-senior executives employed at each agency, showcasing their band, grading and their average remuneration;
- (c) the number of media staff employed in each agency for the years 2022-23 up to 2025-26; and
- (d) the number of policy staff employed in each agency for the years 2022-23 to 2025-26.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PROGRAM

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (12:12): My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Minister for Regional New South Wales. Further to the question asked about the Newcastle Cruising Yacht Club, will the Minister inform the House what specific advice she received about the number of jobs the project will create in the Hunter and in which communities they will be located?

Questions Without Notice: Take Note

TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I move:

That the House take note of answers to questions.

VIRTUAL STOCK FENCING

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (12:12): I note the answer given by the Minister for Agriculture in response to a question about virtual stock fencing. The Minister gave us a sweeping economic thesis about the competitive nature of cow-neck zappers under the banner of virtual fencing. She said that it is a very competitive industry internationally. She knows of players out there on the global stage. She thinks Vladimir Putin is weaponising virtual fencing in Russia to solve all of his problems. She thinks Donald Trump has a tariff war over virtual fencing in the United States. She thinks factories are springing up in the great industrial states of Ohio, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania. Virtual fencing is out of control. In fact, Trump is going to make zapping great again, such is the international competitiveness of the industry. The hapless Minister is leaving the Chamber with her failed, dismal and incorrect economy theory.

It turns out that she has had only two meetings with virtual fencing outfits. They do not exist on a global scale. There is one tiny operator—Gallagher Animal Management—in Queensland, with whom she met on 6 May. She has had a lot of meetings with MPs, including the Hon. Emma Hurst, who has the red carpet rolled out for animal welfare; and the Hon. Scott Barrett—the traitor—has met with the Minister to discuss regional development. We have to watch the quiet ones in the fifth column of politics. The Minister also met with the dominant industry player, Halter, on 7 May.

The date of 7 May 2025 is significant because it was seven days after the Minns Government, out of nowhere, opposed that virtual fencing policy that zaps poor cows in the neck to teach them a lesson about where they should roam. Through Steve Whan in the other place, the Government opposed the policy when the member for Orange introduced a private member's bill. Then out of nowhere, on 30 April, when visiting Orange, the Minister for Agriculture said, "No, we will legalise it." Today she told us that may not be the case. She said the Government is now consulting on whether to legalise it. Seven days after that announcement, the Minister met with Brent Thomas, who, coincidentally, was seven days into his tenure as the strategic relations director at Halter. What an amazing coincidence!

The Hon. Nichole Overall: Deidre Chambers.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Yes, Deidre Chambers—what a coincidence! Where is Walt Secord when you need him? Seven days into Brent Thomas's tenure at Halter, he met with the Minister. That was seven days after the Minister's announcement. All of that was perfectly synchronised. Who is Brent Thomas? I am told he is even closer to the Minns inner circle than Jamie Clements. He is in the inner-inner circle. He has been around. He ran the communications campaign for the Australian Turf Club for the sale of Rosehill. He was the Labor candidate who lost in Hughes in 2010. He tried to roll my old mate Daryl Melham in the electorate of Banks in 2001 and 2004, assisted by some Chris Minns branch recruitment. [*Time expired.*]

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PROGRAM

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (12:16): I take note of the answer given by the acting Minister for Education and Early Learning in response to a question I asked about an incident at a Sydney childcare centre that involved an alleged paedophile. I did not ask that question lightly. I understand it is a sensitive topic. A number of parents have reached out to me who are concerned and who have questions. They are wondering how something was flagged in the system in June 2024 without being picked up, allowing that individual to continue working with children. That is a valid question. I look forward to hearing the Minister's answer. It is important that the Government and the regulator are as transparent as they can be about the matter. Parents deserve some reassurance that everything is being done properly, especially when particular individuals are flagged for potentially harmful behaviour against children.

More broadly, I agree with some of the Minister's comments. Some really fantastic people work in our early childhood services. It is a very difficult time for them at the moment. A number of incidents have been made public of people committing some truly shocking and horrific acts against children. It is important that we work in a bipartisan way on any reforms. We all agree that we need the strongest possible child protection laws in New South Wales. The opposition is keen to engage with the Government on the issue as we move forward.

I also take note of the answer given by the Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales in response to a question about the Newcastle Cruising Yacht Club. Every time the Minister gets to her feet and spruiks about how well communities are doing under her Government, I think she must not spend much time in the regions.

The Hon. Scott Barrett: Maybe the footy at Newcastle.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, maybe she goes to Newcastle and thinks she has ticked off the box of going to the bush. A number of people in the community from local government, business and community organisations are consistently raising with me and my colleagues—who I am sure will have more to say on the matter—the fact that there is nothing available for regional communities anymore. So many of the funding programs are not there. Already, only two years into this term of government, support for regional communities is drying up. It is not good enough that the Minister tried to justify a superyacht facility in Newcastle by saying, "That will be good for the regions and the Hunter." I look forward to hearing the answer to the supplementary question for written answer that I asked. I would love to know how many jobs the investment will create and where they will be. I suspect that the Minister has not received any advice on that, but it was a good thing to point out while she was on her feet. It is not good enough. People in regional areas deserve better. The Opposition will continue to support regional communities— [*Time expired.*]

GOULBURN BASE HOSPITAL

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (12:19): I take note of the answer to my question on notice No. 4017 provided by the Minister for Finance, representing the Minister for Health. I asked a simple question that required a simple one-word answer. The question was, "On 27 June 2025 how many beds in the general wards of Goulburn Base Hospital were occupied by patients awaiting transfer to an aged-care facility?" I know someone who works at the Goulburn Base Hospital and they told me. All the answer had to say was "12". Instead, the answer I received was, "New South Wales hospitals continue to care for a high number of patients who cannot be discharged because there is not a place available in a residential aged-care facility." I know that; that is why I am asking the question. The answer continued, "NSW Health will continue to work with the Federal Government to ensure that people who require aged-care facilities and care are supported."

A straightforward question only needs a straightforward answer. However, it is increasingly impossible for this Government to give one. Its default setting seems to be to deny, deflect, defend and diffuse, even when it has no need to. I know, and we all know, that a lack of aged-care beds, especially in regional New South Wales, has been caused by chronic underinvestment from the Federal Government. That leads to bed-blocking whereby our hospitals cannot release beds for new patients. If the Federal Government is the cause, why must our State Government respond in such a defensive manner?

Unfortunately, serious problems in our hospitals are appearing across the State. Recently, it was reported that John Hunter Hospital had a negative 37 beds in its emergency department, with paramedics facing delays of up to eight hours. That is in the wake of the hospital serving disgusting food to child patients. Hospitals are also failing in Western Sydney Local Health District, where there are allegations of preventable deaths, patients forced to sleep in the car park and patients lying on the floor in the emergency ward.

The Government's culture of obfuscation and concealment has been a common complaint in this place, and that misplaced focus must contribute to the Government's flagging performance. That hubris should not occur in a first-term government. Who has given first-time Ministers the licence to behave in such a manner? From my experience, a bad culture is always downstream from bad leadership. The health Minister's response has been, "It's a challenge and we need to do better." I suggest that this Government can do better, in the provision of not just health services but also answers. We have passed the statute of limitations under which Ministers can blame the previous Government for their portfolio's poor performance. If they are serious about reversing the decline, the first step is to be accountable and give legitimate answers to important questions.

NATIONAL PARKS
BIOSECURITY WORKFORCE
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORT FOR NSW

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (12:22): I talk to a couple of things. The first is the comments we heard about national parks today. I am a fan of our national parks. It is very important we have and protect national parks, but we need to be very careful how we do that. In the past five years, notwithstanding the numbers the Minister said today, we have spent \$300 million expanding our national park estate by 800,000 hectares. If there is important land that we need to block up, that is good. But we must remember that every time we buy up land, we are taking productive farms out of the system. We are taking farming families out of local communities. It could mean that a school loses a kid and does not have enough kids to warrant an extra teacher. We need to think carefully about that.

Also in the mix at the moment is a consultation paper that talks about increasing camping fees in our national parks, including increases of up to 600 per cent in some areas. Rather than blindly trying to hit figures and increase our national park estate, let us be smart about this. Let us work hard on the national parks we have. Let us spend a bit more money improving their ecological value. Let us get the pigs, the St John's wort and the lantana out of there so we have something that we are proud of protecting.

The second thing is a response I received to a written question asking how many jobs in biosecurity the agriculture Minister would be cutting in the latest job cuts. Very disappointingly, the response was that staffing is a matter for the Secretary of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. At least twice today, the Minister spoke about "my department". She said, "My department has done this; my department has done that." If it is her department, how does she not know how many jobs in biosecurity are being cut? If we are to believe her side of events, that she woke up one day and the department had decided to cut 165 jobs—at a time when pigs are running rampant, fire ants are moving down from the north, carp are doing damage throughout the State, tilapia is a threat, and cattle tick poses another threat as we move into the warmer months—how is her first question not "How is this going to affect our biosecurity capacity?" Yet we are told that that has not been asked at all. We need more accountability from the Minister.

We also heard some advice from the transport Minister on how to treat public servants. Can you imagine the rapture from members opposite if, when we were in government, we cut 1,500 to 2,000 jobs in one week? They would be swinging from the rafters, calling for our blood. Yet they brush it off as business as usual. We need more accountability from the Minister for Agriculture and we need answers for the people of regional New South Wales, which, in most people's books—apart from the Minister, apparently—does not include Newcastle.

PREMIER'S DEPARTMENT AND CABINET OFFICE STAFFING
DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (12:25): I take note of the answer provided to me by the Leader of the Government, representing the Premier. I asked her specifically about the increase in staff or the inflated bureaucracy that we see across the Premier's Department and the Cabinet Office after the Government split them into two departments back in April 2023. It was one of the first actions of the newly minted Premier Minns. The staff have jumped from 809 in the 2022-23 financial year to a combined 922 in 2023-24, and then 68 senior executives have jumped to a combined 84. I find it extraordinary that at the same time as those huge increases in the Premier's Department, which, I believe, will ultimately be non-frontline service positions, the Government has sacked 1,000 staff from Transport for NSW—people who were schedulers, safety planners, analysts and in all sorts of positions that it is hard to believe were not necessary. As the Minister for Transport said, it was some sort of exercise in a funding rebalance, whatever that means. He is taking his guidance from Gwyneth Paltrow, I think, coming up with words and terms.

Further, 165 biosecurity officer positions have been cut from an area that I would have thought would be pretty crucial for rural New South Wales, when talking about agriculture, biosecurity, regional development and enabling services in the Rural Assistance Authority. Regarding my further questions that I put on notice, the written answer that I expect from the Leader of the Government is clarification of how many people are media people in the Premier's Department and the Cabinet Office. How many are policy people? How many are being remunerated at senior executive levels?

I will continue to ask those questions and I will ask them at budget estimates, because it is important to understand what the Premier is doing. He has set the standard now. He is expecting his Ministers to cut staff. He has put pressure on the Minister for Transport. He has put pressure on the Minister for Regional New South Wales. Obviously, it was not very hard because they very quickly capitulated to the Premier. What about the two departments that he oversees? I would like to know how many spin doctors there are. How many political operatives are there? How many people are sitting there protecting the Government in positions that we could not possibly call frontline positions, and what are they being paid? I would suggest that a large number of those people are excess staff, being paid very high, six-figure salaries. At the same time, the Government has cut crucial positions in regional New South Wales and Transport for NSW, where we need more staff to support services in the State. *[Time expired.]*

PREMIER'S DEPARTMENT AND CABINET OFFICE STAFFING

SECRETARY OF TRANSPORT FOR NSW

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SPECIAL ADVISER

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (12:28): I take note of a couple of answers given in question time today. A series of questions were asked about pay rises for public service senior executives from a government that talks a good game and is about press releases and high-level conversations. It says, "We're looking at these things. We're taking them seriously. We've got more work to do. We're working on it." But when we ask very specific questions, we do not seem to get the same level of enthusiasm for transparency and accountability. We asked about the Transport for NSW job cuts, including 950 jobs to meet a savings target. Yet, without any issue whatsoever and without any key performance indicators, Mr Murray presides over a 10.2 per cent pay rise, at a time of the worst on-time running of the train network since records were kept—an initiative of the former Coalition Government.

It beggars belief that the Government would cut the essential services that assist on-time running, yet reward the person who we were warned had no operational experience and was not able to run a network. That has been proven; he has not run the network effectively. Commuters have had continual interruptions. Trains do not turn up or turn up late, if commuters are lucky, and this person has just been rewarded by the Minns Labor Government. Why? Because he is a Labor mate. We know that, we have called it out and we will continue to do so.

It is important that we have these questions answered. If questions like the Hon. Tania Mihailuk's question on the headcount, what staff are being paid and in what bands, are not specifically answered, and those opposite come back with some fluffy answer that says they will not answer it, then clearly this Labor Government has abandoned any pretence of integrity, the very promise on which it came to government. It is clear that Josh Murray's donation of \$500—and \$250 from his wife, Davina Langton—to Jo Haylen and his mate Minns has paid huge dividends. He has got a big return on his investment, but the commuters of New South Wales have not got any return on investment. In fact, things are worse under those opposite.

When those opposite talk about having expectations, they are getting another review. They already have five reviews. That is not enough, although they have cost millions, and then they ignore them anyway. They say, "Let's have another review so we can buy some more time." Yet Mr Murray is not reviewed. He is not held to account. He is not in any way admonished in terms of remuneration, performance indicators or anything else. It pays for him to go to the wedding of a Labor adviser and hang out with Chris Minns and Jo Haylen at the dinner table and get a gig a few months later, and then get a pay rise. That is not good enough.

Finally, in relation to the answer given by the Leader of the Government in relation to domestic violence, in a bipartisan way I ask all members to be mindful of not using the word "tackling" when answering questions related to domestic violence. The word should be "addressing" it, or trying to deal with it in another way. *[Time expired.]*

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SPECIAL ADVISER

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (12:31): I take note of the answer given by the Hon. Penny Sharpe in relation to domestic violence, the reasons for the very large salary being paid to the special adviser, the key

performance indicators [KPIs] and the work that will be undertaken in that role. Domestic violence, as my colleague the Hon. Natalie Ward has just reminded us, is a critically important and difficult issue. It is one of those wicked issues for which we always struggle for sufficiency of funding. It is very important—and I think it is something all members expect when it comes to domestic violence funding—to spend that funding very carefully and where it can have the most benefit. This is a significant problem, as Jodie Harrison, the Minister for Women, reminded us in May 2023. She said:

We know that more than 50 per cent of women who apply to crisis shelters are turned away due to limited capacity. We also know that each night more than 56,000 women across Australia are homeless and more than 75 per cent of their homelessness is attributed to domestic violence.

That describes the terrible scope of the problem we are facing. The question that arises is: How many nights accommodation for victims of domestic violence could be purchased for that \$212,086.85 fee that has been paid? Yesterday's announcement by the Minister for Homelessness suggests some answers. We learnt of a new modular-build refuge constructed at Revesby consisting of four studios, a refurbished two-bedroom house and central facilities to provide domestic violence and other support services, all at a cost of \$2.29 million. The \$212,000 fee for 114 days of advice is roughly 10 per cent of this investment, or about the price of another modular studio. Advice is important. Policy settings are important. But so is a safe place to sleep for women fleeing violence. It is disappointing that the Minister could not indicate the KPIs and the particular work to be done by the special adviser that make the investment in advice more important than buying another safe place to sleep.

SECRETARY OF TRANSPORT FOR NSW

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (12:34): I take note of the answer of the Minister for Transport in response to a question from my colleague the Hon. Natalie Ward regarding the 10.2 per cent pay rise awarded to the Secretary of Transport for NSW, Josh Murray. I remind the House that my colleague did not ask about the tens of thousands of public transport workers, whether they have a job today or are among the 950 that have been shown the door. They are experiencing uncertainty, asking, "What are my employment prospects, my confidence? I am working hard and I am getting nothing." Along with every other New South Wales taxpayer, I read about the latest staggering 10.2 per cent pay rise being approved while New South Wales commuters still face the most unreliable transport service, the worst on record. The statistics show it. In spite of today's numbers, reported on-time running statistics show persistent delays.

The cost and consequence for New South Wales is that workers are not taking new jobs and are not working longer hours, because they have no confidence that they can travel to their workplace or return home to their families. This comes at the same time as south-west Sydney and greater Western Sydney are awaiting the extension of the Sydney Metro, and they know they will have to wait until 2040. There might be a glossy brochure, but there is no plan, no budget and no strategy. Western Sydney and south-western Sydney motorists are also losing the \$60 weekly toll cap, which was a pre-election announcement in 2023. I saw it myself: Mums and dads walked into polling booths having done the maths on the \$60 cap on tolls.

When I raised this yesterday, the Leader of the Government confirmed it was a pre-election commitment, but it will be discontinued. Only months remain before it goes. There is no budget and no plan. It is another broken promise. Yesterday the Government acknowledged that it was a pre-election ploy and is about to go. New South Wales deserves better, families deserve better, and workers deserve certainty and reliable public transport in New South Wales.

SECRETARY OF TRANSPORT FOR NSW

DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL (12:37): I take note of answers given by Minister Graham and Minister Moriarty, although the term "answers" seems as loose as the information they attempt to provide. Minister Graham claimed to "protect the public service", and he did so with a straight face, yet he is showing the door to hundreds of public servants. When it came to the Minister for Regional New South Wales, it was Minister Sharpe who said that the Opposition should read the newspapers to be better informed. That advice might also be directed to the Minister for Regional New South Wales, because she stated she did not know how things like massive pay rises to department heads work, despite the fact that she referred to the department at least twice, as mentioned by my colleague, as "my department".

If the Minister for Regional New South Wales does not know how these things work, perhaps she needs to take a look at *The Daily Telegraph*, because it seems to know. According to today's edition of *The Daily Telegraph*, the Premier ordered to resolve the wage situation for deputy chiefs by ensuring that they are now paid nearly \$650,000 per year, while the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development alone will lose 266 jobs, let alone the job losses in Transport for NSW.

Labor members constantly state that it is all about meeting savings targets, but are they doing that by robbing Peter to pay Paul? If we are left with only the highly paid department heads, and they are so busy managing, who is left to actually get stuff done? Who is doing the work that needs to be done out there on the ground and, most critically, when it comes to our regional areas, where the cuts are hitting the hardest? As the Hon. Rachel Merton has indicated, our regional communities deserve more respect and more transparency from this Labor Government. Members opposite talk about savings targets. But meeting them by putting jobs and people on the chopping block, particularly in regional areas, is not good enough.

TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (12:40): I acknowledge and thank all the speakers in the debate today.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): The question is that the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Written Answers to Supplementary Questions

ROAD TOLLS

In reply to **the Hon. NATALIE WARD** (5 August 2025).

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy)—The Minister provided the following response:

I am advised:

That for FY25/26 toll revenue by asset is:

- Sydney Harbour Bridge = \$80,020,497
- Sydney Harbour Tunnel = \$43,090,456
- Western Harbour Tunnel = nil
- M6 = nil

That for FY26/27 toll revenue by asset is:

- Sydney Harbour Bridge = \$80,653,198
- Sydney Harbour Tunnel = \$43,448,608
- Western Harbour Tunnel = nil
- M6 = nil

That for FY27/28 toll revenue by asset is:

- Sydney Harbour Bridge = \$81,417,582
- Sydney Harbour Tunnel = \$43,886,164
- Western Harbour Tunnel = nil
- M6 = \$17,680,000

That for FY28/29 toll revenue by asset is:

- Sydney Harbour Bridge = \$82,224,283
- Sydney Harbour Tunnel = \$44,349,195
- Western Harbour Tunnel = \$89,075,077
- M6 = \$30,160,000

The above figures are revenue only figures and exclude the costs associated with toll collection, management, toll relief schemes such as \$60 toll cap and M5 cashback and asset operations and maintenance.

Note that public toll revenues in the budget papers also include revenue from other tolling sources such as tolling fees and e-tags.

CONTEMPORARY MUSIC FESTIVAL VIABILITY FUND

In reply to **Ms CATE FAEHRMANN** (5 August 2025).

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy)—The Minister provided the following response:

I am advised:

The purpose of the Contemporary Music Festival Viability Fund is to grow and support the live music ecosystem in New South Wales through investment in the operations of established music festivals, alleviating short-term financial challenges and improving business and job retention during a cost-of-living crisis.

Applications to the fund opened in September 2024 and closed in April 2025. Five festivals received funding through this program, including Field Day and Listen Out.

All successful applicants of the fund (including Field Day and Listen Out) met the eligibility criteria of being Australian owned or having part international ownership. Eligibility does not specify majority owned. The guidelines do state, however, that festivals with 100 per cent international ownership are not eligible.

The assessment criteria also requires evidence of the organisation's structure and audited accounts. Sound NSW undertook independent assessment for this funding program which reviewed the entity structures and financial viability.

The eligibility criteria were developed by Sound NSW and approved by the Minister. Successful applications to the program were approved by the Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, based on recommendations of the assessment panel.

Details of funding awarded through this program are available on the New South Wales grant funding website.

BIOSECURITY WORKFORCE

In reply to **the Hon. SCOTT BARRETT** (5 August 2025).

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales)—The Minister provided the following response:

I am advised:

Staffing is a matter for the Secretary of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

The New South Wales Government has invested \$1.05 billion towards biosecurity and work will continue.

SYDNEY METRO

In reply to **the Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK** (5 August 2025).

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy)—The Minister provided the following response:

The visit the member refers to was for a press conference to update the public on progress with the Bankstown metro station and did not involve any consultation with businesses in relation to the station or any parking issues. On the day I was driven to this event so was not required to park a car.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.00 p.m.

Private Members' Statements

MID NORTH COAST VISIT

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (14:01): Recently I had the privilege of visiting Bellingen, which is in my duty electorate of Oxley, and the surrounding region. It is an area of incredible natural beauty, dedicated community activism and strong environmental stewardship. Over the course of just a few days, I was privileged to meet with local conservationists, volunteers and community leaders who are doing incredible work to protect our natural heritage and to fight for a more sustainable future, often without reward or recognition. On Friday I flew to Coffs Harbour and was greeted by Grahame Douglas, president of the National Parks Association of NSW [NPA]. Our first stop was the Flora Reserve in Orara East State Forest, followed by the Coramba Nature Reserve, where I got a firsthand look at the unique subtropical rainforest ecosystems that make that region so special.

I then travelled to meet with Karen Masson from Tallowood Ventures at the Tallowood Ventures site in the Glenreagh to Dorrigo area of the Gumbaynggirr National Park. We were joined by Grahame and Danielle from the NPA, Nambucca councillor Luby Simson, and Marc Percival from the Nambucca Environment Network. Over 80 volunteers are involved in that community-led project, which is restoring old rail infrastructure for heritage trains, hiking, horseriding and mountain biking, preserving local history and creating an asset for ecotourism and the community.

On Saturday morning we headed out early to Valery Road to meet with John Pile, a local koala expert, and representatives from Coffs Cycling Club. We walked through Pine Creek State Forest and learnt more about koala habitats and how important the Great Koala National Park will be in protecting that critically endangered species.

I was concerned to hear that the Cows with Guns mountain bike trail in the area, which doubles as a crucial koala corridor, is under threat of imminent clearing by State forests. Later that day I had the privilege of presenting RFS volunteers with service medals in Bellingen and seeing firsthand the extraordinary commitment of local brigades. The service celebrated 47 incredible Coffs Coast RFS volunteers, including the remarkable Darcy and Pauline from Darkwood Brigade, who have each dedicated 50 years of service. The ceremony also included the official handover of two new fire trucks to the Moonee and Sandy Beach brigades, ensuring volunteers have access to the best tools to protect their communities.

Finally, I capped off the visit with some valuable conversations with a wide range of community heroes. I thank Luke Barbagallo for facilitating an impactful discussion with local Fire Brigade Employees Union members about what the Government could be doing to better support retained firefighters like them. I also met with local Palestine activists, Maureen and Barbara, to chat about what actions they have been taking to raise local awareness of the genocide in Gaza. I met with local Labor Party branch members in Nambucca Heads, including Nambucca councillor Susan Jenvey, and heard about what matters to them, including the genocide in Gaza, the issue of unpaid placements for allied health students and their frustrations over the slow progress towards the Great Koala National Park. The trip reminded me that a lot of the answers we are looking for are already being built by people on the ground: the activists and volunteers. I thank everyone who helped make my trip to Bellingen and Nambucca so special.

JAMIE CLEMENTS

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (14:04): At one level I do not mind that my telephone was handed to James Willis, because without that happening I would never have found out the truth about half the Minns ministry. As ever, those who over-egg their pious and sanctimonious hypocrisy and politics pay a price—the price of truth. I know what those members did last summer and every summer before that, going back to 25 June 2015, when a young Labor woman was sexually assaulted by the Premier's best mate, Jamie Clements, in this building. Labor has lied. Labor has covered up. Labor has collaborated with the sexual predator and given him comfort. In several sickening cases, Ministers who know exactly what happened chose to sit in Cabinet and serve this Premier, turning a blind eye to that worst of political diseases: the way of the coward, the quisling.

But for blinding hypocrisy, no member beats Sweet Nell, the Minister for Housing, and Minister for Water. In the first week of August 2015—so we are on the tenth anniversary of this matter—when Jamie Clements, the Labor general secretary, returned to head office, having come from being interviewed about the sexual assault at the nearby Day Street Police Station, what did he do? He went straight to Rose Jackson's office in Sussex Street and closed the door for an hour-long comfort session. To use her phrase, in what other workplace would that be allowed? There was widespread recognition inside the party that this guy had sexually assaulted Greg Warren's staffer, and Rose gives him comfort, advice and succour.

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: Point of order—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: And it does not end there—the quisling is on his feet.

The PRESIDENT: I will hear the point of order.

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: The giving of private members' statements are not opportunities to make adverse mentions of members in this place or in the other place. The Hon. Mark Latham is clearly doing that.

The PRESIDENT: That is true. I note that these sorts of issues can be addressed by way of substantive motion, but they cannot be addressed in private members' statements.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: A year later the Minns crew attended the wedding of Damian Kassabgi in Byron Bay—such a Labor venue—as they all glammed up for a fashion shoot in that well-known Labor journal, *Vogue* magazine. Clements posted on his social media a sweet quote about friendship from a William Butler Yeats poem. Rose Jackson responded, "My heart recovering with covered eyes," again from Yeats—

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: Point of order—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: You ought to be ashamed of yourself, you coward, you dog!

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Daniel Mookhey rises on a point of order.

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: Mr President, the member is clearly not following your ruling. I ask you to call him to order and direct that he follow your ruling, otherwise he should not continue with his private member's statement.

The PRESIDENT: I advised the Hon. Mark Latham that to reflect on another member in this place cannot be done except by way of substantive motion.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I am quoting her words. I am reflecting on the Jamie Clements post, where Rose Jackson responded, "My heart recovering with covered eyes," again from Yeats, in a love-lost reflection. There was no mention of pigs or bigots for this man, Clements. We know what happened to his prospects inside the Labor Party. This guy, on his fake Twitter account @LazLaffer, was a porno star for the sisterhood. In December 2015 he said, "Sandra Sully has wonderful teeth"—like a horse. For Sweet Nell, the pre-eminent hypocrite of the New South Wales Parliament, it was another case of "my heart recovering with covered eyes". I find it hard to describe how much I detest hypocrisy in politics. When it comes to Rose Jackson, pass the chuck bucket. [*Time expired.*]

BLACKTOWN CITY COUNCIL RATES

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (14:07): Blacktown City Council is preparing to slug local ratepayers with a significant rate increase—a 23 per cent or \$230 per year hike on the average bill. That rate increase will hit families through the special rate variation process. For pensioners, even after rebates, that is still an extra \$130 a year out of the household budget. That is happening during a cost-of-living crisis, when electricity, fuel, groceries and mortgage repayments are already putting enormous strain on household finances. Blacktown Council has been under Labor's control for decades. It is not some new administration cleaning up someone else's mess; it is a mess of their own making. Much of it comes from the office building transactions. They were supposed to cost the council only \$150 million, but now they are estimated to be in excess of \$500 million. When it comes to the special rate variation, up to 45 per cent of it can be to cover the office fit-out cost.

To make matters worse, recent council messaging has tried to soften the blow by calling it a "one-off" or "temporary" increase. That is simply not true. It is a permanent increase. Once it is applied, it becomes part of the annual rate base and keeps compounding every year. In year one households will cop a 15 per cent total increase, with about 5 per cent from the standard rise and another 10 per cent from the special rate variation. What is the result? Families are paying far more every year into the future, not just in 2026-27. This is not a one-year hit; it is a permanent extra burden. Where is the money going? It is not going to better roads, upgraded parks or improved community facilities. Some 45 per cent of the extra cash will be spent on new council office buildings. Council offices do not fill potholes. They do not ease congestion. They do not improve the daily lives of ratepayers. This is bureaucracy before community.

Today is Wednesday, so it is only fitting to ask the question that locals in north-west Sydney are asking about this issue: Where's Warren? When his constituents in the Blacktown community are facing a massive, permanent rate hike in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, the member for Riverstone has been missing in action. Residents of the entire Blacktown local government area deserve representatives who will speak up for them when local council decisions hurt them. Liberal councillors on Blacktown City Council are standing up and opposing an unfair rate rise that will hit families who are already buckling under the increased cost of groceries and interest rate or rent rises.

This is a question of priorities. In the largest local government area in New South Wales, home to 450,000 residents and growing rapidly, the focus should be on delivering essential infrastructure and services that keep pace with growth. Let me be clear: The State Government has an important role to play here, along with the Commonwealth, in addressing cost-shifting towards councils. We must devise a better way to fund the required upgrades to infrastructure. But Blacktown City Council is putting offices before potholes. Blacktown City Council is asking households to dig deeper to fund a building project for itself, not for the ratepayers. This is not the time to hit ratepayers with a 23 per cent increase. Raising rates during a cost-of-living crisis to pay for new offices sends the wrong message to ratepayers, and it is putting the community last.

TRIBUTE TO FATHER CHRIS RILEY, AM

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY (14:10): Today I pay tribute to the late Father Chris Riley, AM, who passed away on 1 August. Christopher Keith Riley was born on 24 November 1954 in Echuca, Victoria. By the age of 14 he had already decided that he was going to dedicate his life to working with disadvantaged young people. Inspired by the 1938 movie *Boys Town*, he persuaded his parents to send him to a Salesian boys' boarding school. It was a transformative experience. In 1973, at the age of 18, he entered the Salesian order's teacher training college at Lysterfield. Three years later, on his twenty-first birthday, he was sent to the Sydney suburb of Engadine, where a Boys' Town had been established in 1939. On 8 May 1982 he was ordained into the Catholic priesthood, and his first appointment as Father Chris Riley was as religious educator at Salesian College Chadstone. In his spare time, he established a small refuge for homeless young people.

In 1985 Father Riley was advised that he was being sent back to Boys' Town in Sydney to take up the position of principal. After serving as principal for five years, he left Boys' Town to set up Youth Off The Streets. Father Riley founded Youth Off The Streets in 1991, with one food van delivering meals to young people sleeping rough in Sydney's inner city. During his three decades as CEO, Youth Off The Streets grew to a staff of over

220 and provided more than 30 programs and services for children and young people experiencing homelessness and complex disadvantage. Father Riley believed education was the key to breaking the cycle of poverty and disadvantage. In 1996 he opened Key College in Redfern, the first Youth Off The Streets independent high school for disadvantaged young people.

His commitment to education continued throughout his life, and he went on to expand educational facilities within Youth Off The Streets to include six registered and accredited independent high schools across New South Wales. Throughout his life Father Riley maintained the belief that there is no such thing as a child born bad and that there are only bad circumstances and environments. In 2006 Father Riley was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for his services to disadvantaged young people, and he also received the Human Rights Medal from the then Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. In 2012 Father Riley was named NSW Australian of the Year for his work with disadvantaged young people. For all that Father Chris Riley has done for so many young people, may his soul rest in eternal peace.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN (14:13): Last month the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency released the third edition of its small modular reactor dashboard report. The report said that interest in small modular reactors is growing worldwide, both in the private sector and among governments drawn to the technology's potential to support significant cuts to carbon emissions while providing energy security. Importantly, the report found that seven designs are currently operating or under construction with a "strong pipeline of projects progressing towards first-of-a-kind deployment". The report identified 99 small modular reactor technologies currently under development that are being designed throughout North America, South America, Europe, Asia and Africa. Notably, there is no involvement from Australia.

It is a shame that nuclear technology is still not being embraced by governments across Australia like it is elsewhere in the developed world. At the last two United Nations Climate Change Conferences, more than 31 countries signed a pledge to triple their nuclear capacity by 2050. Those signatories include countries with major economic and cultural ties to Australia, like the United Kingdom, United States, Japan, South Korea, United Arab Emirates, Canada and France. That followed analysis by the OECD that found that a tripling of nuclear energy capacity by 2050 would significantly help countries reach their net zero carbon emission targets while creating and maintaining energy security.

Last month it was announced that Westinghouse plans to start construction of the first of 10 new AP1000 reactors to be built in the United States by 2030. That announcement is due to the massive demand for energy that is expected in the coming years, fuelled by a surge in artificial intelligence and data centres. It is expected that the development will drive \$75 billion worth of economic value across the United States alone and will create or sustain 55,000 jobs in manufacturing, engineering and construction. Those are good, high-paying, real STEM jobs.

Another interesting development was the news last month that fusion energy developer Helion Energy announced it has begun initial earthworks and construction of a new power plant in Washington state that will provide electricity to Microsoft. Helion has previously built six working prototypes and in June 2021 became the first private fusion company to reach the 100-million-degree plasma temperatures needed. Given the developments in nuclear technology around the world, it remains concerning and disappointing that Australia continues to be invisible in this space. Notwithstanding our current bans, we should become more involved. We have large uranium deposits, of course, and we have the brainpower needed to get involved in that technology into the future.

YASS VALLEY WIND FARMS

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL (14:16): On the rolling hills and prime agricultural land just beyond Yass, residents of the small and historic townships of Bowning, Binalong, and a little further down the highway at Bookham, are living in genuine dread as they are faced with yet another proposed rollout of wind towers. This time it is 90 more massive constructions across their landscape. They are being forced to confront what it is going to do to them as a community environmentally, socially, economically and emotionally. Let us be clear: These community members are not opposed to the energy transition as such. They did not arc up when the first of many of projects went up in their region. They were willing to give it a go, play their part and shoulder their share of the load for the benefit of us all, as well as for the benefit of our kids and grandkids. Now they feel they are being played for mugs.

All they want is what was promised, and that was a just transition. This concept, as specified by the International Labour Organization, is meant to ensure that environmentally sustainable communities are treated in a fair and inclusive way, that decent work opportunities are created, and that no-one is left behind. A just

transition is supposed to support communities affected by moves to a low-carbon economy. Social impacts are meant to be evaluated. The problem is that this is not happening. This is a story that is being told over and over across New South Wales and more broadly. The growing concerns are about a lack of proper oversight and regulation; negative impacts on land values, wildlife and the quality of life; and developers who—to use an Enid Blyton reference—seem to treat it as *The Land of Take-What-You-Want*, only to then disappear into the sunset without a thought for the legacy left in their wake. For all of the promises and commitments, what are communities really being left with? How much more can they bear?

It is incumbent upon the Government to make things right for local communities. The list of pros and cons has changed over time, and not for the better. As the member for Goulburn, Wendy Tuckerman, has said, "Hiding does not build trust; it erodes it." There are potential solutions. Communities must be asked what they want and need. Like the European example, when it comes to developers doling out the cash, it should be provided for equitable distribution for all, and not after the event but up-front; no-one should be left behind in protecting the environment and the future, so we all benefit; and there should be a just transition, particularly for the regional communities on the front line and the people who call those regions home.

ROUSE HILL HOSPITAL

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE (14:19): Today I will briefly talk about progress on the new \$910 million Rouse Hill Hospital. When the Liberal-Nationals Coalition was in government, it promised before every election that the hospital would be built. The only thing that was ever constructed was a wire fence with plastic bunting. Equally as weird is that the hospital proposal included no plans for an emergency department. A brand-new hospital with no emergency department—how dumb is that? The new hospital is being built under this Labor Government and it will have an emergency department and full birthing services.

The New South Wales and Commonwealth governments have committed a total of \$910 million to the new Rouse Hill Hospital to cater for the growing needs of the north-west Sydney community. Those north-west Sydney communities have been invited to view and provide feedback on the first planning application for the new hospital. Community members are also invited to contribute to a survey which will shape the design of the hospital's comprehensive maternity and birthing services. The local community is encouraged to meet the project team and learn more at one of the information sessions on Tuesday 12 August at Castle Towers, Wednesday 13 August at Schofields Village and Thursday 14 August in the foyer of Blacktown Hospital.

The final scope for the \$910 million Rouse Hill Hospital project will include an emergency department and primary access clinic; comprehensive birthing services, including birthing rooms and a maternity inpatient unit; inpatient beds and day surgery services; short-stay medical assessment services; pathology, pharmacy and medical imaging services; outpatient and ambulatory care services, including paediatrics and renal dialysis; virtual care and Hospital in the Home services; and prehabilitation, rehabilitation and lifestyle medicine.

Early works will be the first step to prepare the site for construction of the new hospital. The Early Works Review of Environmental Factors and supporting technical documents are now on public exhibition and are available for all to view online. Feedback can be provided until 29 August 2025. Planning and design work is currently underway to help shape the future of the comprehensive maternity and birthing services at the hospital. A new survey, which can be completed online, gives the community and healthcare staff the opportunity to have their say on this important service.

NATIONAL INVESTIGATIONS SYMPOSIUM

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (14:22): On 28 May I had the great pleasure of attending the dinner of the fourteenth National Investigations Symposium, held at the Four Seasons Hotel Sydney. I attended as a guest of the Chief Commissioner of New South Wales ICAC, the Hon. John Hatzistergos, AM, and as a member of the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption. The symposium, which took place over two days on 28 and 29 May, is the result of a partnership between the New South Wales Independent Commission Against Corruption, the NSW Ombudsman and the New South Wales division of the Institute of Public Administration Australia [IPAA NSW].

The intent of the symposium was to enhance the knowledge and skills of delegates to develop better approaches to complaint handling and investigative practice. It featured over 50 international and Australian practitioners and experts who delivered presentations on topics including public interest disclosure investigations, countering foreign interference and other anti-corruption and integrity matters. The symposium is considered the principal networking and professional development event for public officials who undertake investigations. It has attracted over 550 Australian and international delegates from the public, non-government, academic and legal sectors in previous years.

At dinner we were treated to a presentation from an investigative journalist for *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*, Nick McKenzie, which I enjoyed immensely. Mr McKenzie has been awarded the Graham Perkin Australian Journalist of the Year three times and has won 20 Walkley Awards, including the Gold Walkley. He investigates politics, business, foreign affairs and criminal justice. We were extremely fortunate to have someone with his level of experience and expertise in the field present to us. The keynote address for the conference was given by the Australian Tax Office assistant commissioner for fraud and criminal behaviours, Jade Hawkins. She addressed the ATO response to the increase in digitalised fraud. In this brave new digital world that we live in, being aware of digitalised fraud in all its forms is extremely important. I commend the symposium for addressing this crucial issue of modern society.

Unfortunately the conference was held during a sitting week of Parliament, which made it difficult for other members of the committee to attend. However, I understand that staff from a number of different committees did attend, including the staff who support the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption. I thank them for representing the Parliament in this instance. I acknowledge the efforts of the New South Wales ICAC, NSW Ombudsman and IPAA NSW for collaborating to host the symposium. I thank the Hon. John Hatzistergos, AM, for graciously having me as a guest at the dinner on Wednesday evening. I wish the host organisations well. I hope there will be many more National Investigations Symposiums in the years to come.

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (14:25): Too many young people are experiencing homelessness. Data has revealed that 49 per cent of people helped by specialist homelessness services [SHS] in New South Wales were under 24 years of age. According to Yfoundations, a quarter of the homeless population is aged between 10 and 24 years old. They report that over 43,000 children and young people across Australia presented alone to an SHS. These young people are without a parent or guardian. This does not include the thousands who sought assistance and could not be helped or those who never reached out, because that data is not collected.

During 2023-24 SHS helped 17,062 children and young people in New South Wales, 13,217 of whom presented alone. The majority were female, and over 2,000 were in the care of the Minister under child protection orders. In fact, New South Wales had the largest number of young people seeking assistance among all of the States and Territories. Yet, there was still no funding in the budget to support young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Youth homelessness services are being stretched to their limits. A recent Yfoundations survey found that 98 per cent of organisations have reported rising workloads driven by more complex cases, skyrocketing demand and an inability to find long-term housing solutions.

Last month Yfoundations reported that 50 per cent of young people were turned away from an SHS last year, meaning that thousands of young people were left to sleep in unsafe conditions. The Minister talks about housing, but the fact remains that the Government has failed to identify youth supported housing solutions, particularly in rural and regional areas. People are staying in crisis accommodation for longer right across the State, which means more people are living on the streets, couch surfing or living in improvised dwellings like squats because they cannot access crisis accommodation or get the support they need.

I met an amazing 14-year-old who has been in and out of homelessness services for the past year or so. She talked about not being able to live at home and having to stay in unsafe places, including a vacant house with other kids from the region. I do not want to identify this girl, and therefore I cannot acknowledge the services supporting her, the local community she moved to or the school that provided her with pyjamas and equipment, but I thank them for all they do. Like so many other young people, this young woman had to travel 80 kilometres to get the support she needed because services in her local area were at capacity. With the support of youth services, she is turning her life around one day at a time.

She spoke to me about being drug free, going back to school and the subjects she loved. She wants to become a paramedic so she can help others. She wants to get a part-time job so she can save up to buy a car and move into her own home. These are things that all young people aspire to, but unlike other young people, this amazing young woman has had to overcome adversity. That has made her stronger and more determined. It is heartbreaking to know that so many young people who present to homelessness services cannot be assisted. I do not have time to talk about the impact that has on volunteers. It is Homelessness Week. I call on the Minns Labor Government to adequately fund youth services and housing-first initiatives to support young people. [*Time expired.*]

*Bills***WORKERS COMPENSATION AMENDMENT (FIREFIGHTERS' DISEASES) BILL 2025****Second Reading Speech****Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (14:28): Before being interrupted for question time today, I was addressing the Workers Compensation Amendment (Firefighters' Diseases) Bill 2025. I will now conclude my remarks. In an order for papers passed by the House on 25 June 2025, the Opposition asked for "all documents relating to the expansion of schedule 4 to the Workers Compensation Act 1987", created since 25 March 2023, in the possession, custody or control of the Minister for Work Health and Safety, Treasury, the Department of Customer Service, Insurance and Care NSW [icare] or the State Insurance Regulatory Authority [SIRA].

Given the Minister's evidence at three budget estimates hearings that work was being done by icare, SIRA and Treasury on expanding the list of presumptive cancers in schedule 4, we legitimately and reasonably expected to receive some substantial documents reflecting this serious work. What did we get? We received draft and signed letters to concerned stakeholders, MPs and constituents giving the same assurance that icare and SIRA were working away steadily on this issue. What we did not get was a single document with any actual analysis—not even a document setting out what other jurisdictions had done in relation to this issue.

Was the Minister misleading those estimates committees, MPs and stakeholders when she assured them this work was underway and would be completed and released "shortly"? Is this the Government intentionally withholding all documents dealing in any substantial way with expanding presumptive cancers for firefighters? The Commonwealth expanded the list of presumptive cancers for firefighters in 2022. Western Australia expanded coverage from 10 August 2023, and Tasmania did so in November 2023. South Australia added the three female reproductive system cancers in June 2024. Queensland expanded coverage from August 2024. The Northern Territory introduced coverage for all 23 cancers from September 2024. It is time for New South Wales to do the right thing and to show our genuine support for firefighters—both men and women, professionals and volunteers—who risk their lives and health in fighting fires in defence of our communities.

The Minister has had long enough to get this work done. I am sure at the next estimates hearing the Minister will tell us that SIRA and icare are working on this matter and there will be an announcement "shortly". Given that the Minister first said this in November 2023, there would be no reason to take this claim at face value. Our order for papers tested that glib claim. There were no documents evidencing any work by icare, SIRA or Treasury. I anticipate support for this bill from all in this House who share the Opposition's concern that firefighters who contract cancer are entitled to reasonable, evidence-based presumptions that firefighting was a substantial contributing factor or contributing factor to them contracting that cancer. I would be proud to wear this T-shirt to fight for this issue. The Government should have done the work; the Opposition is doing it because of the inactivity of those opposite. It is a scandal that it has not been done. The bill should be supported by all members. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.*Motions***ENERGY TRANSITION**

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (14:33): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) in June 2025, the Victorian Labor Government announced electrification and energy efficiency reforms, including:
 - (i) a mandate for all new residential homes, most commercial buildings and government buildings including hospitals and schools to be all-electric from 1 January 2027;
 - (ii) requirements for existing gas hot water systems in residential buildings to be replaced with electric appliances at end-of-life; and
 - (iii) setting minimum energy efficiency standards for rental properties and public housing, including a ban on replacement gas heaters or hot water systems.
 - (b) in June 2025, the City of Sydney Council became the latest New South Wales council to mandate electrification in new residential developments from 1 January 2026, a move unanimously supported by Labor, Liberal, Independent and Greens councillors and backed by the Property Council of Australia, the Owners Corporation Network of Australia and Asthma Australia;

- (c) other councils that have implemented electrification mandates include the City of Canada Bay, City of Canterbury-Bankstown, Hornsby Shire Council, Lane Cove Council, City of Newcastle, Waverley Council and City of Parramatta, and councils in the process of exploring or developing electrification changes include North Sydney Council, Inner West Council, Blue Mountains City Council, City of Ryde and Wagga Wagga City Council; and
- (d) according to the *2024 Annual Report Net Zero Commission*:
 - (i) New South Wales is not on track to meet emission reduction targets, and the built environment sector is the worst performer, having nearly doubled greenhouse gas emissions between 2005 and 2022 while all other sectors have reduced theirs; and
 - (ii) compared to other jurisdictions "the New South Wales Government currently has neither regulations nor targets to drive building electrification. Unlike Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales has not placed restrictions on gas connections to new homes or developments".
- (2) That this House further notes analysis conducted by the Energy Efficiency Council which shows just how much gas can be freed up through efficiency and electrification, which will directly drive down gas prices and supply shortfalls for industries in difficult to abate sectors and who are struggling with their power bills.
- (3) That this House congratulates the Victorian Government, the Australian Capital Territory Government and various New South Wales councils on taking necessary action to transition households and businesses from gas and electrify everything.
- (4) That this House calls on the Government to follow the lead of the Victorian Labor Government and Australian Capital Territory Government, as well as community leaders in councils across New South Wales, to ban new gas connections for residential and commercial developments and require higher standards of energy efficiency for rentals, to protect health and climate.

Gas is a polluting fossil fuel, and one of the leading causes of the climate crisis. Every day that we continue to extract, process and burn gas, we are overheating our planet and driving more frequent and intense catastrophic climate disasters. Study after study and common sense have proven that electrifying all new homes in New South Wales is one of the most effective ways to cut emissions. We can do this by getting off gas and getting more renewables online, like wind and solar, through faster and fairer deployment of large-scale projects.

In its 2024 annual report, the Net Zero Commission highlighted New South Wales' lack of progress in pursuing ambitious electrification policies compared to other jurisdictions like the European Union, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory. The Net Zero Commission noted that the New South Wales Government currently has neither regulations nor targets to drive building electrification and has not placed restrictions on gas connections to new homes or developments. Instead, the New South Wales Government's current policy initiatives introduced in 2022 merely encourage but not mandate large new buildings to be all-electric, along with some subsidies through programs like the Energy Savings Scheme. As the world electrifies everything, New South Wales households stuck on gas will be locked into increasingly expensive energy bills, and more and more people will be forced into energy poverty. Low-income households, regional households and renters will inevitably bear the brunt if we do not stop building new gas connections and start helping households make the switch.

We need to invest in the rollout of household energy efficiency upgrades that prioritise difficult to electrify households, so that no-one is left behind in the process. A just and equitable energy transition means making sure no-one is left behind and no-one bears the brunt of irresponsible government inaction. More and more councils are taking charge and leveraging their powers through the planning system to electrify communities with gas-free, all-electric new homes and businesses. The City of Sydney council recently became the latest New South Wales council to mandate electrification in new residential developments from 1 January 2026—a move led by Greens councillors. This was unanimously supported by Labor, Liberal, Independent and Greens councillors, and has since been publicly backed and commended by the Property Council of Australia, the Owners Corporation Network of Australia Ltd, Asthma Australia and other peak bodies for health, housing and environmental matters. The national policy director for the Property Council of Australia, Frankie Muskovic, said of the changes:

This is a clear step towards cleaner, cheaper, all-electric buildings and it's what the future demands – we support it.

The City of Sydney is showing leadership here, giving developers clarity and sending the right signal to the market. Families want homes that are cheaper to run and the shift away from gas will help deliver that.

Every new building built with gas today is one that will need to be upgraded later at greater cost, so targeting new buildings first, where the change is easier and cost effective to make is a no-brainer.

Meanwhile, the Australian Capital Territory is leading the nation in decarbonising and fast-tracking clean energy generation thanks to the foundations laid by the former Labor-Greens Government. Since 2020, the ACT has been 100 per cent powered by renewables, which has given Canberrans some of the lowest energy bills in the country. In Victoria, the Labor Allan Government unveiled a suite of home electrification and energy efficiency reforms last month, which build on the Victorian Government's Gas Substitution Roadmap. Under those changes, all new residential homes, most commercial buildings and government buildings, including hospitals and schools, will be required to be all-electric from 1 January 2027. Households will also be required to replace existing gas hot water

systems with electric appliances at the end of their life, and renters will benefit from minimum energy efficiency standards for rental properties and public housing.

While these changes are not perfect, and our Victorian Greens colleagues have called for the Allan Government to take even more ambitious leaps to electrify the State and accelerate energy efficiency upgrades for vulnerable households, they are a necessary step forward that should be commended. The Victorian Government's plan has been analysed by the Energy Efficiency Council. It found that electrification of Victoria's buildings could free up an average of 80 petajoules a year through to 2035 to support industries impacted by high prices and gas supply shortfalls. Electrification will drive down not just household energy prices but the energy prices of industry and business as well. Claims of gas shortfalls fall flat in the face of this fact. We do not need to dig or drill more gas; we need to be smart with the way we use it, with electrification and efficiency improvements delivering climate and economic benefits across society from households to industry.

But it is not just climate and financial benefits that are achieved by getting off gas. There is increasing evidence that pollution from gas stoves is responsible for one in eight, or 12.3 per cent, of current childhood asthma cases. A child living with gas cooking in their home faces a similar risk of asthma to a child living with household cigarette smoke. We must start building healthier and more energy-efficient buildings. Doing so will fast-track our transition, keep us moving with the times and ensure that new builds meet future energy standards. Gas has no place in our future clean, green energy mix. It is time for the Government to take charge of the transition and set a clear pathway towards electrifying everything, building by building and suburb by suburb.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (14:38): I thank Ms Abigail Boyd for bringing this issue to the Chamber. Electrification is an important part of the energy transition path we are on. I have an amendment to the motion. I move:

That the question be amended by:

- (1) In paragraph (3):
 - (a) omitting "congratulates" and inserting instead "notes that"; and
 - (b) omitting "for taking necessary" and inserting instead "have taken".
- (2) Omitting paragraph (4) and inserting instead:
 - (4) That this House notes that the Government:
 - (a) released the *Consumer Energy Strategy* in 2024 that supports electrification through incentives and targets; and
 - (b) commits to investigating minimum energy efficiency performance standards for rentals, and to developing a New South Wales gas plan that will consider electrification and energy efficiency.

There is not a lot of distance between us on the issue. As usual, The Greens want us to go faster. We have a clear path, but it is going to take longer.

The Hon. Wes Fang: You can say "slower".

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Taylor Martin): Order!

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can the Hon. Wes Fang stop interrupting every single time I am at the table? Just stop it. What I wanted to say is that we accept that this has happened. In relation to new builds, there are a lot of builders who no longer put gas into their buildings. That is a good thing. Councils have taken a view on the issue and some are choosing to do that as well. The Government has been clear that banning new connections is not a priority in our approach around gas, but acknowledges that the benefits of electrification for households are great, with literally thousands of dollars of savings.

I also acknowledge the issue raised by the member about those left stuck on gas as more people get off the network. That issue is not insubstantial, and we need to deal with it equitably. The point—as reflected in my amendment—is that we are broadly supportive of the move, but we have a different approach. The Government is investing \$290 million into the Consumer Energy Strategy. A lot of the work around energy efficiency and reporting about rentals is contained in that strategy. It is an important step forward. I thank the various groups that had input into that. Where we are today is that we agree that the more people electrify, the more that they will save. We agree that it is better for people in the long term, particularly as more renewable energy becomes available in the system, because it will save emissions. I commend the amendment to the House.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (14:41): On behalf of the Coalition, I oppose the motion from The Greens regarding gas and electrification. We recognise the role that electrification plays, and will continue to play, in our energy transition. New technology will, over time, improve in efficiency and affordability, but the reality is that

gas continues to be an important and reliable energy source for households, small businesses and the hospitality sector across New South Wales. In fact, it is an important part of the transition. It should be up to businesses, households and developers to decide how they power their kitchens, homes or projects. The role of government should be to set fair standards for safety and efficiency, not to dictate a single energy source. Heavy-handed intervention removes choice and ignores the fact that different users have different needs. What works in one setting may not be practical or affordable in another.

The motion mentions the City of Sydney gas ban. Renowned chef Luke Mangan made the point that for many cooking styles, particularly in restaurants, gas offers a level of control and consistency that current electric alternatives cannot replicate. A number of other hospitality industry stakeholders have also spoken out following the ban. It is not just a matter for high-end venues. In multicultural communities across Sydney and regional New South Wales, gas is central to traditional cooking methods. Whether it is a stir-fry in an Asian kitchen, bread in a Middle Eastern bakery or a charcoal grill in a Greek restaurant, gas is part of how those cuisines are authentically prepared. We must be mindful that blanket bans or restrictions risk disregarding those cultural practices and could lead to unintended consequences. If people feel they cannot achieve the same results with the mandated alternatives, some may turn to unsafe, unregulated workarounds. Campfires have spawned in homes in some areas, and more of them could result from a ban such as the one proposed by The Greens. That is not a good outcome for safety or for the environment.

The City of Sydney and some other councils have moved to ban gas connections in new developments. Those decisions do not consider the diverse needs of the community, nor do they provide sufficient transition time for industry or households to adapt. Let us consider what happens to our energy needs throughout a day. The peak period is around six o'clock, when people are firing up their kitchens, but that is the time that renewables go offline. In that situation peak power, often provided by gas, is required. We are effectively switching one gas source for another. Whilst the Premier has stated such moves are oversteps, with this amendment the Government members are trying to work both sides of the street. On the one hand, they say they are all aboard with the movement, but on the other they are saying they are not going to do it. That is effectively the nature of the amendment being put forward by the Government today. We on this side will not be supporting the amendment, because we want to vote on the original motion as moved. We support a balanced, technology-neutral approach that allows households and businesses to choose the energy source that works for them.

The Hon. BOB NANVA (14:44): As the Minister has outlined, even though the Government is committed to supporting households to electrify and take up clean energy technologies like solar technology, heat pump technology, hot water systems and electric vehicles [EVs], it is not supportive of banning new gas connections, because households should have choice. That said, there is plenty that the Government is doing to decarbonise the economy. The Government's Energy Savings Scheme provides incentives to households when they choose to upgrade from a gas hot water system to an electric heat pump hot water system, or from a gas heater to an efficient air conditioning system.

There is also the Consumer Energy Strategy, which lays out the Government's plan to support households to electrify, to save money on their energy bills and to benefit from the energy transition, which is well underway: 35 per cent of our energy is already from renewable sources, and construction on our first renewable energy zone has begun. EVs now make up 8 per cent of new car sales and hundreds of EV chargers are being rolled out. As of 10 July 2025, 35 new ultra-fast charging stations, 434 destination charging sites, 250 kerbside charging sites and 19 apartment building charging sites are operational. That is not to mention the \$275 million put towards net-zero manufacturing in New South Wales for developers of low-carbon materials, renewable manufacturing and clean technology innovation.

On top of that, although we do not support a gas ban, there is plenty we are doing to decarbonise. In 2023 New South Wales became the first State to mandate seven-star thermal performance for all new homes, alongside tougher targets to cut greenhouse gas emissions to between 7 per cent and 11 per cent, depending on the location and the housing type. Houses built to the seven-star standard are obviously going to save households money through reduced energy bills, projected to be approximately \$1,070 per year. After mortgage repayments, energy bills are up there in terms of cost-of-living pressures, so that will leave people about \$700 a year better off. That is a meaningful contribution to cost-of-living pressures; it is also a meaningful contribution to decarbonising the economy.

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (14:47): I am thrilled that the Minister for the Environment is here to listen and learn.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: I always look forward to your lessons, John.

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK: Thank you. The policy of banning gas in new homes is absurd. The war on natural gas is yet another attempt in the endless attempts to stop non-existent global warming. There is a

bipartisan consensus in this place that we in this Chamber can change the weather. Members truly believe that absurdity, and they truly believe they must do it because of global warming. Global warming is not happening. Oceans are not rising. Natural disasters are not increasing in frequency. The climate has been changing for four billion years. Sometimes it can change quite abruptly due to natural forces, but the good news is that we in this generation have enjoyed a benign climate. Even if it does get a little warmer due to natural variation, it would almost certainly be a good thing. The real concern is that we enter an extended cold period; that is when life is stunted. All around the world, the public and the governments—Minister, you really should be listening to this; it is important.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: I am always listening.

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK: No, you are chatting. All around the world, the public and the governments are losing interest in global warming, because all the prophecies of doom have failed to materialise. Kamala Harris's presidential campaign barely mentioned climate change. New Zealand has reversed many climate change policies. When he was the United Kingdom's Opposition leader, Keir Starmer pledged to invest £28 billion a year to decarbonise the country. However, in office he has halved that commitment and extended the goal of a net-zero economy from 2030 to 2050; that is, the never-never. He does not care.

If it truly was an emergency, why would left-wing leaders be winding it back? Gas is a cheap, reliable energy source that powers homes efficiently, keeping costs down for families already battered by soaring electricity bills. To ban gas in new homes is to force families into pricier, less reliable alternatives. The City of Sydney's ban on gas relies on projections from Climate Group 350 Australia, a group with a clear bias towards renewables. Their numbers lack objectivity, yet they are used to justify policies that punish households.

Meanwhile, Australian Energy Market Operator 2024 data shows 80 per cent of New South Wales night-time electricity comes from good old coal. On 16 May this year, wind power contributed a mere 0.7 per cent to the grid at night—when cooktops are most used. Gas is not the villain here. Even if you are still clinging to global warming as a holy truth, you should be pro-gas. The United States slashed greenhouse emissions by 18 per cent from 2005 to 2015 by increasing natural gas use.

While the benefits of banning gas in new homes are close to zero, the costs are very real. Here is just a short list of the costs that would be imposed on the general public: devaluing existing gas infrastructure, which pushes up the price of gas for existing users; taking away choice from residents and businesses; increasing the demand on our electricity grid; and shrinking the gas industry and associated jobs. This nonsense cannot endure forever. For some strange reason, Australia seems to be the last nation to wake up. But wake we will.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (14:50): I also oppose the motion—not because I oppose a cleaner, more sustainable future, but because I believe in balanced, practical solutions and respect for the lived realities of everyday Australians, particularly in the regions. This motion seeks to celebrate sweeping electrification mandates and push for further bans on gas connections in residential and commercial settings across New South Wales. But, in doing so, it disregards the realities faced by many families and small businesses in regional communities like mine.

Though it may be hard for The Greens to see, from the comfort of inner-city policymaking, they must consider the lived experience of regional people. What about pensioners—people who have worked hard their whole lives, raised families and retired to places like Armidale or Guyra that have colder climates where gas heating is not a luxury but essential for safety and wellbeing in winter? Those households have not budgeted for, and cannot afford, the tens of thousands of dollars it would cost to electrify their homes if gas is taken away. Once again, The Greens are pushing policy that shows a deep disconnect with the realities of regional life. We should not allow ideological agendas to force country people into having to choose between staying warm or staying afloat financially. Let us be clear: Affordability and choice matter.

Gas remains a reliable and affordable energy source that supports thousands of households and small businesses, especially in regional New South Wales. It is often more dependable than electricity, when the power goes out during storms or blackouts. The motion also overlooks the significant cost of transition, retrofitting homes, replacing gas appliances and upgrading electrical infrastructure. Those costs will fall on everyday people, renters, businesses and the construction sector—none of whom have been properly consulted. Environmental goals must be pursued sensibly—not through blanket bans and mandates but through a transition that is affordable for households and small businesses, flexible to suit regional needs and reliability, and collaborative, working with communities and industry instead of imposing one-size-fits-all ideology. We want a cleaner future. But we must get there together without leaving anyone behind.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (14:53): I speak in support of the Government's amendment to the motion. The motion canvasses a number of different issues, but I will speak briefly around the issues of banning new gas

connections, which of course is not something that the New South Wales Government is looking at, and some of the measures that we have put in place around standards for new builds around the Building Sustainability Index. Electrical appliances can often be cheaper for consumers in the long run, so the New South Wales Government encourages consumers to go electric if that is the best choice for them. We have introduced a number of measures to encourage consumers in that direction. Following a ministerial directive, all Landcom developments are fully electric and the NSW Housing Pattern Book has been designed to produce all-electric homes.

The New South Wales Government is also supporting more affordable and energy-efficient homes. In terms of the Building Sustainability Index or BASIX standards for new builds, in 2023 New South Wales became the first State to mandate seven-star Nationwide House Energy Rating Scheme thermal performance for all new homes, alongside tougher targets to cut greenhouse gas emissions by between 7 and 11 per cent, depending on the location and the housing type. Homes that are built to the seven-star standard are projected to save households an average of \$1,070 per year in energy bills. After mortgage repayments are factored in, this still leaves home owners nearly \$700 better off each year. That is a meaningful contribution at a time when cost-of-living pressures are being felt in every household across the State. The reforms are supporting the market as it shifts towards electrification. Builders and developers are now using BASIX seven-star ratings in their marketing, which is no longer considered unnecessary red tape but a positive thing.

The New South Wales Government is planning to develop the NSW Gas Plan, which will cover decarbonisation. It will consider east coast short-term gas supply issues with the Commonwealth and other States and Territories; investigate reforms to support electrification and energy efficiency; and investigate other longer term systemic issues. Consultation will be undertaken with stakeholders, including industry, consumers, network operators and energy market bodies, at relevant points to inform the three stages of important work that the New South Wales Government is doing.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (14:56): I make a brief contribution. I oppose the motion and the amendment moved by the Government. I do not understand why the Government has moved it. It could have agreed with the Opposition to simply oppose the motion. I know what Premier Minns' position is: He is a great supporter of gas. The Hon. Penny Sharpe knows it, and I know it. The Hon. Bob Nanva knows. He has had to deal with many right-wing unions that are big supporters of gas and jobs in this State. I find it very odd that the Government, as the Hon. Scott Farlow rightly said earlier, needs to try to walk on both sides of the street. It is just nonsense. You lose people from both sides. The Greens are going to take Labor's left voters. We know that. They already are. Lots of votes are seeping out of the inner city to The Greens.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: They are actually going the other way.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: It is not going the other way. The Hon. Penny Sharpe rushed down to the Harbour Bridge on the weekend when George Simon gave her the direction to do so because young people are increasingly voting for The Greens. That is the reality. If they are choosing a left-wing party, they are choosing The Greens over the Labor Party. Let us be very clear: We can be proud of what gas offers to New South Wales. We should be proud that we have a Premier who is not going to support what Victorian Labor is doing, what Australian Capital Territory Labor is doing and what some ridiculous councils are doing. The City of Sydney council—the socialist bloody republic of the Southern Hemisphere—is deciding that there are no more gas connections, deciding to destroy business and restaurant and hospitality opportunities in Sydney. It is just a joke.

Does it surprise anyone that councils like Canterbury-Bankstown council are supporting this? They do not care about the environment. They want to make sure their developers can build at a cheaper cost. They do not have to do connections with gas. We all know who they are worried about. In fact, they will allow the inflated bureaucracy at Canterbury-Bankstown to propose any change they want, as long as they do not get involved in any of the rezoning decisions, which is their concern. I find it really absurd. I would have liked to have heard a better and stronger speech from the Leader of the Government simply saying, "We don't support this motion. We are clearly not on the same page as Victorian Labor. New South Wales Labor cares about business, cares about industries, cares about jobs, and certainly still continues to support gas in New South Wales."

The Hon. WES FANG (14:59): I congratulate Ms Abigail Boyd. At least she has the courage of her convictions to bring a motion like this to the House. We know where we stand with The Greens on this. We do not necessarily agree with them, but we respect the fact that they own these issues. That is unlike members opposite, who like to have a bet each way. We know that the Minister for the Environment was clear about wanting to get rid of gas appliances, before she was overruled by the Premier on 2GB. In fact, the Premier did not even have the decency to tell the Minister for the Environment that he was going to do that before he did so in the interview.

Many ethnic communities are very attached to gas cooking. When my dad was alive and looking to buy a house, he was very determined to have gas in the house that he lived in. That was so much so that, even though

we did not have a permanent gas connection, we had to have large, refillable gas bottles, because authentic Asian cooking needs gas or flame. Traditionally, people have used charcoal or fire to create the wok hei taste of Asian cooking that is done with flame. We have now transitioned to gas. Gas is a less impactful way of cooking ethnic dishes, but what does it achieve to take gas away from people in our communities? Why would we stop communities being able to prepare their meals, which is often part of the way they come together? Why would we do that? Is it because we want to somehow try to change the temperature of this planet?

Yes, we need to look at some of these issues, but this is not going to be the thing that will fix it. We are going to take away the right of people to prepare meals the way that they want. I do not think that is going to make a measurable difference to climate change, but it will make a great change in the way that some people live their lives. I do not think that this House should be looking to do that at this time.

[Business interrupted.]

Business of the House

EXTENSION OF TIME

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I move:

That the time for debate on this motion be extended by 10 minutes.

Motion agreed to.

Motions

ENERGY TRANSITION

[Business resumed.]

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (15:03): I add some thoughts to the debate. I commence by saying some things about the Net Zero Commission's 2024 annual report in regard to emissions. The report did find that New South Wales is not on track to meet its emission reduction targets. That is why in the Government's response we committed to doubling down and developing a new net zero plan to ensure that we meet those targets. The latest projections show there is only a 4 per cent gap to reaching our 2030 target. That is 2 per cent closer than last year's projections. We are currently on track for a 46 per cent reduction on 2005 levels by 2030.

The commission found that the built environment sector increased emissions since 2005, which is why it has been chosen as a priority sector for the new net zero plan. The other priority sector chosen is transport, because as we decarbonise the energy sector it will become the next largest emitting sector. There is already great work underway to decarbonise our economy. The energy transition is well underway. Thirty-five per cent of our energy is already from renewable sources, and construction on our first renewable energy zone has begun. We are also rolling out hundreds of electric vehicle chargers, as EVs are now making up 8 per cent of new car sales, and that will accelerate. As of 10 July 2025, 30 new ultra-fast charging stations, 434 destination charging sites, 250 kerbside charging sites and 19 apartment building charging sites are operational.

We are investing \$275 million towards net zero manufacturing in New South Wales, for businesses developing low-carbon materials, renewable manufacturing and clean technology innovation. As has been said, the New South Wales Government is not looking at banning gas in the residential sector. But it is true that electric appliances can often be cheaper for consumers in the long run, so the New South Wales Government encourages consumers to go electric, if that is the best choice for them. Following a ministerial directive, all Landcom developments are fully electric, and the NSW Housing Pattern Book has been designed to produce all-electric homes. In conclusion, the New South Wales Government is supporting more affordable and energy-efficient homes, and that is a key part of meeting the targets that I discussed earlier.

Dr AMANDA COHN (15:06): I strongly support this excellent motion moved by my excellent colleague Ms Abigail Boyd. We know that phasing out gas connections and gas appliances is critical for meaningful climate action, but we also know that it is important to reduce what is now a really well-established health hazard. Some of the arguments being trotted out in defence of the gas industry these days honestly feel like the kinds of arguments that were trotted out by the tobacco industry when governments started to take meaningful action to address the harms of cigarette smoke. We know that 12 per cent of childhood asthma in Australia is now being caused by indoor air pollution, including from gas appliances.

For children who are growing up in households with gas appliances, it can be similar to living in a household with exposure to second-hand cigarette smoke. I think most people who are either moving into properties with gas kitchen appliances or who are choosing to purchase new gas appliances probably have no idea that is the case. There is a significant educational piece needed. It should be the responsibility of government to tell people the facts that we now know. Asthma Australia, the Lung Foundation Australia and Doctors for the

Environment Australia have all been really clear in calling not only for people to understand this but also for meaningful initiatives to support people to transition to clean, healthy electric appliances in their homes.

In the absence of State or Federal government leadership, local councils are leading the way. There have been lots of comments about the political nature of the councils listed in the motion. I point out that not a single one of those councils has a Greens majority. Not one.

The Hon. Tania Mihailuk: Not Waverley?

Dr AMANDA COHN: Not Waverley. Those councils are diverse in their political make-up; they are diverse in their location. We are talking about the City of Sydney and the city of Wagga Wagga moving towards electrification. This is local government leadership on behalf of communities, because it is what communities want and need. It is also the direction that industry is moving. I am aware of a subdivision proposed in Orange with no new gas connections. For local councils and for the State Government to show some leadership would provide certainty. Then those new subdivisions would go ahead with no new gas connections. I think it is a real shame that the Government has continued its business-as-usual approach, when Labor governments in other jurisdictions are doing excellent work looking to the future. It is what we need, not just for climate but for our health.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (15:09): I make a brief contribution to debate on the motion moved by Ms Abigail Boyd. It is so important that we move towards electrification. It is a challenging thing to do. It is something that I want to do. It is hard though. I live in a cold climate in Queanbeyan. Air conditioning is just not effective. I have a gas heater. I have looked to replace it. It can be extremely difficult to retrofit a solution. People who are building new houses can put coils in the floor or use a different type of thermal heating. But the technology just is not quite there yet to replace gas central heating in cold climates. That is the reality. The excellent investment by the Government to encourage people to move to technology such as heat pumps—which do work in cold climates and are great—will encourage the development of new technology that will ultimately allow us to replace gas. Unlike the upper House member for Wagga Wagga, I think we can replace traditional cooking methods with induction cooktops and other technology that does work.

The Hon. Wes Fang: It just doesn't taste the same.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: I was waiting for the Hon. Wes Fang to give us a recipe for what he is trying to cook. We could have a competition and I could cook the same thing using an electric method. It is a good motion. For the reasons I have outlined, the Government does not support the removal of gas. But the motion does give us an opportunity to talk about why the transition to renewable energy and using electricity are important. It is something that we should do. But forcing people to do it without the right technology in every area is difficult to achieve. That is why the Government's position is to encourage people and give them subsidies for technologies such as batteries. The Government is encouraging people to use heat pumps and other types of hot water. People can degasify their cooking and their hot water systems if alternatives are available. I support those wonderful initiatives. But forcing people is a different question entirely. I do not think we can do that until we have technology that is cheaper and works in all areas. [*Time expired.*]

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (15:12): I make a very short contribution to debate on the motion moved by Ms Abigail Boyd. We need to get off the gas. That is very, very clear. We know that gas generates one of the most potent greenhouse gases. It is a futile greenhouse gas emission. We need to consider where the gas is coming from. In New South Wales, we look to the Pilliga and the communities in that area. The Gomeroi people have been fighting the potential filthy gas exploitation project. They have been fighting the exploitation of the people in their community. Those who want us to stay on gas want to open up that filthy reserve. It needs to be a no. The Government needs to go further and faster to get us all off the gas as quickly as we can. It needs to keep that gas in the ground. It needs to let communities thrive. At the moment, those communities are being flooded and drowned by climate-fuelled disasters. At the moment, they are struggling to not only thrive, but also survive. Let us get off the gas.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (15:13): In reply: I thank all members for contributing to debate on residential and commercial gas connections. The debate has been refreshing in its normalcy and because all members put their positions forward in ways that were largely expected. The motion and my Greens colleagues have set out very clearly the evidence-based reasons why the motion makes sense from environmental, health and business perspectives. The Hon. Scott Farlow did include a lot of misinformation in his contribution. He used a lot of gas industry talking points. He does not actually need gas for a charcoal grill. That was a major flaw in his contribution. He might want to look at that. He may need to work on his barbequing. I did like his comment that the Labor Government is walking both sides of the street in its response. That is spot on.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe has moved an amendment to the motion to acknowledge the Government's support for and commitment to electrification. But when it comes to actually banning gas in new builds, there is no commitment. Government members put forward a bunch of interesting reasons in their contributions. They said The Greens want to go too fast. They said Labor has a clear pathway, but apparently it takes longer. The Greens members never said anything about timing in our contributions. We talked about making the commitment. Anyone who knows anything about business—and I absolutely acknowledge the comments made about how difficult it is to find some of the services in some parts of the State—knows that business likes certainty. We cannot deal with the issue without certainty.

I acknowledge the comments made by the Hon. Cameron Murphy. It is difficult to replace gas with electricity. That is why new builds should be built without it. It is inevitable that it will happen anyway. That is why we need to do it. There was a lot of talk about choice. That is lovely for developers. That is lovely for homeowners. But a great many people do not have a choice. Renters are taking whatever they can. The idea that they will be sentenced to live in houses where there are high risks of asthma and everything else, and where electricity is more expensive, is not about choice. When we had CFCs in refrigerators, no-one talked about choice. We got rid of the CFCs because it made sense. Gas is no different, but the gas industry is much, much stronger. *[Time expired.]*

The PRESIDENT: Ms Abigail Boyd has moved a motion, to which the Hon. Penny Sharpe has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes15
Noes23
Majority.....8

AYES

D'Adam
Donnelly
Graham
Houssos
Jackson

Kaine
Latham
Lawrence
Mookhey
Moriarty

Murphy (teller)
Nanva (teller)
Primrose
Sharpe
Suvaal

NOES

Barrett
Boyd
Buckingham
Carter
Cohn
Faehrmann
Fang (teller)
Farlow

Higginson
Hurst
MacDonald
Maclaren-Jones
Martin
Merton
Mihailuk
Mitchell

Munro
Overall
Rath (teller)
Roberts
Ruddick
Tudehope
Ward

Amendment negated.

The PRESIDENT: The question now is that the motion be agreed to. Is leave granted to ring the bells for one minute?

Leave not granted.

The House divided.

Ayes6
Noes33
Majority.....27

AYES

Boyd (teller)
Buckingham

Cohn
Faehrmann (teller)

Higginson
Hurst

NOES

Barrett	Latham	Murphy
Buttigieg	Lawrence	Nanva (teller)
Carter	MacDonald	Overall
D'Adam	Maclaren-Jones	Primrose
Donnelly	Martin	Rath (teller)
Fang	Merton	Roberts
Farlow	Mihailuk	Ruddick
Graham	Mitchell	Sharpe
Houssos	Mookhey	Suvaal
Jackson	Moriarty	Tudehope
Kaine	Munro	Ward

Motion negatived.

*Documents***WORKERS COMPENSATION LEGISLATION****Production of Documents: Further Order**

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (15:31): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) on Wednesday 25 June 2025, this House ordered the production of documents relating to workers compensation legislation;
 - (b) in response to the order on Wednesday 23 July 2025 a return was received from the Cabinet Office which included:
 - (i) certifications from the Treasurer, the Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety, Insurance and Care NSW (icare), the State Insurance Regulatory Authority, the Department of Customer Service, and Treasury that, "to the best of their knowledge and subject to the matters outlined in the letters, all documents held that are covered by the terms of the resolution and lawfully required to be provided have been provided";
 - (ii) a certification that "no documents covered by the terms of the resolution and lawfully required to be provided are held by the Cabinet Office or the Premier's Department"; and
 - (iii) advice that the Premier and the Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice "have been unable to provide a return by the due date, and that returns will be provided as soon as possible and by Tuesday 29 July 2025".
 - (c) in a further response to the order on Friday 25 July 2025, a return was received from the Cabinet Office which included a certification from the Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Youth Justice that "all documents held by the Office of the Hon. Jihad Dib that are covered by the terms of the resolution and are lawfully required to be provided have been provided";
 - (d) on Tuesday 29 July 2025, at a hearing held by the Public Accountability and Works Committee for its inquiry into the Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, in response to questions from the Hon. Damien Tudehope regarding certain documents captured by the scope, but not returned to, the order for papers:
 - (i) a witness from State Insurance Regulatory Authority stated: "they are advice for a decision of the Government and are protected by the Cabinet-in-confidence provisions"; and
 - (ii) a witness from Insurance and Care NSW (icare) stated: "It was a document provided for the purpose of policy, so I would assume" it was a document provided to Cabinet.
 - (e) in a further response to the order on Tuesday 5 August 2025, a return was received from the Cabinet Office which included a certification from the Premier that "all documents that are held and covered by the terms of the resolution and lawfully required to be provided have been provided".
- (2) That this House:
 - (a) rejects the definition of Cabinet documents expressed by witnesses during the hearing held by the Public Accountability and Works Committee for its inquiry into the Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, which even exceeds the definition of Cabinet documents used in the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 and, if followed, may lead to a much broader class of documents being withheld from this House;
 - (b) notes that the true principle from *Egan v Chadwick* concerning the power of the House to order the production of Cabinet documents is, at a minimum, that articulated by Spigelman, CJ, who held that "a distinction has been made between documents which disclose the actual deliberations within Cabinet and documents in the nature of reports or submissions prepared for the assistance of Cabinet";

- (c) reasserts its power to order the production of all documents in the possession, custody or control of the Executive Government with the exception of those documents that reveal the actual deliberations of Cabinet, as articulated by Spigelman, CJ, in *Egan v Chadwick*; and
 - (d) reminds the Leader of the Government that, as the representative of the Government in this House, they are responsible for compliance with orders for papers passed by the Legislative Council.
- (3) That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within seven days of the date of passing of this resolution the following documents, excluding any documents previously returned under an order of the House, created between 25 March 2023 and Wednesday 25 June 2025 in the possession, custody or control of the Premier, the Treasurer, the Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice, the Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety, the Premier's Department, the Cabinet Office, Treasury, the Department of Customer Service, Insurance and Care NSW (icare) or the State Insurance Regulatory Authority relating to workers compensation legislation:
- (a) all documents relating to actuarial modelling and assumptions regarding changes to the Workers Compensation Act 1987 or the Workplace Injury Management and Workers Compensation Act 1998;
 - (b) all documents relating to drafting instructions for the exposure draft of the Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025;
 - (c) all documents relating to drafting instructions for the Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025;
 - (d) all versions of the Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025;
 - (e) all documents relating to proposed amendments to the Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, including all costings, briefings, modelling, or advice;
 - (f) all documents relating to premium filings for the Nominal Insurer;
 - (g) all documents relating to the Nominal Insurer valuation;
 - (h) all documents relating to the expansion of schedule 4 of the Workers Compensation Act 1987;
 - (i) all documents relating to consultation regarding changes to workers compensation;
 - (j) all contracts relating to claims service providers;
 - (k) all correspondence sent between the Premier and the Treasurer, including between their offices, relating to workers compensation;
 - (l) all correspondence sent to or received from a trade union relating to workers compensation reform; and
 - (m) any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.

The rationale for this motion is clearly set out. The motion describes evidence given before the parliamentary Public Accountability and Works Committee that inquired into the Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. During the course of the hearing, evidence was given by various witnesses. I refer specifically to two witnesses: namely Mr Dai Liu, who gave evidence on behalf of Insurance and Care NSW [icare], and Ms Mandy Young, who gave evidence on behalf of the State Insurance Regulatory Authority [SIRA]. I will relate some of the exchanges which took place in relation to the documents which have been provided. The transcript reads:

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: What was the advice being given or the modelling that you were being asked to do before that date?

DAI LIU: We looked at the various cost drivers in workers compensation, so both the increasing volumes of psychological claims as well as the threshold erosion. There was scenario analysis done around what the threshold could be, but there was a wide range that was done, so there was not a specific threshold.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: So there were various models put to the Government over that period of time?

DAI LIU: I wouldn't say models; they were more just scenario analysis around the cost pressures and where the costs were coming from.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: And that was written advice, was it?

DAI LIU: There were briefings.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Briefing notes?

DAI LIU: There were briefings—presentations.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: That you provided to the Government. So if there were documents produced pursuant to a Standing Order 52, I should expect to find all those documents, should I not?

DAI LIU: I can't answer that question.

I asked Mr Tony Wessling, the CEO at icare, the same question, and he could not answer that question. I asked questions about modelling that had been done in relation to presumptive cancers for firefighters and a few versions around the costings of presumptions for firefighters. The transcript reads:

DAI LIU: We've done a few versions around the costing of presumptive firefighters—so in terms of costing advice.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: You've done some work in relation to that?

DAI LIU: Yes.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Again, if you've done work in relation to that, are there any documents that you've produced in response to the Standing Order 52 for the production of documents relating to presumptive cancers for firefighters?

DAI LIU: We've done a search but, again, I'm not in a position to answer in terms of which bits of information it is.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: When you said you did a search—

DAI LIU: As per required—

The exchange continues. It is clear that a significant amount of work had been done by either Mr Liu or Ms Young on behalf of SIRA to produce documents. If we go to documents that were to be produced by both of those organisations in response to the order pursuant to Standing Order 52, there are none. In evidence given by Ms Mandy Young, she speculates that they are policy documents and therefore qualified as Cabinet in confidence. This appears to be a new level of arrogance on behalf of this Government. Transparency is being absolutely trashed by the manner in which the Government seeks to operate. I refer the Government—and I am sure most Government members would know of this, because when they were in opposition they quoted this material to us on a regular basis—to the judgement of His Honour Mr Justice Spigelman in *Egan v Chadwick*, about which Harry Evans wrote:

Spigelman CJ stated the question before the court:

Is it reasonably necessary for the proper exercise of the functions of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, for its power to require production of documents to extend to documents which, at common law, would be protected from disclosure on the grounds of legal professional privilege or public interest immunity?

The Chief Justice, with whom Meagher JA agreed, answered this question in the affirmative. To restrict the powers of the council in the manner suggested by Mr Egan would be an intrusion of the court into matters which should be determined by the legislature itself. Having regard to the principle that ministers are responsible to the council, access to legal advice provided to government is reasonably necessary for the council to perform its functions, and it is for the council to weigh any claim of public interest immunity.

The judgement went on to give an exception in relation to Cabinet-in-confidence documents, in relation to which Priestley JA made an observation.

I seek an extension of time.

Leave granted.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Priestley JA assessed the contention that documents which were so-called "Cabinet-in-confidence" may also be excluded. His Honour said that there were documents that were wheeled into Cabinet and therefore sought to invoke the privilege attached to them by so-called Cabinet-in-confidence. Priestley JA made this observation, as Harry Evans' article continues:

Every act of the Executive in carrying out its functions is paid for by public money. Every document for which the Executive claims legal professional privilege or public interest immunity must have come into existence through an outlay of public money, and for public purposes.

Just as the courts examine documents for which protection is claimed to determine where the balance of public interest lies, so must the Legislative Council have this capacity. Cabinet documents yield to the principle of government accountability, of which he made a ringing declaration:

.... notwithstanding the great respect that must be paid to such incidents of responsible government as cabinet confidentiality and collective responsibility, no *legal right* to *absolute* secrecy is given to any group of men and women in government, the possibility of accountability can never be kept out of mind, and this can only be to the benefit of the people of a truly representative democracy.

Harry Evans, who most members would know, makes a scathing assessment of Mr Egan's action. While he makes the observation in respect of Mr Egan, who was the Treasurer at that time, it is possible that the current Treasurer and the current Government are seeking to outdo Mr Egan in terms of ensuring that documents are never produced. He makes this assessment:

It may be too much to ask that no minister will henceforth be arrogant, but the judgement of the court struck a significant blow for accountability of the executive to parliament.

Mr Egan spent \$2 million on that case. I can assure members that those of us on this side of the House will pursue these documents.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (15:39): On behalf of The Greens, I indicate that we will support the motion. I declare myself perplexed by a pattern we are seeing from this Labor Government. It is not just a lack of transparency and accountability. Putting it all together, it is an attack on democracy. The Premier continuously

tries to ram things through in a way that gets around the rules of the upper House and the proper democratic functioning of the institutions that have served this jurisdiction for so many decades—for hundreds of years.

I do not understand why this Government has not changed its tack. It is not getting anywhere by continuing to disrespect the upper House. It is not getting anywhere by continuing to refuse to negotiate with us and instead using the media—and now the government departments and people in the public sector—to try to stymie the democratic process. That is not the Labor Party I thought I knew when its members were in opposition. It seems not to be interested in being honest with the public, the media or the House, and this is just another example. I almost fell off my chair when the witnesses from icare and the State Insurance Regulatory Authority said that they had not provided documents in response to the order for papers because they could be Cabinet in confidence. That is not how it works.

In the last term of Parliament, I remember sitting in the Clerk's office and looking through privileged documents that were Cabinet in confidence. We got the documents. We might have had to fight to get them released and challenge that privilege, but to not even produce them because they might be Cabinet in confidence just shows disrespect to the House. We see it over and over. I say again to Labor members that they need to move from merely playing student politics to actually being the custodians of a government. It is not their plaything to play political games with. Until they change the way they are doing things, we will continue to oppose them and stand up for accountability, transparency and democracy. So I plead with them to change the way they are doing things.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (15:42): I agree with Ms Abigail Boyd and the Leader of the Opposition that this Government is seeking to destroy the Legislative Council's powers of accountability. Governance is now conducted largely on the Signal app, and matters that are non-Cabinet are being falsely reclassified to go to Cabinet to protect them from orders for papers under Standing Order 52. I cannot access the documents for statutory appointments to the board of Racing NSW because a Minister, who would normally just make those appointments on the recommendation of a selection panel, has sent them to Cabinet to hide them. I assume that the tail end of every Minns Cabinet meeting now has a list of box-ticking items that really do not need to go to Cabinet but go there to avoid the Standing Order 52 powers of the upper House.

The Deputy President knows about the attack on our powers from the caravan inquiry and the absurd, off-the-planet attempt to use the privileges of the other place to say that staff of the Executive Government would not appear before our committees. It takes a bit to suck me in these days, after all these years in politics, but I did get a bit sucked in by the rhetoric of the Labor Party in the last term that this Government would be an improvement on the last. In terms of accountability to this House, the last Government was probably a six out of 10; the Minns Government is minus five. Those things are horrendous to our role and our institution as an upper House. We hear a lot about respect for the upper House and its powers, but no government in anyone's living memory has sought to subvert what we do here on the scale of the Minns Government.

Ms Abigail Boyd asked why it is happening. It is because Chris Minns is not just a pretty face; he is a cold, calculating political strategist—a machine man from Sussex Street. He has locked up six teals in the other place, whipped in by Alex Greenwich. We saw that in the budget in the funding that went to the northern beaches rather than Western Sydney. We saw the bills to buy the support of the three former Shooters. If Labor can wage enough of a war on The Greens—and perhaps it is encouraged by the last Federal election result—it is hoping to pick up Balmain and Newtown. That is a bloc of 11 votes, compared with what we have now. If Minns was to lose five, six or even seven electorates at the next election, he could still form a minority government.

That is his strategy in the other place, which one would have to say is clever enough for a machine man. There is just one problem: There are no former Shooters or teals in this place. So his tactic is to subvert our powers at every turn like some Third World dictator, thinking he can get away with it, to perform the political miracle of uniting me with The Greens on matters of integrity and accountability, and for us to fight tooth and nail for this institution. In some cases—three that I know of—legislation is being traded away to get some crossbench votes. But most non-Government members in this Chamber stand united to fight that tyranny—to fight the attempt to destroy the powers of the Legislative Council. This motion is one example of dozens where this is happening. This Premier is a disgrace.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (15:45): I support the motion moved by the Hon. Damien Tudehope regarding the designation of certain documents pertinent to the Public Accountability and Works Committee's inquiry into the Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 as Cabinet in confidence. The motion outlines that the House originally ordered the production of particular documents relating to workers compensation legislation. As paragraph (1) outlines, various agencies and Ministers—including the Cabinet Office, the Treasurer, the Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety, icare, the State Insurance Regulatory Authority [SIRA] and the Department of Customer Service—refused to provide

documents to an order for papers made by this House under Standing Order 52 relating to the operation of the workers compensation scheme.

I particularly note paragraph (1) (d) of the motion, which refers to the excellent witness examination by the Hon. Damien Tudehope during the Public Accountability and Works Committee inquiry on 29 July. The newly minted CEO of SIRA, Mandy Young, refused to provide evidence to the committee about advice provided by SIRA to the Government about increasing our whole person impairment threshold to 31 per cent, on the basis that such advice was Cabinet in confidence. According to the transcript, Ms Young said the documents "are advice for a decision of government and are protected by the Cabinet-in-confidence provisions".

In my view, that is a gross misunderstanding of the principle of Cabinet in confidence, which has in turn prevented the committee from viewing potentially important information relating to the inquiry. Some members might not be on the committee, but I make very clear to the Government that we are watching the inquiry. I watched the proceedings. It is important to many of us to see what the stakeholders have to say and what information is being provided to committee members because we will have to make a very significant decision. I think the Treasurer knows that to date I have been relatively sympathetic to the Government position and I have my own concerns about the workers compensation scheme, but I want information.

I do not think information should be withheld, and I am tired of seeing this Government constantly hide behind Cabinet in confidence and the stamp of "privileged" on every single document produced under Standing Order 52. It has to stop. When I was part of the Opposition, we demanded that the then Liberal Government be more accountable and transparent. We were always angry that it hid behind Cabinet in confidence and privileged documents. I support the Hon. Damien Tudehope's motion. He is right to ask in paragraph (3) that the documents become available in the next seven days. The documents are there and the public deserves to see them.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (15:48): The Government opposes the motion. I have listened very respectfully to the contributions of the members, and I will set out a few facts. I heard one member say that no documents were produced; I think it was the shadow Treasurer. That is not true. Icare has produced two boxes and the State Insurance Regulatory Authority has produced two boxes. In fact, the total production easily exceeded 700-odd pages, and that is public. There is no privilege claim on them. I read them and I am sure the shadow Treasurer has, so I point out that first fact.

The second fact, which eluded all discussion—particularly when the Government was being accused of wanting to squash transparency—is that it voluntarily produced 1,500 pages to the inquiry. That was voluntary, without a Standing Order 52 motion. The scenario modelling that has been called for was provided—dare I say, at record pace and at request. Not only did we do that, but we also provided private and public briefings and acceded to the request of the shadow Treasurer and the Hon. Mark Latham to model their amendments. When I was on that side of the Chamber, not once did I receive not only an offer to model amendments, but also an agreement to do so. That is what we did, and we kept our word to support the second inquiry in its deliberations.

To the extent to which members say that there is an effort from the Government to hide information about a contentious change, that is just not true. In addition, we have made witnesses available at all times. I have appeared before the inquiry multiple times. That is the Government respecting the powers and the will of the House. We have carried that forward with respect to this motion as well. The Government has complied with its obligations when it comes to this order for the production of documents, as it should. There is no dispute about that. The Government respects the power of the House.

However, I note that the shadow Treasurer vehemently quoted the judgement of Justice Priestley. I found that telling. I recall that when the shadow Treasurer was on this side of the Chamber, he went completely the other way. The biggest defender of Cabinet-in-confidence privilege in this House is the shadow Treasurer. Members can read the record. He was the biggest defender of the same definition we use. It is the exact same definition that he used. I know that because I spent more time challenging it than anyone. I accept the fact that the Hon. Damien Tudehope has a different role right now. However, the Government is using the same definition of Cabinet documents that he did in respect to the icare productions and all the other productions of documents. There has been no change in attitude whatsoever. I respect the fact that people want to see these documents. The Government has assisted the House immensely when it comes to the workers compensation changes that have been proposed.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (15:51): I contribute to debate on the motion. The Government opposes the motion, as the Treasurer has just indicated. It is a further order seeking documents that were previously sought in relation to workers compensation legislation. I will set out some of the relevant history of this legislation. The Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 was introduced on 27 May 2025 in the other place by the Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety, the Hon. Sophie Cotsis. It was passed in the other place with amendments on 3 June 2025. On 4 June 2025 the bill was introduced into this House

by the Treasurer. After the initial Standing Committee on Law and Justice inquiry, the bill was referred to the Public Accountability and Works Committee for inquiry and report, including the examination of the—

Ms Abigail Boyd: Point of order: I hate to do this, but I do not see how this is relevant to the motion. Could the member perhaps make that clear?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): Far be it from me to tell the Hon. Stephen Lawrence what to say, but I draw him back to the motion before the House.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I will certainly do that. I note the urgency mentioned by the Treasurer, and also emphasise the urgent need to reform the workers compensation system. Every day that the bill remains without resolution in the committee is another day that we have less and less clarity for workers and employers. That ongoing uncertainty on policies—

Ms Abigail Boyd: Point of order—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): Ms Abigail Boyd has risen on a point of order. I can guess what it is.

Ms Abigail Boyd: I have sympathy for the member. I know that he is just reading his notes, but this is not related at all. It seems to be an opportunity to put forward Government talking points.

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: To the point of order: The member is entitled to give his reasons for why he does not think the order for papers is necessary. He is doing so by making the point about the urgency of the bill. It is that straightforward.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: To the point of order: In the next paragraph I was getting to something that I think will make clear the relevance of what I was saying.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): Let us get to the relevant bit. The Hon. Stephen Lawrence is running out of time.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I confirm that the Government has made significant resources available to the Public Accountability and Works Committee. It has made public thousands of pages of documents, including at least 3,500 pages of non-privileged material for the member's original Standing Order 52 motion. That is, I submit, a reason to reject this motion. There have been private and public hearings where the same witnesses are dragged back in for another day of hearings to go over the same material and, in some cases, provide the exact same answers. All of that is only for the purpose of delaying this House from debating and voting on the Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill. I commend the Government for its constructive consultation and engagement with members and stakeholders. I note that the lack of certainty or progress has led to a second bill being introduced in the other place.

The Hon. BOB NANVA (15:54): The Treasurer referred to a number of positions that the Hon. Damien Tudehope has taken in the past. I will come to some of those contributions in years of old. I do so not with a view to criticising the mover of the motion, but actually with respect to the mover, because he is one of the most experienced people in this place and has accumulated a lot of wisdom. He is someone who has seen it all in his very long and distinguished career as a very senior Minister in a long-term government. I assume the Treasurer is referring to some contributions from the Hon. Damien Tudehope in the past, such as when he said:

The extent of this Standing Order 52 request for papers is so wide, so vast and so incomprehensible in many respects that it should be rejected on the basis that it does not serve the House well.

He also pointed out:

The documents provided by the Department ... in response to a resolution under Standing Order 52 are only those that may lawfully be required by the resolution. This excludes Cabinet documents which ... cannot be compelled by the House.

I am only a mere newcomer to this place. I am not going to quarrel with the respective positions of the Hon. Damien Tudehope and the Treasurer.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Don't, then.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: I am not going to quarrel, but I will emphasise the point that the Treasurer has made: Those were the positions of the Hon. Damien Tudehope only a matter of years ago, and we have suddenly seen a complete reversal now that the current Treasurer is applying the same principle. I am not going to get into a debate around the Cabinet-in-confidence nature of these documents. I am a mere newcomer; I am not going to debate the point.

However, I make the point that irrespective of all of that, the Government has made significant resources available for the purposes of this bill. It has made resources available to the Public Accountability and Works

Committee. It has made public thousands of pages of documents, including at least 3,500 pages of non-privileged material for the member's original Standing Order 52 motion. The member has been provided with vast amounts of material, including material—we can all go back to the McDougall review, the Dore review, the Auditor-General's review from 2024. There is a significant amount of information available for the Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill. The problem with the workers compensation system is not the lack of information that is publicly available.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): Order!

The Hon. BOB NANVA: As I was saying, the problem with the workers compensation system is not the lack of information that is currently available to form a proper, considered view on what we should do; the problem is the fact that the scheme is on its financial knees. It is financially unsustainable. That is not a factor of a lack of information; it is a factor of a lack of will.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (15:58): I speak to oppose this motion. It is a further order seeking documents which, as other members have outlined, were previously sought in relation to workers compensation legislation. The Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 was introduced on 27 May 2025 in the other place by the Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety, the Hon. Sophie Cotsis, MP. It was passed in the other place with amendments on 3 June 2025. On 4 June 2025 the bill—

Ms Abigail Boyd: Point of order—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): Ms Abigail Boyd has risen on a point of order. What could it be?

Ms Abigail Boyd: As much as I love to hear about the Government's continual failures with its three versions of a bill in three months, it is not actually relevant to the motion.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: To the point of order: I am speaking about the Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill that is in the SO 52 motion which, I will note, goes over some two pages; it is quite lengthy. It canvasses the Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill. It is mentioned throughout the motion. I am merely providing some important context that members ought to consider when we are debating and voting on this important motion.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: To the point of order: While I accept the argument being put by the Hon. Emily Suvaal, reiterating the introduction of legislation does not go to addressing the power of this House to request documents from the Executive Government. The assertion is that the documents have not been produced. The Hon. Emily Suvaal should address the non-production of documents and not the history of the legislation.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): I uphold the point of order. I ask the Hon. Emily Suvaal to direct her contribution to the motion before the House, which is the SO 52 relating to the production of documents.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Given the amount of time that was taken up with the point of order, I seek an extension of time.

Leave not granted.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: That is the will of the House. As a member of the committee that was mentioned, I note the urgency that was mentioned by the Treasurer. I also emphasise to this House the urgent need to reform the New South Wales workers compensation system. Every day that that bill remains without resolution in that committee is another day—*[Time expired.]*

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (16:01): In reply: I thank all members who made contributions to debate on this motion. As I indicated in my point of order, this is a motion relating to the non-production of documents pursuant to Standing Order 52. It is patently clear from the evidence given by Mr Liu and Ms Young that documents were not produced, and they were taken as not being produced because of "Cabinet in confidence". The Treasurer asserted in his contribution to the House today that the Government's definition of Cabinet in confidence is not the same definition adopted by the previous Government.

To assert otherwise is factually wrong. The manner in which it was described by Ms Young was that policy documents now comprise Cabinet-in-confidence documents, not deliberations of the Cabinet—which was previously the manner in which documents were assessed as being Cabinet in confidence—but documents which comprise policy formulations, modelling and correspondence relating to policy. All of that appears to now be within the definition of Cabinet in confidence. The position adopted by the previous Government never came within a bull's roar of that definition for the purposes of hiding documents from the House.

The Treasurer hangs himself in relation to this matter because he says, "There is a new test. If I give you documents, I don't have to comply with my obligations pursuant to SO 52." It is news time for the Treasurer: Standing Order 52 is an order of this House. Notwithstanding the new world order that he is trying to impose upon transparency—"I will give you documents; therefore, I have fulfilled my obligations"—when the House passes an order pursuant to Standing Order 52, it becomes an obligation of the Government to comply with that order.

It is not at his discretion to say, "I've been a good bloke. I've made myself available. I've given you documents voluntarily." Let me tell members about some of the documents the Government has given us pursuant to this Standing Order 52. It gave us three copies of a 100-page public document on NDIS and Aboriginal people, which had nothing to do with the order. They were in the boxes of documents provided, and they had nothing to do with the order. Yet none of the relevant documents—and I go back to presumptive cancers—have in fact been produced as a result of that order. I urge the House to request the further production of documents in accordance with the motion.

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

The House divided.

Ayes23
Noes16
Majority.....7

AYES

Barrett	Higginson	Mitchell
Boyd	Hurst	Munro
Buckingham	Latham	Overall
Carter	MacDonald	Rath (teller)
Cohn	Maclaren-Jones	Roberts
Faehrmann	Martin	Tudehope
Fang (teller)	Merton	Ward
Farlow	Mihailuk	

NOES

Buttigieg	Kaine	Nanva (teller)
D'Adam	Lawrence	Primrose
Donnelly	Mookhey	Ruddick
Graham	Moriarty	Sharpe
Houssos	Murphy (teller)	Suvaal
Jackson		

Motion agreed to.

JAMIE CLEMENTS

Production of Documents: Order

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (16:11): I move:

That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 21 days of the date of passing of this resolution the following documents created since 1 June 2015 in the possession, custody or control of the Premier, the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, the Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, Minister for Sport and Minister for Jobs and Tourism, the Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health and Minister for Youth or the NSW Police Force relating to an incident at NSW Parliament House:

- (a) all documents in the possession, custody or control of the NSW Police Force relating to the investigation of sexual harassment and sexual assault of Stefanie Jones by Jamie Clements in the office of the member for Campbelltown at New South Wales Parliament House on 25 June 2015;
- (b) all documents in the possession, custody or control of the Premier or any Minister concerning their involvement in relation to the incident in the office of the member for Campbelltown at New South Wales Parliament House on 25 June 2015, including all communication with Mr Clements, Australian Labor Party officials, trade union officials, media, the NSW Police Force or other members of Parliament; and
- (c) any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.

This is an incredibly serious matter for which the upper House needs to hold the Labor Party to account. A decade of denial is long enough. The culprits have climbed the greasy pole, and some of them have convenient memory

loss. The victims have lost that great working-class dream of serving the cause of Labor as it is properly understood. I can imagine how their sense of injustice, on this and other fronts, is very real. This matter should not be closed off because the slut-shamers, intimidators and perverters of justice thought they had got away with it.

This House needs to examine the police file to consider the key outstanding issues. Greg Warren made what he called a "personal diarised note" on 25 June 2015. Was this ever made available to the police? After the member for Campbelltown met with the member for Rockdale at the Art Gallery of NSW, what statement did he provide to the New South Wales police? Were the police aware that both the member for Kogarah and the member for Rockdale were suspended from the other place at 3.09 p.m. on 25 June? Did Mr Kamper give a statement to the police?

Did Jamie Clements meet with the member for Kogarah on both sides of the Clements assault, and did he fully disclose to the member for Kogarah what he must have known from these meetings? They are godfathers to each other's children. Was the now Premier compromised in telling the truth about Jamie Clements because of cash washing by Labor head office during Minns' campaign for Kogarah in March 2015, which started at a Chinese engagement dinner at the Sunny Seafood Restaurant in September—

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Point of order: This Standing Order 52 motion relates to a very particular matter. The issues that the member is traversing, and which he has traversed several times today, are not subject to this motion and are out of order. Mr Deputy President, I ask that you direct the member to speak within the motion.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: To the point of order: In explaining the need for the call for papers in a matter like this, it is legitimate to ask the questions outstanding that, hopefully, will be answered when the papers are returned. These are the key outstanding matters. Some of the matters were public knowledge prior to this week; others I have added to the public knowledge from information that has become available to me. As I told the House, in most cases this is reflected in police records, but there is still other material that may be relevant. The assault that we are talking about is an indictable offence. There is no statute of limitations; the investigation might be reopened as a result of the House's inquiry. These are important matters. In this Chamber, we hear so much about respect for women, the Broderick report and the agenda of encouraging women to participate in politics. This young Labor woman was assaulted in a Labor office in this Parliament.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): I have heard enough. This is very similar to my ruling in the previous debate. I draw the member's attention to his motion and ask him to address his comments to it.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: There are many other unknowns that need to be answered, which is why the papers need to be returned. We need to examine the police file. There may be a case for reopening the investigation. Let us examine the documents from this shameful episode in Labor Party history. Sadly, the culprits have climbed the greasy pole of politics and others have had convenient memory loss. The victims in this matter have lost a lot more than just their work and career. They have lost peace of mind and have suffered an agonising decade of regret about what was done on 25 June 2015. It is time to return agency to those who lost it 10 years ago. Agency was ripped from them along with their career and peace of mind. It was ripped away by the thugs and predators of the Chris Minns Labor Party.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (16:16): I speak on behalf of the Government on this motion in my capacity representing the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism in this place. The Government does not oppose this motion. However, the Government does not believe it is appropriate for any member of the House to have access to sensitive investigative documents. In particular, the Government thinks it is wholly inappropriate for members of this place to have access to documents related to individual matters when the complainant or victim has in no way consented to the release of that information.

Privacy and confidentiality are of the highest importance to the New South Wales police. I am advised that the NSW Police Force is committed to responsibly and properly managing the personal and health information it collects, including protecting the privacy of members of the public and staff members. As stated in the *NSW Police Force Privacy Management Plan*:

NSWPF will not disclose personal and health information, unless the person has consented to the disclosure, or the law permits or requires us to disclose the information.

It is only logical that members of the public who seek assistance from the police can be assured that their personal information is kept secure and only released when absolutely necessary. The Government will not oppose the motion, but I urge the House to consider my comments.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (16:17): The Greens support justice and accountability for women who allege sexual assault. We respect and expect the need for informed consent to be present when discussing such experiences. The fact is that these discussions can be triggering and cause harm, and those involved must have agency. I stand here as a woman with the confidence I require to make this short contribution on The Greens' position in support of this motion. It is clear that the New South Wales Labor Party has failed women. That failure has seriously harmed, personally and professionally, the person named in this motion.

This call for papers will bring forward documents from the relevant Ministers and the police that go to that failure and harm. The information that is being sought will not be made public. I accept the allegations made about the sexual assault by Mr Clements that occurred in the office of the member for Campbelltown in 2015. There is a serious question about the actions of the Premier in relation to what occurred. Jamie Clements has close ties with the Premier and his direct family. Premier Chris Minns describes Mr Clements as his "great friend". In 2021 a staffer from the office of the then Deputy Opposition Leader, Yasmin Catley, distributed a dossier titled, "Why Chris Minns and Jamie Clements can never run the NSW Labor Party." If Labor's staffers believed in 2021—

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Point of order: I have listened carefully. I believe that the member is straying from the contents of the motion. Ms Sue Higginson has made her position very clear. Using this motion to put other allegations on the record is thoroughly out of order.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: To the point of order: This material is already in the public arena and goes to why The Greens support this call for papers. In my submission it is directly relevant.

The Hon. Mark Latham: To the point of order: It is a bit like the Mad Hatter's tea party, is it not, for the leader of the Labor Party in this Chamber to say that the views of the Labor police Minister should not be known to the Chamber? I know there are two sides of this coin inside the Australian Labor Party. I know that in detail. But we now have an absurd situation where the leader of the Labor Party in this place has taken a point of order to say that the Labor police Minister's views in a document she publicised—that caused the resignation from the frontbench of the Hon. Walt Secord—about Chris Minns and others should not be mentioned in this Chamber. The proposition is absurd.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): I note Ms Sue Higginson has little time left. I ask the member to return to the motion before the House.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I seek an extension of time—one more minute.

Leave not granted.

The Hon. WES FANG (16:21): We have just seen Labor members shut down an upstanding member of this House who wanted to have her say. That type of behaviour is the very reason why the Opposition will support the motion under Standing Order 52. The Labor Party uses rhetoric which is not supported by its actions—like the actions that may or may not have occurred 10 years ago, and as we saw just now when Labor members denied Ms Sue Higginson the opportunity to make a further contribution to this debate. The Opposition supports the motion because we want to ensure that there is transparency and accountability in this Parliament, now and in relation to past actions.

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN (16:22): I was not going to contribute to this debate, but Ms Sue Higginson mentioned the word "triggering" in her contribution. These matters are very triggering for me. Members know that before coming to this place I worked for a Federal member of Parliament. I was treated very poorly by that MP when I worked in their electorate office, in their office at Parliament House in Canberra, and in other places. It took a long time for me to complain about their behaviour. I was told that senior people in the Liberal Party would have to become involved. I did not want it to become a political process.

I complained to the Liberal Party. Instead of investigating my complaint, I was set up and I was looked into. Now I sit over there in the corner, and I am not able to do the same job. When we try to hold powerful people or the friends of powerful people to account, there is a lot of trouble. That is especially the case for the people that we are talking about now. I support the motion. I know that many people have a very similar story about their early days working either in this place or the place in Canberra, or anywhere else for a political party. People have been used, abused and thrown to the side. I thank the Hon. Mark Latham for moving the motion and I thank those members from this side of the Chamber who have made contributions in support of it.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (16:23): I will continue on from Ms Sue Higginson's contribution as to why The Greens support the motion and put on record relevant information, with consent. The Labor Government should be doing that, instead of using people for its own political purposes without their consent. I now have personal experience of that. If Labor's staffers believed in 2021 that Mr Minns and Mr Clements would be running the NSW Labor Party, the question stands in 2025 what role, if any, Mr Clements had in running the New South

Wales Government. It is important that we examine the extent to which an alleged perpetrator of sexual assault, who was never properly investigated within the NSW Labor Party, still has influence through members of executive government. There are serious questions with regard to the treatment of the woman named in the motion. That person told *The Daily Telegraph*:

There's such a lack of support ... as long as the party has people like (that in it), the filth ... the continuation of disgusting treatment of women will continue.

...

I would say, if you're a woman in the Labor Party, be careful. It's heartbreaking when you come forward; when you're the person who has not done anything wrong and you have people openly calling you a 'slut' ...

The woman impacted never received the justice she deserved. The perpetrator and people involved—powerful people—have never been held to account. Imagine how she must feel, knowing that the people who could have and should have helped did not, and then went on to become some of the most powerful and arguably successful people in the State, while she was denied justice. This motion could assist in accessing justice and accountability for someone who was seriously harmed by people thrusting with ambition for power. This should be a story about a woman who was failed by the institution that is the NSW Labor Party. It should not be a story about the member who moved the call for papers.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (16:25): I do not oppose the motion, for reasons that have already been well ventilated. But I raise an issue that should be of concern to the House regarding the process and the standing orders under which this information is sought. The House is considering a motion under Standing Order 52 that will require the NSW Police Force to produce documents. I have spoken to the Hon. Mark Latham about this. His advice from the Clerks was that he could move this motion under Standing Order 52. This is tangential, but it is very important. I have sought to move a motion in this House for the production of documents by the police relating to another matter. I was told that I could not do it under Standing Order 52. I was told that I had to present a request to the Governor under paragraph (c) of Standing Order 55 because the documents relate to the administration of justice.

I was seeking the police files relating to Ivan Milat. The written advice I received was that I could not seek them under Standing Order 52. I was very surprised when I read this motion, because the Hon. Mark Latham is doing just that. He is seeking the production of police files using Standing Order 52. I moved a motion under Standing Order 55. The House passed that motion, but then the Executive Council advised the Governor not to agree to it. We are considering a motion under Standing Order 52 that documents be produced by the NSW Police Force. If I am able to seek the production of police documents under Standing Order 52, without needing the agreement of the Governor, then I will do so. But I have written advice that I was not able to do that. The case is not currently before the courts. I wanted to bring that to the attention of members. I indicate that I will renew my request to this House for the production of police files relating to Ivan Milat under Standing Order 52.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (16:27): I make a very short contribution to debate on the motion. I do not seek to deal with the many allegations that have been raised. I simply want to make a couple of points. I do not presume to speak on anyone else's behalf or to express any view other my own. First, we have to be very careful in relation to this kind of motion. As I have indicated, the Government is not opposing the motion. But over a long period of time, we worked through the Broderick report, the establishment of the Independent Complaints Officer and the very deliberate exclusion of Standing Order 52 motions relating to workplace complaints. We need to note that. Secondly, I note what The Greens have said about not allowing this material to be made public. We have serious concerns about that. I ask all members to consider that whatever comes out of here is very sensitive material. I do not know the circumstances in which the information has come forward. I have some views on that, which I will not go into today, other than to say that we should tread very carefully. Members should deal sensitively with these matters.

There has been a lot of water under the bridge in these matters, and a lot of people have been hurt. The power of this House is important, but any information that comes forward needs to be dealt with in the most serious manner. If and when the material comes forward, I hope we are not back in this place at some point with some of it having come into the public domain. That is not what a call for papers is for. We were very careful to exclude staff complaints so that a staff member could feel comfortable that, when they make a complaint, it would not subsequently be the subject of a call for papers under Standing Order 52. I understand that that is not the case in this matter, because it predates all of that.

This House has made really serious decisions about the way we protect people impacted by alleged or actual behaviour, and we need to be careful about that. It is important to put that on record. As I said, the Government is not opposing the motion, but it is important that we understand that it deals with serious matters.

A long time has passed, and we need to tread carefully and consider the people who have been impacted. I am not saying for a minute that I am speaking on behalf of any or all of them; I am thinking about staff who could be in a similar position in the future. We need to understand that and be sensitive to it.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (16:30): In reply: I thank each of the speakers in the debate, most particularly The Greens members Ms Sue Higginson and Ms Abigail Boyd. I concur entirely with their comments and observations about consent and agency in this particular question. I also particularly thank the Hon. Taylor Martin, who showed courage in his circumstances to bring forward his own personal experience, which obviously has been traumatising and incredibly difficult.

I note the comments of the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham but draw his attention to the distinction between Standing Order 52 and Standing Order 55. The Clerk's advice to me was that if police investigate a matter but it does not lead to arrest and prosecution, it is still part of executive action, not the administration of justice. If charges have not been laid and the matter has not been taken to the courts as a criminal matter, then Standing Order 52 applies. The problem we had with Ivan Milat was that charges were laid and the man was jailed for a long time—and died in jail—so the call for documents had to be made under Standing Order 55 (c), which relates to the production of documents concerning the administration of justice. That is the distinction between standing orders 52 and 55, and is very clearly articulated—I sat up all night to find it out—on pages 722 to 725 of the second edition of *New South Wales Legislative Council Practice*. It is very clear in the big, fat, red book.

Importantly, I also draw the attention of the House to the fact that in the last Parliament, when some members were not here, two Standing Order 52 motions were agreed to by the Labor Party in opposition, and certainly by crossbench members, regarding matters concerning police files and police material. The first of those was moved by the now Senator David Shoebridge regarding what was thought to be the road rage incident involving then police Minister David Elliott when, I think, he dusted up with someone on the roads of The Hills. The Shoe, of course, was all over it like a rash, and we got the documents. The Labor Party pored over them with the usual forensic integrity and determination of a John Graham, a Daniel Mookhey and probably a Walt Secord at the time.

The second matter was one that I brought to the House, again with support from my friends in the Labor Party, concerning the breach of COVID orders by the then Leader of the Government, the Hon. Don Harwin. The charges were withdrawn, so it came under the remit of Standing Order 52. And again, the forensic team of the Labor Party would have pored over it with their little magnifying glasses up in the Mookhey library. Let's not have any confusion about this because it is not unusual for the House to seek such documents. I am curious as to what Minister Moriarty meant when she said that the police do not provide such material. They have in the past, and they should now.

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

Motion agreed to.

Rulings

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

The PRESIDENT (16:33): During the giving of notices of motions today, the Leader of the Government twice took points of order that a notice of motion being given by the Hon. Mark Latham contained significant argument and untested imputations against others. The Leader of the Government invited me to strike the relevant portions of the notice from the record. I am now in a position to rule on the matter.

As a general proposition, there are few restrictions on the subject matter of notices of motions given by members, aside from the rules of debate which apply generally. Of note, Presidents have routinely ruled that members may direct a charge against another member or reflect on their character or conduct by way of substantive motion, provided it can be the subject of a vote by the House. There are examples where I, as President, and past Presidents have ruled that notices be amended or omitted entirely under Standing Order 75 (9). However, those examples are rare and they have mostly related to breaches of the Constitution, the sub judice convention or comity between the Houses.

Unlike during question time, Presidents have generally not sought to interfere with the content of notices on the basis that they contain argument or imputations. One example occurred in 2018 when President Ajaka ruled that a notice contained an offensive expression and should be amended for going beyond good taste. I have reviewed the notice given by the Hon. Mark Latham. While it certainly makes imputations and reflections, it does not appear to contain words or phrases that are unparliamentary in the specific sense referred to by President Ajaka.

I also make some broader observations before ruling on the matter. First, I note that there is no restriction on the length of notices given in this House. The Procedure Committee has considered the issue repeatedly without ever recommending any restrictions on the current practices of the House. Most Houses in Australia have a 250-word limit on notices, and some limit the number of notices given on any day. However, I do note a ruling of President Ajaka from 2020, in which he observed:

... as a general proposition, I believe that members of the House in drafting the notices of motion should reflect on what is best parliamentary practice. Notices are an opportunity to put a question or proposition to the House, which may be debated and amended before being decided by the House. They are not an opportunity to put voluminous material on the *Notice Paper* except as necessary to facilitate debate and elicit a decision of the House.

The other broader observation I would make is a significant one. Whilst the immunity attaching to speech and debates in the Legislative Council is absolute in the courts, the exercise of free speech by members in this Chamber is still subject to control by the House itself. The House is responsible for regulating members' use of the freedom of speech that they enjoy. The rules of debate are one aspect of that; the sub judice convention is another. But more generally, I note that the Legislative Council has never adopted any further rules or resolutions setting out, amongst other things, the manner in which members are expected to exercise their privilege of freedom of speech. Other parliaments have. The Privileges Committee of the Legislative Council has on many occasions recommended that the House act in that area. Of note, in 1996 the committee recommended adoption of a draft code of conduct for members, which included the following clause relating to the exercise of freedom of speech:

Members should be mindful of the privileges conferred when speaking in the House and should seek to avoid causing undeserved harm to any individual who does not enjoy the same privileges.

As I indicated, the House never acted on that. In the absence of the House having acted, it is very difficult for me as President to take any further action in relation to the spoken words of members in notices. Accordingly, I do not uphold the point of order.

Documents

LOCAL SMALL COMMITMENTS ALLOCATION

Production of Documents: Further Order

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (16:37): I move:

- (1) That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within seven days of the date of passing of this resolution the following documents, excluding any documents previously returned under an order of the House, created since between 1 January 2023 and 31 August 2023 in the possession, custody or control of the Premier, the Special Minister of State, the Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, the Premier's Department or the Cabinet Office relating to the Local Small Commitments Allocation:
 - (a) all versions of document 230728 \$400k local commitments master list, as provided on 30 November 2023 in response to the order for papers regarding local and community grants decisions, including all deleted or archived versions, or versions saved under a different document name;
 - (b) all documents relating to the GIPA TCO A5794143 application made under Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009; and
 - (c) any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.
- (2) That the indexed list of documents returned to this order of the House also include for each document provided under (1) (a) the time of creation, author of the document and the modification date.

The cover up is often worse than the crime. When it comes to the Local Small Commitments Allocation [LSCA], that phrase is beginning to ring true. Never before have I heard of a \$40 million government program implemented entirely at the discretion of a single person's word. But we now know that that is the state of the LSCA program.

Despite all of the procedures, policies and people involved in the administration of the grant scheme, the funding commitments behind the entire program teeter upon Cherie Burton saying, "Trust me. I know you have absolutely no clue where the master list nominating a combined \$37.2 million of taxpayer money came from, but trust me—these are definitely the commitments," and, "I know that the \$400,000 allocated for homelessness services in the Sydney electorate were originally allocated one way, but trust me—I had made a mistake and corrected it, coincidentally after Alex Greenwich had lobbied me to change the funding commitment. Trust me, though, because the new projects were always the original commitment," and, "I know that there was \$400,000 of unallocated LSCA funding for the electorate of Wollondilly in June 2023, but trust me—by 14 July 2023 I alone had somehow worked out the commitments and added seven projects to the master list. On what basis? The trust me basis."

I simply do not believe "trust me" is good enough. Every single expenditure of taxpayer money should be backed by complete transparency, clarity of decision-making and accountability for those decisions. The motion

before members today is simple: The people of New South Wales deserve to know more about the so-called "source of truth" master list document. The master list is the all-powerful spreadsheet wielded by Cherie Burton to determine the projects that were nominated for LSCA funding.

Thus far, we know very little about the master list document. It was given to Cherie Burton—she cannot remember how—by someone she cannot remember from the campaign, at some point during the transition into government, the details of which she cannot remember. The excellent public servants of this State have done what they can to reverse-engineer a probity and conflict of interest process for the LSCA program after the fact. However, the retrofit simply cannot address what is fundamentally unknown: how the master list itself came to its final form. How can the people of New South Wales have confidence that any of these projects were legitimately nominated for funding?

Labor apparatchiks of all varieties have therefore been dragged before an inquiry to explain this point. They have all deflected and denied, no matter the public interest otherwise. I make a point about two particularly egregious examples, Cherie Burton and Paul Mills, both working in the Premier's office, who have set about deliberately misleading the inquiry into the LSCA program. I believe that Ms Burton probably knows when and from whom she received the original master list. She almost certainly knows the author, or at least the most recent editor who modified the document prior to her receipt.

Did Ms Burton knowingly doctor the master list for at least the electorate of Sydney, in accordance with the wishes of the member for Sydney? The evidence we have uncovered through the powers of this House indicate as much. Finally, I believe that both Ms Burton and Mr Mills have been actively involved in obfuscating the process of the parliamentary inquiry into the LSCA by giving misleading evidence to the committee. A number of their responses to questions, both before the inquiry and on notice, have been obvious falsehoods or deliberately partial. The contempt with which the New South Wales Labor Government is treating the New South Wales people is appalling. This is the least transparent government in the history of New South Wales. If the Labor Party will not provide the transparency that is expected of it, and that NSW Labor promised to provide at the last election, then this House is left with no choice but to once again require that the sought information be provided by this order for papers.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (16:42): The Government will not oppose this call for papers. While we do not think it is necessary, it is focused on a couple of documents that are obviously of interest to the Hon. Chris Rath. I reject the broad assertions that the member has made about aspects of the program. He has been proved wrong by the evidence on a host of these allegations previously. The Local Small Commitments Allocation program has been—and continues to be—the subject of a lot of scrutiny in various forums. One of those was by the Audit Office, which investigated this program. It found it had been effectively administered and made a number of recommendations in relation to it. The Government accepts those recommendations. They are helpful guidance as to how these programs should operate across government.

The program has also been one of the most transparent in terms of the documents provided. I have proactively released all the approval briefs and the other briefs that have come to me that have formed the basis for the decisions. The list on the publicly available website is now up to 52 different items, and it has been updated on a rolling basis as new things have come to the Government. The most recent item is the interim outcomes report, which goes into detail on the community benefit and amenity that has been provided by over 600 projects across New South Wales that have been funded by the Local Small Commitments Allocation program.

In the most recent call for papers, over a thousand public non-privileged documents were returned. The Government endeavours to comply fully with every call for papers and takes them seriously. We do not agree with the member's characterisation of the program, but we will comply with this order. I remind members of some of the key principles that stood behind the program. There is an allocation of an equal amount of \$400,000 per electorate right across the State. There is also an allocation to parks and playgrounds for any residual funding that was not allocated. Councils are involved in that, as are the local MPs. No matter who wins the seat, under the guidelines for the program, the projects that were promised as election commitments will be delivered.

This was a fully costed program that was public as part of the Parliamentary Budget Office costings prior to the election. The grant guidelines, that this Government has tightened, apply to this program. There has been a tough assessment program. I indicate a number of those projects I have not approved because I could not satisfy myself that they met the criteria. At least six projects are in that category.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (16:44): The Greens will also support this order for papers. As chair of the Public Accountability and Works Committee that is undertaking this inquiry, I will reflect a little on why we need to move this order for papers again. At the heart of this is the fact that we have genuine questions about this program. To be honest, when we went into this, The Greens were concerned about what looked to be a candidate election

slush fund. That was really where the focus was. We wanted to get to the bottom of whether we thought that was ethical and whether it was swaying votes towards major parties. We wanted to look at that to work out whether we think that does or does not subvert the democratic process during elections. That was really the primary focus.

When we got into the inquiry, it became clear that there were some really strange inaccuracies in the documentation and what looked to be cover-ups in a lot of what the Government was saying. That is when we became a bit more interested in some aspects of it. The one that has not been explained, and cannot be explained, is that the guidelines for the program that were put in place three or four months after the election clearly state that those projects that will be eligible have to have been committed to prior to the election. That seems simple enough. We said, "Come on, then. Just show us the evidence of all of your candidates having actually made these election commitments."

Since then we have heard different stories about candidates in electorate after electorate who did not actually make any election commitments but those commitments were made for them after the event by head office. Most unfortunate were the irregularities with the electorate of Sydney. From The Greens' perspective, our focus has been on what the Labor Government has been doing on this. Government members have shown obstinance and an inability to provide us with a list. They tell us that the only list on which the entire program was founded was some document that was handed in paper version to somebody. They cannot remember who they got it from and do not know where it has gone. They do not know where it originated and what the edits were to it. That just does not stack up.

Labor members have now drawn other people in to their attempt to cover up something. It is them that are doing harm here. They really need to think about that. The cover-up is worse than the crime. The Government should just give us the list.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (16:48): In reply: I thank the Hon. John Graham and Ms Abigail Boyd for their contributions to the debate. It does not pass the pub test to say that while in opposition and during the election campaign, the Labor Party was putting together a list of election commitments as part of the project, but then when it came to government, a hard copy of the list was given to Cherie Burton, but she cannot remember who gave it to her or where it came from. This Standing Order 52 motion is necessary to try to get a little bit more clarity about where the document came from. As Ms Abigail Boyd said, as part of the grants process, all of the projects had to be nominated by the Labor candidates during the election campaign and before the election. Any doctoring of those projects after the election falls outside the guidelines. That is why we need clarity. That is why members should support this Standing Order 52 motion.

This scheme is so good that nobody wants to take credit for it. We called all sorts of witnesses before the inquiry, from people in Labor head office to staffers in various Ministers' offices, the Premier's office and the previous Leader of the Opposition's office. Nobody wants to take credit for the scheme. Usually, everybody rushes to take credit for a good reform. That is not true in this case. Nobody wants to take credit for it because it is dodgy. Nobody can remember where the hardcopy document came from. It just fell off the back of a truck. Where is the hardcopy document? Was it shredded? We do not know where it is, and we do not know where it came from. That is why this motion is necessary.

We have been looking most closely into the Sydney electorate, but there are so many other questions that remain unanswered. This week, I raised the issue of Wollondilly. The Government Information (Public Access) Act request information we received in June 2023 showed the \$400,000 was unallocated. By July—three or four weeks after we received that information—seven projects were identified. Who identified them? Was it the Labor candidate for Wollondilly? We do not know. What we know so far is the tip of the iceberg. That is why this Standing Order 52 motion is necessary and that is why the inquiry is ongoing.

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

Motion agreed to.

Motions

UKRAINE INDEPENDENCE DAY

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (16:51): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) on 24 August 2025, Ukraine will celebrate its thirty-fourth independence day;
 - (b) Ukraine has established itself as a forward-looking, democratic ally of Australia; and
 - (c) Ukraine and its people continue to fight for its independence against Russia's illegal war and invasion.
- (2) That this House further notes that:

- (a) since Russia's illegal full-scale invasion on 24 February 2022, Ukraine has fought courageously to maintain its independence; and
 - (b) since that date, according to the United Nations, more than 13,600 Ukrainian civilians have been killed and more than 35,000 of its citizens injured, including more than 2,000 children.
- (3) That this House recognises:
- (a) the State and Federal governments' unwavering support for the Ukrainian Government, people, and community in New South Wales and Australia;
 - (b) the resilience and sacrifice of the Ukrainian people;
 - (c) that Ukraine's independence matters not just to that country, but to the entire world and the international rules-based order;
 - (d) since Russia's full-scale invasion, the Australian Federal Government has committed \$1.5 billion to support Ukraine; and
 - (e) that it has imposed more than 1,400 sanctions on Russian entities or people.
- (4) That this House further recognises:
- (a) the immense contribution of New South Wales Ukrainian community to the State's harmonious multicultural society;
 - (b) the pain and impact the war has had on the diaspora and community;
 - (c) the significant work of the Ukrainian Council of NSW, particularly across the past three years; and
 - (d) that New South Wales has welcomed more than 1,500 Ukrainians fleeing the war.
- (5) That this House:
- (a) condemns Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine and occupation of its sovereign territory;
 - (b) recognises Ukraine's status as an independent nation;
 - (c) applauds the support given thus far by the Federal Government toward Ukraine and echoes its calls on Russia to end the war;
 - (d) mourns every innocent life lost during Russia's full-scale invasion;
 - (e) stands with the people of Ukraine and New South Wales Ukrainian community; and
 - (f) celebrates Ukraine's independence day now and in the many years to come.

On 24 August 2025, Ukraine will celebrate its thirty-fourth independence day. The day reflects on the seismic moment born from 24 August 1991 and how an independent Ukraine emerged from the former Soviet Union. It emphasises the importance of national identity and reflects on Ukraine's path to building a democratic independent state. Although Ukraine's battle for independence predates 1991, the date marks Ukraine moving forward on a prosperous and independent past. Ukraine's history is woven with both tragedy and triumph, including the horrors of the Holodomor, the devastation of World War II and the early twentieth century struggle for independence. Those moments of history stand as stark reminders of the immense price Ukraine has paid for its sovereignty. The country has shown incredible determination in defending not only its borders but also the democratic values that we all hold dear.

While we celebrate Ukraine's independence today, we know that the Ukrainian people are fighting hard to maintain it. Since Russia's full-scale invasion on 24 February 2022, Ukraine has fought courageously to maintain its independence. Since that date, according to the United Nations, more than 13,600 Ukrainian civilians have been killed and more than 35,000 citizens have been injured, including more than 2,000 children. Many more tens of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers have been killed defending their country. Australia and New South Wales have been united in their condemnation of Russia's illegal invasion. The Australian Federal Government has made clear that Ukraine's independence matters to not only that country but also the entire world and the international rules-based order.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion, the Australian Federal Government has committed \$1.5 billion to support Ukraine and imposed more than 1,400 sanctions on Russian entities or people. In February, at the three-year mark of Russia's full-scale invasion, Foreign Minister Penny Wong said Australia mourns the rising toll of Russia's brutality. She called on Russia to immediately end its war and adhere to its obligations under international law. This House and the Minns Labor Government have made clear that New South Wales condemns Russia's invasion and stands firmly alongside the State's Ukrainian community. In September 2023 Premier Chris Minns moved a motion that noted that the Parliament stood with the people of Ukraine, affirmed the Government's support for more than 1,500 displaced Ukrainians in New South Wales and condemned Russia's illegal, immoral and unprovoked war. The Leader of the Opposition, Mark Speakman, supported the motion.

Since Russia's invasion, the Department of Home Affairs has granted nearly 15,000 visas to Ukrainian nationals in Ukraine and thousands more to Ukrainian nationals elsewhere. A significant number of Ukrainians have settled here in New South Wales. I acknowledge the tireless work of the Ukrainian Council of NSW and its entire executive committee, particularly president Andrew Mencinsky and vice-president Bohdan Wolody. For many years, the council has worked tirelessly for its community. It has contributed enormously to New South Wales's vibrant multiculturalism. Although the council's work predates Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion, it has accelerated its efforts to support the diaspora and the community's loved ones in Ukraine.

On Tuesday, in this Parliament, the council and the member for Auburn hosted a film screening of *Warning! Life goes on*, a documentary showcasing the trauma experienced by Ukrainians at the hands of Russian aggression. On August 23 the council will host an independence day concert in Sydney called Spirit in Colour. We wish the council and community all the very best for the event and the day. This motion and the support of the House for the Ukrainian people will not in and of itself materially bolster the country's fight for its independence. We understand that. But it will show that this House and the New South Wales Government are unwavering in their commitment to and support for the Ukrainian community in our great State.

Our Ukrainian diaspora have endured a tumultuous three years. They have worried about their country and loved ones while working tirelessly to support each other here in New South Wales. They have made a valuable contribution to our State and its vibrant multiculturalism in not only the years since Russia's invasion but also in the decades predating it. I implore the House to support the motion and our Ukrainian community. I ask all members to join me in wishing the Ukrainian community a prosperous independence day. This House and the New South Wales Government look forward to celebrating Ukraine's independence day this year and for many, many more years to come.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (16:57): The Opposition supports the motion. I thank the Hon. Mark Buttigieg for bringing the issue to the House so that we can discuss the incredible contribution the Ukrainian community has made to New South Wales and reflect on the values that our country and Ukraine share. On 1 December 1991 the Ukrainian people voted overwhelmingly for independence. Some 84 per cent of eligible voters participated in the referendum and 90 per cent endorsed independence, confirming the declaration that was made on 24 August 1991. I think I am young in this place, but Ukraine is one year younger than me. Yet, it has achieved so much. In its new constitution, Ukraine captured the spirit of liberal democratic principles that we hold dear and ensured that they are the basis of the growth and character of the country that is so shockingly under attack. Article 3 of the Constitution of Ukraine states:

- The human being, his or her life and health, honour and dignity, inviolability and security are recognised in Ukraine as the highest social value.
- Human rights and freedoms and their guarantees determine the essence and orientation of the activity of the State. The State is answerable to the individual for its activity. To affirm and ensure human rights and freedoms is the main duty of the State.

Those values should act as a guide for the way that we govern here. A really incredible part of Ukraine's development is their technological transformation. This year, Ukraine ranked fifth globally in digital public service development according to the United Nations E-Government Development Index. That is sitting behind countries like Korea, Denmark, Estonia and Saudi Arabia. Then you have Ukraine. That is remarkable given that in 2018, Ukraine was ranked 102nd.

In that relatively short time, Ukraine has leveraged technology to sustain governance functions and provide critical public services, despite the war and the pandemic. In fact, it has allowed its citizens to prosper and thrive, or has at least ensured that some of their activities that might have otherwise been incredibly difficult are made easier through digitisation. During the war, for example, where physical public documents have been destroyed, digital ID has been a godsend. There is still more to do. I am pleased and privileged to know Vlad and Sasha, a couple of young men who came to this country as humanitarian visa holders to live safely as gay men. We really value their contribution to this country.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (17:00): The Greens broadly agree with the motion of the Hon. Mark Buttigieg. The Greens also stand with the Ukrainian people suffering from the actions of Putin in starting this war, and we stand against the failure of world leaders to work towards a negotiated peace and an end to hostilities. The Hon. Mark Buttigieg mentioned the other motion on Ukraine that was moved in the other place on 14 September 2023 by the Premier himself. On moving that motion, the Premier said:

On 24 February 2022 Russian military forces entered Ukraine from Belarus, Russia and Crimea. The invasion started 567 days of violence and suffering for the people of the Ukraine. That is 567 days of air sirens, missile strikes, burning buildings, burying loved ones and, in many cases, fleeing from imminent danger. For 567 days the brave people of Ukraine have been fighting back to drive the invaders out of their country.

It is 669 days for the people of Gaza. The Palestinian people have no fight left in them. They have nothing with which to even fight back. During that speech the Premier continued:

I expressed—I hope not prematurely—on behalf of the entire Chamber—

when he met with representatives of the Ukrainian people—

our willingness to stand with the people of Ukraine in this struggle to condemn the illegal military aggression and to support the Ukrainian diaspora. In New South Wales we have a proud history, and admittedly across party lines, of helping people when they are in crisis ... We must never take this peace for granted.

He finished with:

Finally, no parent should have to put their child to bed in fear of an aerial bombardment, but that is a reality millions of people are living with right now in Ukraine, a democratic country. We call upon Russia to end this illegal and immoral war and allow for peace to be restored. On behalf of the Government, the Legislative Assembly and the people of New South Wales, we are proud to stand with the people of Ukraine.

Why are we not standing with the people of Gaza against Israel, the aggressor? Why has the Premier not put anything on record, as he did on 23 September, about what the parents of Gaza experience every night when they put their children to bed?

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (17:03): This brutal war has gone on for far longer than anybody expected. But that is only because of the courage and determination of the Ukrainian people. Since 24 February 2022, the first day of Putin's war, I have known that the Russia-Ukraine war is about far more than territorial control. The war is an attack on the values held by the West. It is the will of an authoritarian dictator being imposed upon the free people of a democratic state. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the people of Ukraine have become inheritors of our shared western values. They have every right to maintain them. Vladimir Putin, an autocrat intent on empire building, clearly thinks otherwise. The conflict therefore also attacks the values underlying the Liberal Party.

Embedded in the fabric of liberalism itself is the fundamental right to self-determination. A people can never be free if they are subject to external oppression. In the words of Thomas Jefferson, "The will of the people is the only legitimate foundation of any government." I stand with Ukraine as a proud defender of the West, of liberalism and of the Ukrainian people's freedoms. There is zero equivalence, as some on the fringe of the right have implied, between Zelenskyy and Putin. The contrast between Putin's tyranny and the courage of Zelenskyy is stark. Putin is allied to the world's new axis of evil, an assortment of autocratic and terroristic states. Zelenskyy, by contrast, finds himself requesting support from free peoples and democratic governments.

Zelenskyy has repeatedly called for real, lasting peace; Putin calls for total surrender. Ukraine is not fighting for territory alone but for the future of a free Europe. Ukrainians are fighting for a world in which the self-determination of all nations is respected, not trampled on. For that reason, NATO has been rightly supportive of Ukraine. Australia too has done its part, as part of a coalition of like-minded countries across the globe. Long may that continue, until Russia ends its barbarous invasion of Ukraine. Until then, we continue to be inspired by the sacrifice of the Ukrainian people in defence of their home. We stand with Ukraine.

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (17:06): The Libertarian Party cannot support this motion. There are parts of the motion worth supporting, but unfortunately it goes further than those good points. The motion also celebrates and applauds the Australian Government's involvement in the war, which we cannot support. Australia should not be involved in any way—not one dollar or bullet. Many terrible wars are going on around the world, and citizens are right to raise their voices and do what they can as individuals, but our Government should not get involved in any of those far-flung conflicts. Australia should strive to be the Switzerland of the Pacific—scrupulously neutral and non-interventionist. We should have friendly relations, trade and diplomacy with all nations, but avoid getting dragged into conflicts that have little to do with our interests.

That brings me to my second point. While the libertarians believe in neutrality and non-intervention, that does not preclude us from sharing personal opinions. I share the common sympathy with the Ukrainian people suffering through this war, but that sympathy does not extend to the Ukrainian Government. Many have noted that Ukraine has the most corrupt government in Europe, but that is not my primary concern. Rather, I condemn the Ukrainian Government for the same reason that I condemn the Russian Government: The actions of both governments led to this war, and their intransigence is extending the war.

Ukraine stands at the centre of a decades-long struggle between NATO and Russia. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the reason for NATO also collapsed. Of course, global bureaucracies hate to disappear, so instead of winding back, NATO started expanding towards Russia. That was an obvious and unnecessary provocation. Russia loudly objected but, in most cases, it eventually had to accept the new reality—that the largest military force in the history of humanity was slowly creeping up to its border, seemingly with Russia as NATO's only

possible target. The red line in the sand for the Russians was Ukraine. That would leave Russia vulnerable in a way that it considered intolerable.

Perhaps Russia was wrong to fear NATO. Perhaps NATO was only expanding up to Russia's borders for some harmless reason. But the reality was that the Russians were deeply worried. They had been invaded by Napoleon, and in World War I and World War II. All those invasions came from the West, so they were a little bit paranoid. The Russians had made it clear they would respond. We can wish it were otherwise, but we cannot run geopolitics on the basis of wishes. Instead of navigating the sensitive situation carefully, NATO and the Ukraine Government decided to light a match and throw it on a metaphorical barrel of gunpowder, and then act surprised when the barrel exploded.

The Ukraine war is a disaster. There is no realistic prospect of Ukraine winning the war, so the only options on the table are a quick Russian victory, a slow Russian victory or NATO getting directly involved—nuclear war. Of those options, the least bad is a quick end to the war, which will involve Ukraine losing some of its Russian-speaking eastern provinces. That is very uncomfortable for people to hear, since we are used to watching movies where the good guys have total victory. But our discomfort is nothing compared to the suffering of the Ukrainian people. There is plenty of blame to go around in the Ukraine war, and Russia deserves its fair share—*[Time expired.]*

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (17:09): I support the motion and thank my colleague the Hon. Mark Buttigieg for moving it. This House and the Minns Labor Government have made clear, now and on previous occasions, our condemnation of Russia's invasion and that we stand firmly alongside our State's Ukrainian community. As other members previously said, in September 2023 Premier Chris Minns moved a motion that stood with the people of Ukraine and affirmed the Government's support for more than 1,500 displaced Ukrainians in New South Wales, and condemned Russia's illegal, immoral and unprovoked war. The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Mark Speakman, supported the motion.

More than 1,500 Ukrainian nationals have arrived in New South Wales on humanitarian visas since the invasion. We welcome them and wish they had arrived here under better circumstances. Since Russia's invasion, the Department of Home Affairs has granted nearly 15,000 visas to Ukrainian nationals in Ukraine and thousands more visas to Ukrainian nationals elsewhere. I also acknowledge the tireless work of the Ukrainian Council of NSW, including the entire executive committee. On 14 September 2023 in the Legislative Assembly, the Premier stated:

Ukraine, like every other nation, has a right to territorial sovereignty and peace. Its citizens have a right to enjoy their freedom and to practise democracy, to live according to their customs and traditions.

As the Premier did on that day, I extend the support of the Legislative Council and our Parliament to the people of Ukraine, who are still fighting every day to liberate their country. On 24 August 2025 we will celebrate Ukraine on its thirty-fourth independence day. Ukraine has come a long way after emerging from the former Soviet Union in a battle for independence that has taken place since before 1991. Ukraine's history is woven with tragedy and triumph. I look forward to standing with others as we not only celebrate the triumphs but also acknowledge the tragedies that have occurred.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (17:12): In reply: I thank all members who contributed to the debate: the Hon. Jacqui Munro, Ms Cate Faehrmann, the Hon. Chris Rath, the Hon. John Ruddick and my colleague the Hon. Emily Suvaal. I note and acknowledge the contributions and sentiment shared today in this House on this topic and motion. I know this issue certainly cuts across party lines. Ukraine's independence day is something this House should acknowledge and support for New South Wales's Ukrainian community. In the large part, support for Ukraine and its diaspora here is a bipartisan issue. I thank those who voiced their support for this motion and the Ukrainian community. I also point to the Federal Government's unwavering support for Ukraine and its people and its clear acknowledgement of Ukraine's importance as an ally to Australia, and us to it.

In response to the contribution to debate made by my colleague the Hon. John Ruddick, the idea that New South Wales should not be involved in foreign conflicts is anathema to anyone who cares about humanity. If people are suffering oppression and are underdogs, we have a right as humans to support them. Just because we are a separate nation, that does not mean we should not get involved in our fellow human beings' affairs by standing up for them. That is exactly what the Australian Federal Government and the New South Wales Government are doing. More importantly, what matters in New South Wales is that we foster harmonious relationships in our domestic communities. I know the Minister has done a lot of work in consulting the Ukrainian community and the Russian community to make sure that tensions that are catalysts overseas do not find their way here.

In a more general sense, the New South Wales Government takes the view that Ukraine is the underdog and the nation that has been attacked. Therefore, it is in our interests—and it is right—that we defend Ukraine,

contribute to the effort of Ukrainians and help those people. This issue means a lot to this House. We also know it means immeasurably more to our Ukrainian community in New South Wales. As I stated in my earlier remarks, Ukraine has been a pillar of vibrant multiculturalism in New South Wales for many years, contributing much to our State's social harmony.

The motion and voice of support will go far in signalling to our Ukrainian community that this House backs them. Even if we cannot back Ukraine's people materially, our vocal support for the country's independence day and community in New South Wales will go far. It will show that this House notes and celebrates Ukraine's independence day and its fight for independence. We should always support a people's right to sovereignty and independence wherever that is being threatened. That is what this motion does. I thank members for their contribution and support.

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

Motion agreed to.

Committees

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE FACILITIES AT TARAGO AND PARKES

Establishment, Membership, Chair and Deputy Chair

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (17:15): I move:

- (1) That a select committee be established to inquire into and report on proposed energy from waste facilities at Tarago and Parkes, and in particular:
 - (a) the performance of the technologies proposed for the Tarago and Parkes energy recovery facilities as compared to leading thermal technologies employed in "state of the art" facilities internationally, noting such technologies as proposed are not employed anywhere else on the eastern seaboard;
 - (b) the spread of the emissions predicted and the quality of emissions to be generated;
 - (c) health impacts from currently operating older technology waste incinerators as compared to the proposed newer technology;
 - (d) impacts on human health including on regional town drinking water, rainwater harvesting and soil contamination;
 - (e) the impact on agriculture locally and across the wider region;
 - (f) alterations to the Parkes Special Activation Precinct specifically in relation to the proposed energy recovery facility in that region;
 - (g) impacts of waste-dumping over a number of decades in the Tarago region;
 - (h) the methodology of emission monitoring employed by leading large scale waste-to-energy facilities in Australia and across the world; and
 - (i) any other related matter.
- (2) That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the standing orders, the committee consist of seven members comprising:
 - (a) three government members;
 - (b) two opposition members, one being the Hon. Nichole Overall; and
 - (c) two crossbench members, one being Dr Amanda Cohn.
- (3) That the Chair of the committee be the Hon. Nichole Overall and the deputy Chair be Dr Amanda Cohn.
- (4) That unless the committee decides otherwise:
 - (a) all inquiries are to be advertised via social media, stakeholder emails and a media release distributed to all media outlets in New South Wales;
 - (b) submissions to inquiries are to be published, subject to the Committee Clerk checking for confidentiality and adverse mention and, where those issues arise, bringing them to the attention of the committee for consideration;
 - (c) attachments to submissions are to remain confidential;
 - (d) the Chair's proposed witness list is to be circulated to provide members with an opportunity to amend the list, with the witness list agreed to by email, unless a member requests the Chair to convene a meeting to resolve any disagreement;
 - (e) the sequence of questions to be asked at hearings alternate between Opposition, crossbench and Government members, in that order, with equal time allocated to each;
 - (f) transcripts of evidence taken at public hearings are to be published;

- (g) supplementary questions are to be lodged with the Committee Clerk within two business days following the receipt of the hearing transcript, with witnesses requested to return answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions within 21 calendar days of the date on which questions are forwarded to the witness;
- (h) answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions are to be published, subject to the Committee Clerk checking for confidentiality and adverse mention and, where those issues arise, bringing them to the attention of the committee for consideration; and
- (i) media statements on behalf of the committee are to be made only by the Chair.

I move the motion because communities want answers. I will speak specifically about the Parkes community, with which I am most familiar, but I look forward to hearing from other members, including my Nationals colleague the Hon. Nichole Overall, who is working very closely with the Tarago community on this matter. Even in a very short visit to Parkes, we learnt that a lot of the community feels that there are still too many unanswered questions. Moreover, they do not feel that their concerns are being taken seriously, or that they are being even heard. I have to be honest, this one is a tough one for me. I want to see our regional communities thrive and grow, so my initial instinct, if there is an opportunity to attract industry and investment to one of the communities, is to get behind it. But we need to ask the question: At what cost?

We do not want industries in our communities that put our health, our kids and our agriculture production at risk. I am not totally ignorant of how we got to this point and the regulation that regards the areas around Parkes, Tarago, Richmond Valley and Lithgow as potential locations for these types of facilities. I am sure others, who think they are very clever, will take the opportunity to bring that up during this debate. I was not in Parliament at the time, but from talking to my colleagues who were here when that decision was made, it is clear that what is being considered now is not really what was previously in mind when it comes to scale and potential impact. I have also heard many times that the community expects and deserves more consultation than it has received on this matter. People feel very much in the dark on some key issues.

Most importantly, policy is constantly evolving. As more information comes to light on this issue, I, for one, am more than happy to be led by science and by the community. On 26 July I attended an information night hosted by the Parkes Clean Future Alliance, which was attended by nearly 600 people—a huge turn-out. I acknowledge that Dr Amanda Cohn was present and I know that other members of the New South Wales Parliament, including the Hon. Nichole Overall, also would have liked to have been there but were unable to be. At the meeting, the idea of this inquiry was very warmly received. It has given people hope that some of their questions can be answered and their concerns listened to. The Mayor of Parkes, Neil Westcott, has since expressed strong support for the inquiry. I quote a line from his media release, which addresses that there had been a slightly similar inquiry in the past:

While the 2017 inquiry provided a foundation, there remain important questions that are yet to be fully addressed. A renewed Parliamentary inquiry could help clarify these issues and provide the transparency our community has been seeking.

I do not think there is much resistance within the Parkes community to the idea of an inquiry, and I am sure we will hear more about other communities as the debate goes on. If communities are behind this inquiry, we should be as well. It is important to note that I am not taking a swing at any of the councils or councillors involved, whom I know have copped some heat, nor the proponents of those facilities. They are operating within parameters set by government, both previous and existing. We just want to look a bit closer at those parameters and make sure they are still fit for purpose.

The motion establishes that the chair of the inquiry be the Hon. Nichole Overall and the deputy chair be Dr Amanda Cohn, which is in recognition of their ongoing work on and passion for this issue. In closing, I thank members in advance for any and all support we receive for the motion, noting that I cannot think of any genuine reason they would not support it. This must not be about politics. Obviously a lot of what we do here is about politics, but this needs to be about communities such as Parkes and the future of the amazing people who live there.

Dr AMANDA COHN (17:20): I indicate The Greens' support for an inquiry on this matter. I move:

That the question be amended by:

- (1) In paragraph (1) omitting "at Tarago and Parkes".
- (2) Inserting after paragraph (1) (h):
 - (i) alternative solutions to reduce and manage residual waste produced by Greater Sydney; and.

In establishing this inquiry, it seems like The Nationals are doing the right thing. The previous Liberal-Nationals Government took the approach of adopting an energy from waste framework as part of the solution to managing the waste crisis in Greater Sydney, and that has been perpetuated and continued by the current Government. But it is right to approach these things with an open mind and be willing to ask questions, even about decisions that

were made by one's own party in government. I certainly commend that approach. I have also heard the same level of distress from impacted local communities, who feel that not only they were not consulted about those issues but also they were not even informed.

When the Hon. Scott Barrett and I were in Parkes a couple of weeks ago, the scale of community interest must have been unprecedented. Nearly 600 people attended an event in a town of about 9,000 people. That is over 5 per cent of the population of the town coming to a community forum on this matter, so community members are engaged. They want the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry and have the really hard questions asked. I share the serious concerns raised by the Public Health Association of Australia, particularly that those types of incinerators should not be located in regions where food is grown. The lack of data around newer energy from waste incinerators comes from the fact that they have not existed long enough for quality data about their health impacts to be collected, not because the technology is actually any better.

In terms of my amendment, I think the inquiry must be statewide. There cannot be an approach that pits local communities against each other and then dumps a similar problem on a different local community. Previously, Casino in the Richmond Valley was on the list of precincts, but it was removed. Tomago in the Hunter is now on the list and Lithgow is still on the list. There has to be a statewide, system-level approach to asking those questions, not to the exclusion of anybody, so I hope that the amendment will be supported. Similarly, the obvious question that gets asked as soon as someone says that the incinerator should not be built is what else we do with the waste from Greater Sydney. It is important that the committee also has the opportunity to ask that question and to hear some of the alternative solutions put forward to reduce and manage the residual waste produced by Greater Sydney. The Greens will support the inquiry, and I hope that the amendment will be supported so that the committee can do even better work.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (17:23): The Government is happy to support the amendment and the establishment of this committee. I make the following points in relation to that. The challenge of waste is real. This Government has done more to be honest and open about that, and I look forward to scrutinising the very good work that has been done by the Environment Protection Authority. Greater Sydney is running out of landfill sites, and some areas in regional New South Wales have the same problem. I wish that we could recycle our way out of it and reduce waste from the front. That is what we are trying to get to; that is what we talk about when we talk about the circular economy. But the reality is that the amount of waste that is being generated by individuals continues to grow, landfill space continues to shrink and we have to do everything that we possibly can.

This Government is already working through all of that, and I have talked about that a lot. We are trying to use every lever we have. An implementation committee will deal with the infrastructure study. We will soon make some decisions about the tools and the way in which we use the waste levy. I know that local government has a strong view in relation to that. We have implemented the food organics and garden organics mandates. We are doing ongoing work around plastics and the container deposit scheme. I am working federally with all of the other Ministers to try to stop waste at the beginning so we are not even generating it. But I will not pretend that we can recycle our way out of the problem. Communities need to understand the implications of energy from waste. I say two things about this. Energy from waste facilities exist across the world—in Copenhagen, in Singapore, in Tokyo and right in the middle of Paris. People are right to ask the questions, and we are right to answer those questions.

I also note that the previous Government really wrangled this issue. I am not seeking to make political points out of that, but the policy that we are currently seeing and the communities that are impacted are a result of the settings that the previous Government made and this Government has continued. We have also done a review of energy from waste, which we will provide. I am sure all of that will be dealt with at the inquiry. No-one should have anything to hide here. I say to the House that landfill is the worst solution for getting rid of waste. Energy from waste is the slightly less bad way of dealing with those things. We need to grapple with the issue, make sure it is safe and make sure that communities have the answers that they want. We also need to push back on a lot of misinformation. I welcome this inquiry, because that is where we will get to the bottom of it.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL (17:26): I very much appreciate the opportunity to be involved with this inquiry and the collegial way in which we have progressed it and hopefully will continue to progress it this evening, in the best interests of our communities, particularly in regional and rural New South Wales. We call for this inquiry because of the ongoing and growing issues, questions and concerns raised in these particular instances. The inquiry was formulated and progressed because of the specific instances at Tarago and Parkes. I take the point of the Hon. Penny Sharpe that the issue was first raised and addressed through the former Coalition Government.

I was very aware of it during my time as the member for Monaro, and the concerns that were raised with me at that point. I continue to be contacted by similarly concerned residents of Parkes. In other words, in that period of nearly four years, those matters have not gone away. They have been exacerbated, and those

communities feel that they are not being heard, they have not been addressed and they are not being provided with the information that they need.

I also acknowledge the Hon. Penny Sharpe's point that we absolutely need to address the issue of waste. But those residents do not want to see almost a million tonnes of Sydney waste trucked and sent by rail to their regions, and we must listen to their genuine concerns about that. I welcome the opportunity for an inquiry of this nature to explore all of those elements more fully across all of New South Wales, if we broaden the scope and remit of the inquiry. Whatever the outcomes are, we need to reach consensus on the solutions. Our communities need to know that they have been provided with transparent and comprehensive information so that they can feel safe and secure about their future in our regions, and the future of their children and grandchildren as well.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (17:29): I speak briefly on the motion to establish a select committee. I echo the words of my colleague: The entire reason that we are dealing with this is as a result of the policy settings of the previous Government. Setting that to one side, this Government understands and acknowledges that there are concerns in various parts of the community around energy from waste. As I said, that is a result of the policy settings of the previous Government. It is a harsh reality to deal with—I acknowledge that—but it is the reality that we are faced with.

As the Minister outlined, a lot of work has been done within the departments to grapple with this issue. It is part of a broader issue that the Minister has spoken about many times in this place. The problem confronting our State is landfill and the lack of space we have left in our landfill and waste infrastructure facilities. This is a wicked problem. It is a huge problem, and the Government is taking steps to deal with it. We know we are building a waste crisis. There are novel solutions. However, as the Minister said, even with a dramatic increase in recycling and food organics and garden organics mandates, we would still need new waste infrastructure.

I am reminded of some of the wonderful work of the Office of the Chief Scientist, which is looking at novel ways of dealing with waste. A breakfast series that I attended looked at the Galleria caterpillar, which is an amazing bug—I probably cannot call it a bug. It eats plastic. That is an amazing, novel solution. We cannot keep that caterpillar in a normal petri dish because it will literally eat the petri dish. There is exciting work underway, and there is huge potential within the minds of some of the most brilliant people in our State—not me—to grapple with this waste crisis. We will obviously set up another select committee today; I acknowledge that. I look forward to canvassing these issues. However, as I said at the outset, members know who we have to thank for this issue: It is the previous Government.

The Hon. WES FANG (17:32): I will not speak for long. It is often said in this place, "I wasn't going to speak." However, the previous contribution compelled me to seek the call. I do so in response to the continual narrative from members opposite. At some point the Government has to accept that it is in government. I do not think that Government members actually have the mentality that they are in government, because they continually blame everybody else for the issues that exist at the moment. They are in government and members on this side of the Chamber know that. However, members opposite continually seek to blame us for issues that are occurring now.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Wes Fang has the call.

The Hon. WES FANG: Thank you, Mr President. I will take a point of order after I have finished my contribution. We continually hear from members opposite that everything is the fault of the former Government. We accept that we did a lot in government. We accept that we did a lot of policy work, and we accept that we put a lot of things in train. Government members certainly continue to open the things that we put in train, including metros, transport programs, roads, mRNA vaccines for lumpy skin disease and foot-and-mouth disease—things that we put in train that they are now trying to claim as their own.

Members opposite are in government. They need to accept that they have been in government for at least two years. They need to accept that the policy settings that are in train are changeable, malleable or adaptable in places where the Government seeks to make changes. I have no doubt that this inquiry will seek to understand why the Government continually blames the Opposition and does not actually take the reins of the issue. When is this Government going to accept that it has its hands on the wheel, and it has the ability to change the destination that it is seeking?

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Leader of the Government will cease interjecting.

The Hon. WES FANG: If Government members continue with the mindset that nothing is their fault and they are not in control, nothing is going to change in this State. That is a really concerning matter for everybody. That is why this inquiry is so important.

The PRESIDENT: The member's time has expired. I will hear the member's foreshadowed point of order.

The Hon. Wes Fang: Point of order: The Leader of the Government has taken numerous points of order today—in fact, one where I got called to order. Mr President, you have identified that the continual interjections by the Leader of the Government were, I would say, unparliamentary. Given that I have already been called to order, and given that she has continually interjected despite the—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Wes Fang will be heard in silence.

The Hon. Wes Fang: Given that the Leader of the Government has continually interjected quite rudely through my contribution, which was not seeking to incite her at all, I ask that you call her to order so that we have some level of equity in this place.

The Hon. John Graham: Point of order—

The PRESIDENT: I will rule on the point of order. First, the Hon. Wes Fang will not try to instruct the Chair on what to do. That will never be acceptable in this place. Secondly, the member is being hypocritical because he has been interjecting vociferously for the entire day. He has clearly been the worst offender in this place. I have called him to order once. Frankly, I could have called him to order three times within the first 15 minutes of question time. I have not done so because I respect the robust environment of this Chamber. At the end of question time I made it clear that I am grumpy about the level of interjections. However, I absolutely do not uphold the point of order. I instructed the Leader of the Government to stop interjecting, and that is the end of the matter. Does the Hon. John Graham wish to take another point of order?

The Hon. John Graham: My point of order relates to referring to members by their correct titles. I think the Hon. Wes Fang is aware of that. There has been a number of instances over the course of the day. I ask that you remind members of that rule. It is one of the fundamental parliamentary principles, and I think we should collectively enforce it with your assistance.

The PRESIDENT: I agree. I do not think that on this occasion the Hon. Wes Fang was being deliberately inciteful, but it has happened on a number of occasions and to an increasing degree. I instruct all members to refer to other members by their correct titles.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE (17:38): I will make a very brief contribution; I feel compelled to speak after the previous speaker. When I first saw "energy from waste", I misread it as "lack of energy from waste". I thought it might be referring to the former Government's activities in this area. However, having looked through the notice of motion, I now realise what the motion is actually about. Obviously, I support the motion. Coming from Western Sydney, my experience of campaigns in relation to energy from waste is that communities are really concerned. They are organising and opposing any attempt to introduce energy from waste because they are concerned about air pollution.

I then had the opportunity to visit a number of councils in rural and regional areas of New South Wales, and a number of them said, "We actually see this not as waste but as a resource that we are saving and can use to generate energy in our community." They showed me examples of where they are doing that, which started me thinking that there is a real opportunity for local councils. It changed my perception, which meant I had to rethink my attitudes. I am not an expert in this field. I do not have the answer, but I do believe that different communities will respond differently, and I certainly lack adequate information to make a final decision.

That is why I am also looking forward to gathering evidence and looking to the findings and deliberations of this committee. However, I am advised that one thing is crystal clear: if we do not find a way out of this by 2030 by building new infrastructure or working out what we do with residual red bin waste as energy from waste or some terrifying worm or something that might consume it all, it means those bins will not be able to be collected. That is a real problem, and I am pleased that this committee will look at one possible way of solving it.

The PRESIDENT: I call the Hon. Bob Nanva.

The Hon. Mark Latham: The general secretary, he knows waste.

The Hon. BOB NANVA (17:41): I acknowledge that interjection. I thank the Hon. Scott Barrett for bringing this issue to the attention of the House. I know that people in regional areas are extremely concerned about the future of energy-from-waste projects, and I think this select committee will be a valuable opportunity to ventilate and work through those concerns. As the Minister has said, the starting point for this conversation has to be the recognition that New South Wales is facing a waste crisis, and if we do not build infrastructure for residual waste, we are going to run out of available landfill space in Greater Sydney and some of our major regional areas.

Doing more with recycling and re-using is part of the solution, and the Government is making progress in the transition to a circular economy. But the transition is going to take time. New sites for landfill in our

communities are also hard to find. Even if we can find new landfill sites, using landfill for residual waste, as the Minister had said, is itself problematic when it comes to methane emissions. But we cannot put our heads in the sand. Difficult decisions have to be made. They have to be made transparently and on the best possible information. That is why the Government is taking a careful, methodical approach to the question of energy from waste while also taking action to plan and develop critical waste infrastructure, to reduce waste going to landfill, and to grow recycling rates and opportunities, such as through the mandate on food organics and garden organics.

The previous Government definitely took a different approach. It would have had all of the same warnings that our Government has had. It took its approach and made its decisions, and one of those was, as the Hon. Emily Suvaal has stated, to expect, through its vague hope, that energy-from-waste projects would magically make the landfill problem disappear. The previous Government chose four precincts for the development of those projects: West Lithgow, Parkes, Richmond Valley and Southern Goulburn Mulwaree. I accept what the Hon. Scott Barrett has said. He was not here for those decisions. But the reality is that one cannot decouple the predicament we are currently in from the decisions the previous Government made.

Why the previous Government restricted the development of energy-from-waste infrastructure to those specific locations was never properly explained. It is something I never understood and still do not understand. It was almost a "pin the tail on the donkey" approach to site selection. That is not how significant infrastructure is done. The lack of information and explanation has contributed to the understandable confusion and concern in communities today. The Government is undertaking a scientific review. That is welcome. I hope this select committee makes a similarly positive contribution to the development of policy solutions to our waste problem.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (17:44): In reply: I have got written notes all over the place, and one of them said that I agree with absolutely everything that has been said. I discarded that note about halfway through the debate, so I cannot use that anymore! I thank the members who spoke to the motion. I did not want to raise it here, but I come back to a constant criticism from this Government. I have acknowledged that this is a regulation the Coalition put in, and we just heard how much the Hon. Bob Nanva objected to it. But this Government could have overturned that regulation at any time over the past two years. That has not happened, so we should go into this inquiry with open minds and see what comes out the other end.

I thank Dr Amanda Cohn for moving the amendment. One part was about expanding the scope to cover the whole State. I am very happy with that. I definitely support the other part of the amendment about including alternative solutions to manage waste. I have great sympathy for what the Minister was saying about waste management. It is clear that we need to do more with our waste, both before and after it is produced. Not that long ago, I stood with the RFS at a tip fire at Molong, near Orange, and it was a horrible experience. We did not have to stand there long before people started to get headaches. It was a difficult thing to put out and took us quite a bit of time. While there, I learnt that lots of other tips are constantly smouldering away under the dirt. That is not a great scenario, and it is great to have that amendment to look at what some other solutions might be. I am very excited about the galleria cactus—

The Hon. Emily Suvaal: The galleria caterpillar.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: We learnt about the galleria caterpillar in this debate, and I am very excited about what that could bring for us. That is the sort of thing that can come out of this. But we need to remember, this inquiry has come about because the people of regional New South Wales want more answers about this. They are not confident that waste incinerators can go ahead in their communities without having an impact on them and their children. They are talking about people leaving town. We need to give them the confidence that they are being heard in this debate. They are the most important people. No-one has to convince me that one should go there; they need to convince the people of Parkes, from my perspective. I think this inquiry is a great way to shine some light on the issue. Once again, I thank all members who contributed, and I am thankful for all and any support we get for this inquiry.

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Scott Barrett has moved a motion, to which Dr Amanda Cohn has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The PRESIDENT: The question now is that the motion as amended be agreed to.

Motion as amended agreed to.

*Documents***GREYHOUND RACING NSW INQUIRY****Production of Documents: Order**

The Hon. EMMA HURST (17:47): I seek the leave of the House to amend private members' business item No. 2185 standing in my name on today's *Notice Paper* by:

- (1) Inserting ", Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission" after "Minister for the Central Coast".
- (2) Inserting at the end:
 - (2) That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 21 days of the date of passing of this resolution the following documents in the possession, custody or control of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast, Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission or the Department of Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport (Office of Racing) relating to the Drake inquiry into Greyhound Racing NSW:
 - (a) all reports, including all draft reports and versions of the report with edits or feedback from Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission, Greyhound Racing NSW or the Minister, authored by the Hon. Lea Drake regarding the inquiry into Greyhound Racing NSW;
 - (b) all correspondence, created between 3 March 2025 and 1 August 2025, between the Hon. Lea Drake and the Minister or the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission regarding the inquiry into Greyhound Racing NSW; and
 - (c) any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.

Leave granted.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Accordingly, I move:

- (1) That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within five days of the date of passing of this resolution the report of the Hon. Lea Drake, Acting Commissioner of the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission, on the Inquiry into Greyhound Racing NSW in the possession, custody or control of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research and Minister for the Central Coast, Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission or the Department of Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport (Office of Racing), and any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.
- (2) That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 21 days of the date of passing of this resolution the following documents in the possession, custody or control of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research and Minister for the Central Coast, Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission or the Department of Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport (Office of Racing) relating to the Drake Inquiry into Greyhound Racing NSW:
 - (a) all reports, including all draft reports and versions of the report with edits or feedback from Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission, Greyhound Racing NSW or the Minister, authored by the Hon. Lea Drake regarding the Inquiry into Greyhound Racing NSW;
 - (b) all correspondence, created between 3 March 2025 and 1 August 2025, between the Hon. Lea Drake and the Minister or Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission regarding the Inquiry into Greyhound Racing NSW; and
 - (c) any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.

This straightforward call for papers requires the Minister for Gaming and Racing to produce the Drake inquiry report into greyhound racing, which was due on 31 July 2025. We know that the Minister has the report, but so far he has chosen not to release it to the public. There is significant public interest in this inquiry, which came about in response to the serious allegations raised in the handover memo of Dr Alex Brittan, the former Chief Veterinary Officer of Greyhound Racing NSW. These concerns range from the systemic mistreatment of greyhounds, mass greyhound deaths and greyhounds going missing to financial mismanagement, misuse of veterinary drugs and much more.

The Minister responded to these very serious allegations by setting up the Drake inquiry, but he is currently withholding the findings of that inquiry from the public. This was a taxpayer funded inquiry into an industry that receives millions of dollars of taxpayer funding and tax concessions every year. The public has every right to know what is in this report, and there is no justification in delaying making it public. This SO 52 would require the Government to produce the final Drake inquiry report within five days. Five days is reasonable, as only one very specific document needs to be produced.

The second part of this SO 52, which was the subject of my amendment, calls for all drafts of the Drake inquiry report. This includes any feedback on the report from the Minister, Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission, or Greyhound Racing NSW, and any correspondence between the Minister and Commissioner

Drake or between Commissioner Drake and GWIC about the inquiry. The SO 52 gives much more time to comply with this part of the order, as it is more substantial in nature. The motion allows the full 21 days to comply with the order for the production of papers.

The inquiry followed a strange path, which included two extensions to the reporting date. The second extension happened right after the commissioner assured me during budget estimates that she did not anticipate any further extensions. I have attempted to get answers from the Minister about why the additional extension was needed and who requested it. The answers I have received have only raised more questions. Now that the inquiry has concluded, I am eager to understand how and why this extension came about. What role did the Minister's office or GWIC play in the extension coming about, and what was their input more generally? I commend this call for papers to the House.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (17:51): I ask for a copy of the Hon. Emma Hurst's amendment to the motion, as the Government does not have a copy, although I accept that the member sent it. I will confine my comments to the original motion, but I will also try to provide some Government guidance on the amended motion. I have listened carefully to what the member said. I thank the member for her considerable interest in the Drake inquiry, which members would be aware of.

I am advised that the Government intended to oppose the original motion, which sought the report of the Acting Commissioner of the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission report on the inquiry in Greyhound Racing NSW. The Minister for Gaming and Racing had publicly stated that he intended to consult with his colleagues and would submit the report to Cabinet in due course for consideration and response. In the Government's view, it is premature to require production of the report before that has happened. As it will be protected in the normal way, it is unlikely to be lawfully required by a call for papers in that instance. The Minister has made that clear publicly and has conveyed it to others. That is the status of the original request. I will assess the amendment moved by the member, which we allowed by leave to be moved in the Chamber.

I acknowledge the member's interest in the subject. She has followed this inquiry very closely as part of her concern about the general welfare of greyhounds in the State. The Government is aware of her interest and is attempting to balance the issues: the welfare of greyhounds, supporting the regions and the economic impact of greyhound racing. The three racing codes in New South Wales generate billions of dollars for the New South Wales economy and, more importantly, sustain tens of thousands of jobs, including in regional communities. The member is well aware of the issues, as she has pursued them often in the House. I will consult with the Clerks to see whether I can speak a second time to the amendment. Otherwise we will indicate the position of the Government on the second matter shortly.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (17:54): I will speak while the Government takes time to consider the amendment. I think that the amendment is pretty straightforward. It is looking for the various iterations of the Drake report which may be available, including drafts, reconsiderations and rewritings of the report. This is a normal Standing Order 52 process. I do not think that any member expects the final report. I make a different observation about Minister Harris. Whether you are on the side of the Animal Justice Party or a supporter of racing in New South Wales like I am, the Minister has generated enormous uncertainty in both the greyhound and thoroughbred racing industries.

We have been waiting for the Drake report to be produced. Participants in the greyhound racing industry have asked, "When is it coming? When do we get some certainty about its recommendations?" There is obviously disquiet about where it came from. The former head of Greyhound Racing NSW made a mistake by appointing a vet who was an animal welfare activist. He has written a report and made recommendations that any practical person involved in greyhound racing would think are quite bizarre. For instance, he thought greyhounds would be better off if they raced in boots. I have heard of Puss in Boots, but this was going to be dogs in boots. People in the greyhound industry thought that was laughable. I am not too sure of the vet. Rob Macaulay sat on that selection panel, which cost him his job and led to the Drake report.

The main issue is why this is taking so long. Where is the certainty for greyhound racing? During a budget estimates hearing on 28 February, the Minister promised a review into the Thoroughbred Racing Act. He put this to me in response to my private member's bill and to say, "No, we can't consider these issues about the transparency and accountability of Racing NSW or the myriad of complaints about that institution until we review the Act. We can't put the cart before the horse." That undertaking was given to me by the Minister during budget estimates. He said that the review of the Thoroughbred Racing Act would occur in the first half of this year, but we are now steaming into the middle of August. Again, this brings uncertainty.

Today a leading New South Wales trainer asked me, "Where can I make my contribution to the review of the Thoroughbred Racing Act?" Nothing will happen if we rely on David Harris's strength of leadership and

purpose to get things done. I will take this up again at the next budget estimate hearings. This SO 52 is warranted. Members should know what has happened to the Drake report and to the Minister's solemn promise of a review into the Thoroughbred Racing Act. All of this uncertainty needs to end. This weak Minister needs to grow a spine, toughen up and get some things done in the interest of racing. In particular, he needs to end of all of this uncertainty.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (17:58): I speak on behalf of The Greens and indicate our support for this motion. As we know, the Drake inquiry was ordered by the Minister for Gaming and Racing in response to a surge of damning revelations exposed by whistleblowers about cruel and corrupt practices across the industry, including greyhounds being discarded as waste, cruel kennel conditions and fraudulent rehoming numbers. Members will recall that this was a time of national outrage. There were demands for an independent public inquiry into Greyhound Racing NSW. Instead of listening to them, Labor constructed a politically constrained inquiry in an attempt to head off those calls. There was no mention of the registry body empowered to oversee greyhound welfare and integrity. It is pretty extraordinary that there was also no agreed timeline or requirement for the final report to be made publicly available. The Greens called it out at the time for what it was: nothing more than a political cover-up and a distraction.

We predicted at the time that we probably would not see the report until 24 December 2025—they seem to dump unfavourable reports on Christmas Eve. Fast-forward a year and the revelations which sparked this inquiry remain unanswered, deflected and ignored. The allegations made by former Greyhound Racing NSW chief veterinarian Alex Britton have yet to be answered, including allegations of between 8,000 and 13,000 greyhounds being shuffled through the industry to paid commercial kennels, thousands of retired greyhounds missing or unaccounted for and blatant misrepresentation of inflated rehoming figures. Also unanswered and swept away from public scrutiny were the horrific revelations exposed by whistleblowers about the Wyee rehoming facility, not to mention the racing industry's cruel United States export program that continues to ship greyhounds overseas in tiny crates, despite having killed at least six greyhounds so far.

Before it had even commenced, the Drake inquiry was pre-emptively constrained by its narrow terms of reference, which were set by a Labor government hell-bent on ensuring that "a viable and sustainable greyhound racing industry in New South Wales" be included as one of the purposes of the inquiry, thereby precluding it from considering much of the evidence that would expose the full extent of the industry's cruel and corrupt practices. This was clearly designed as an inquiry that would prevent another report of the kind that we saw in 2016 from McHugh, which would have put pressure on this Government to shut the industry down once and for all. I am pleased that the Auditor-General took up my request for an inquiry into whether or not the regulation that oversees the greyhound industry, and particularly the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission, is fit for purpose. I think we will get a far less politically constrained analysis out of the Auditor-General than what we will get out of this report. Nevertheless, it was paid for with public money, and we ought to see it.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (18:01): By leave: I make a brief point about animal welfare. I concede that there are still issues on the racetrack, where dogs get barrelled over on the corner. Straight-track racing is helping in that regard. Straight racetracks have been constructed at Goulburn and at Richmond. I think the industry should also be looking at using staggered boxes like they do in the United Kingdom. Members can see what I am talking about if they sit up late at night to watch the UK races on television while they do their parliamentary preparation—and have a little bet. Obviously the staggered boxes help because if the dogs are separate from each other, incidences of injury are reduced. I think the use of staggered boxes is an important consideration for animal welfare.

I know a lot of greyhound trainers and, quite frankly, at some facilities the dogs are living in better conditions than some humans that can be seen sleeping in the tunnel to St James Railway Station. At premier trainer Andy Lord's Clover Park Racing Group facility in Gunning, in southern New South Wales, the dogs enjoy heated floors and cooked meals. Training facilities have improved. The industry got the message about wastage and the illegal putting down of dogs; I think that has all dried up. There have been no more horrific findings of mass graves or reports of people putting dogs into hessian bags and throwing them into dams. That is just not happening now because the penalties are severe.

Greyhound trainers know that surveillance is used. They say, "I think that's a GWIC surveillance camera up in the tree." It is probably not; it is more likely a kookaburra or something, but these people are on edge. They have been put on notice that those past practices are no longer acceptable, heavily illegal and that they will be subject to jail time if caught doing them. The off-track issues have been resolved satisfactorily, but we need to do more on track for animal welfare. I obviously have a different perspective to some of the members who have made contributions, but I hope that my comments are taken in good faith because I believe what I have said is true.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): I make it clear that there is only one motion before the House. There is no amendment before the House. The Hon. Emma Hurst sought leave to amend her motion prior to moving it. Leave was granted and then the member moved the motion as amended.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (18:03): By leave: I want to indicate the Government's position on the amendment made to the motion prior to it being moved, now that we have had time to consider it. I start by saying that I agree with the Hon. Mark Latham that improvements have been made in the industry. The Government believes that is the case, but we also believe that there are questions to answer. Public confidence must be maintained, and it is important that members feel like there are answers to those questions. However it is also important that the Minister, a longstanding and very good member of this Parliament, has time to work through this matter in a reasonable way and, in particular, has time to consult with his colleagues.

In relation to the amended motion, paragraph (1) does not cause the Government a problem, but paragraph (2) does cause a problem because it adds all reports, all draft reports, all versions of the report with edits and feedback authored by the Hon. Lea Drake; and all correspondence over a six-month period between the Minister, the Hon. Lea Drake and the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission. The Minister is asking, quite reasonably in my view and in the view of the Government, to be able to work through the substantial issues in an orderly way and to talk to his colleagues. This is a substantive report, as I understand it. I cannot tell members what is in it because I have not been consulted through the Cabinet process. I am acting on advice here, but I cannot shed more light on the issues that are being raised. I would caution members against dismissing this work before it has been presented. As I understand it, it is a substantive report, and I can understand why members are interested. It is entirely reasonable for the Minister to ask to go through the normal Cabinet process.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (18:06): I want to speak to the motion and more broadly about the New South Wales Government's support for regions and industries in the regions, like the greyhound industry. We are deeply interested in and committed to the welfare of greyhounds in this State. We have made that clear. According to the New South Wales Racing Industry Economic Contribution Report, the three racing codes in this State generate approximately \$3.3 billion for the New South Wales economy and sustain more than 27,500 full-time equivalent jobs across the State. Of this, greyhound racing contributes over \$335 million and 2,781 full-time equivalent jobs, predominantly in our rural and regional communities, like my hometown of Cessnock and electorates in the Upper Hunter. I know there are many greyhound racing trainers and organisations in the great Upper Hunter.

NSW Labor supports our regions. While the greyhound racing industry has made improvements in how it has been run over the past eight years, the Government is committed to making it the best it can be—unlike those opposite, who tried to shut it down. That is why the inquiry into Greyhound Racing NSW was established by the Minister for Gaming and Racing, the Hon. David Harris, MP, on 11 July 2024. The Hon. Lea Drake was appointed to lead the inquiry. Ms Drake is highly respected and regarded across the legal profession. She is an accomplished mediator and investigator. We thank her for her work.

In addition to her 17 years working in private legal practice, Ms Drake has over 28 years of tribunal experience. She has more than two decades experience as a member of the Fair Work Commission and was the inaugural Commissioner of Integrity of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission. She has also sat on several civil, administrative and sports misconduct related tribunals. She served for 23 years as a presidential member of the Fair Work Commission, holding the rank, status and precedence of a Justice of the Federal Court. Most recently, as we know, Ms Drake was appointed as a member in the Workers Compensation Division of the Personal Injury Commission, where she will serve also until 2028. As we have heard, the purpose of the inquiry was to ensure a viable and sustainable greyhound racing industry in New South Wales with the highest standards of integrity and animal welfare, which we, as a government, are committed to, unlike those opposite, who tried to shut it down.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (18:09): On behalf of the Opposition, I indicate our support for the motion. We always support motions of this nature.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (18:09): My contribution will follow on from that of my colleague the Hon. Emily Suvaal and speak about the nature of the inquiry, which examined Greyhound Racing NSW governance, operations, financial management, track safety and animal welfare. Acting Commissioner Drake was given the full powers available to the commission under the Greyhound Racing Act 2017, in its capacity as independent regulator to investigate and report on those issues. The scope of the inquiry was to inquire into, report on and make findings and recommendations in relation to the following matters. The first was greyhound welfare and the care of greyhounds by Greyhound Racing NSW, including management and compliance with welfare standards and any welfare concerns relating to Greyhound Racing NSW's management of greyhound adoption and rehoming programs, and facilities, and its other functions under the Act. The second was Greyhound Racing

NSW processes and management, including financial management, procurement and recruitment practices, and concerns regarding any alleged or identified conflicts of interest and the management of conflicts of interest.

The third was the accuracy and reporting by Greyhound Racing NSW in relation to greyhounds and whether that reporting represents the true state of the greyhound racing industry, including the welfare of greyhounds and the state of related programs under Greyhound Racing NSW's control, awareness and oversight. The fourth was the performance and effectiveness of Greyhound Racing NSW's functions under the Act and the Greyhound Racing NSW operating licence in relation to racecourse safety management and compliance with minimum track standards. The fifth was the Greyhound Racing NSW management response to compliance or concerns regarding organisational and workplace culture and conduct or any other related matters arising in the inquiry. The sixth, and final, was other matters arising in the course of the inquiry into the matters listed above that the acting commissioner considers relevant.

The inquiry received over 1,600 public submissions, more than 80,000 documents and looked at material from 31 days of hearings. As a result of the large volume of sensitive and complex information provided to the inquiry, the Minister for Gaming and Racing approved an extension to the inquiry. The extra time ensured procedural fairness to all parties and allowed more in-depth consideration of reform options. The terms of reference procedures and hearing transcripts are published on the inquiry website. I also point out that the inquiry was independent. The welfare and integrity issues in Greyhound Racing NSW are overseen by the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission, which is an independent government body. *[Time expired.]*

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (18:13): I make a contribution to debate on this motion. Welfare and integrity issues in greyhound racing in New South Wales are overseen by the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission, which is, of course, an independent government body. Acting Commissioner Drake was given full autonomy in determining how the inquiry was conducted, and she had all the inquiry powers available under part 8 of the Act, including broad powers to hold hearings and compel persons to attend the inquiry, give evidence and produce documents. The acting commissioner also had extensive investigatory and enforcement powers available to the commission. An office was established within the Department of Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport to support Acting Commissioner Drake to undertake the inquiry.

It is the case that the Minister for Gaming and Racing, the Hon. David Harris, MP, has received the report from Acting Commissioner Drake. The findings and recommendations of the Drake inquiry report will be considered carefully as part of the New South Wales Government's ongoing commitment to the highest standards of governance, integrity and animal welfare in the greyhound racing industry. The Government will now consider the comprehensive report and determine the appropriate next steps to ensure that the New South Wales greyhound racing industry is the best it can be.

Although the Government does respect the authority of this House to make orders to compel Government Ministers and agencies to produce documents, and acknowledges that it is obliged to comply with those orders, the House's power to compel the production of documents does not extend to Cabinet information. As members know, that has been confirmed by the Court of Appeal in *Egan v Chadwick*. As I said earlier, the inquiry report will be submitted to Cabinet in the near future for the Government to consider and respond to. For those reasons, the Government opposes the motion.

The Hon. EMMA HURST (18:15): In reply: I thank Minister John Graham, the Hon. Mark Latham, Ms Abigail Boyd, the Hon. Emily Suvaal, the Hon. Mark Buttigieg and the Hon. Stephen Lawrence for their contributions. I defend the report that was put forward by Dr Alex Brittan. To be clear, he did not suggest that greyhounds should be wearing shoes, and I want to correct that on record. If members read the handover document, they will find that he compared dogs running in the heat and the surfaces that they are running on with when human beings are running with shoes. If the report is read carefully, it is clear that he is complaining about the surfaces that greyhounds have to run on and saying that the surfaces need to change for the dogs. He is not, at any point, suggesting the dogs should be put into shoes. It is unclear whether the people reading the report did not understand that, or whether they were just trying to make a joke. It is very clear in the report.

Regarding the claims about the Government not wanting to actually release the report, the problem is that no timeline to release it to the public has been announced. There is obviously a push from the Government at the moment to find ways to delay or ignore the Standing Order 52 calls for papers that are agreed to in this House by pretending that either a Standing Order 55 application is required or claiming that it does not have to comply with it. It is simply not acceptable. We cannot know whether the Government's claims that the industry is reforming and has shown improvement are true because we cannot even get access to the report. If there are genuine changes, let us see the report. The Government should agree to make it public.

There are other Standing Order 52 motions in this House regarding other continuing problems, which might be of interest to the Hon. Mark Latham—I do take that his comments were genuine. A Standing Order 52 order

that the House has agreed to but that the Government is refusing to comply with is regarding live baiting, which continues in the industry. It is still being covered up by the Labor Government. I am gobsmacked that anyone can stand in this House and defend extreme animal cruelty. Live animals are tied to lures and then torn apart. And, as the Hon. Mark Latham described, dogs in sacks filled with bricks are thrown in the river. Labor MPs still defend those actions that were exposed in the greyhound racing industry, for which the public will never forgive them. I am rather disgusted to see members of this House defend those practices that were exposed today. I thank members for supporting the motion and acknowledge that the majority of members in this House recognise that the documents should be made public.

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

The House divided.

Ayes23
Noes16
Majority.....7

AYES

Barrett	Higginson	Mitchell
Boyd	Hurst	Munro
Buckingham	Latham	Overall
Carter	MacDonald	Rath (teller)
Cohn	Maclaren-Jones	Roberts
Faehrmann	Martin	Ruddick
Fang (teller)	Merton	Tudehope
Farlow	Mihailuk	

NOES

Banasiak	Jackson	Murphy (teller)
Borsak	Kaine	Nanva (teller)
Buttigieg	Lawrence	Primrose
D'Adam	Mookhey	Sharpe
Donnelly	Moriarty	Suvaal
Graham		

PAIRS

Ward

Houssos

Motion agreed to.

Bills

STATUTE LAW (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL 2025

CHILDREN'S GUARDIAN AMENDMENT BILL 2025

Returned

The PRESIDENT: I report receipt of messages from the Legislative Assembly returning the bills without amendment.

Documents

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE SECTOR

Further Return to Order

The CLERK: According to the resolution of the House of Tuesday 18 March 2025, as varied on Tuesday 6 May 2025 and amended on Thursday 5 June 2025, and Thursday 27 March 2025, I table:

- a return received on Wednesday 6 August 2025 from the Cabinet Office, together with an indexed list of documents with certain privileged and personal information redacted as ordered; and
- a return received on Wednesday 6 August 2025 from the Cabinet Office of documents subject to a claim of personal information.

OUT OF SCHOOL CARE SERVICES**Return to Order**

The CLERK: According to the resolution of the House of Wednesday 25 June 2025, I table:

- (a) a return received on Wednesday 6 August 2025 from the Cabinet Office, together with an indexed list of documents;
- (b) a return received on Wednesday 6 August 2025 from the Cabinet Office of documents subject to a claim of privilege; and
- (c) a return received on Wednesday 6 August 2025 from the Cabinet Office of documents subject to a claim of personal information.

The PRESIDENT: I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 8.00 p.m.

*Bills***CRIMES (SENTENCING PROCEDURE) AMENDMENT BILL 2025****DISTRICT COURT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2025****First Reading**

Bills received from the Legislative Assembly.

Leave granted for procedural matters to be dealt with on one motion without formality.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: On behalf of the Hon. Daniel Mookhey: I move:

That the bills be read a first time and published, standing orders be suspended according to sessional order for remaining stages and the second readings of the bills be set down as orders of the day for the next sitting day.

Motion agreed to.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: According to standing order, I table statements of public interest with respect to each of the bills.

Statements of public interest tabled.

*Documents***WEE WAA HEALTH SERVICE****Production of Documents: Order**

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (20:03): I seek the leave of the House to amend private members' business item No. 2189 standing in my name on today's *Notice Paper* by omitting "21 days" and inserting instead "28 days".

Leave granted.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Accordingly, I move:

That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 28 days of the date of passing of this resolution the following documents created since 1 May 2023 in the possession, custody or control of the Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast, or the Ministry of Health (including NSW Health and NSW Ambulance Service) relating to Wee Waa hospital and health services:

- (a) all documents, including draft reports, meeting minutes, ministerial briefings and correspondence, relating to the review of Wee Waa hospital;
- (b) all documents regarding all proposals to change the emergency department at Wee Waa hospital to an urgent care model;
- (c) all documents relating to the justification or reasoning for the recommendation to transition Wee Waa hospital to an urgent care model;
- (d) all documents concerning all other proposed or potential changes to emergency departments to transition them to urgent care models in other regional, rural and remote hospitals in New South Wales;
- (e) all documents regarding implementation plans for Wee Waa hospital following the review of Wee Waa hospital, including all documents relating to timelines and plans for community consultation;
- (f) all documents regarding the impacts on paramedics in the Wee Waa area since the hospital began operating with reduced hours in May 2023, including all documents relating to staffing impacts or health outcomes for patients; and
- (g) any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House. At the outset, I acknowledge the office of the Minister for Health, who came to see me to indicate that the Government would not oppose the motion but would seek an extension of time. We were happy to support that, because this is a really important issue for the community of Wee Waa and for health services more broadly across regional New South Wales. The

motion is fairly straightforward. We are seeking documents relating to a review that was undertaken of the Wee Waa hospital and Wee Waa Health Service, as well as any of the information that helped to formulate that review and its recommendations.

I move the motion not just as a very proud member of The Nationals who lives in north-western New South Wales but also on behalf of the Wee Waa community. Last week my colleague the Hon. Scott Barrett and I attended a very big community meeting about the hospital. It was also attended by Mayor Darrell Tiemens of Narrabri Shire Council, which looks after Wee Waa, and the Save Wee Waa Hospital community group. I think there were close to 300 residents there. In a town of only a couple of thousand, that tells members how important the issue is to the local community. Everybody who was there was very passionate and very dedicated to making sure that their community has a quality health service.

We heard a lot about the challenges that they are experiencing, given the fact that their hospital is literally open fewer hours per day than their local supermarket; the concern about the distance that they are from Narrabri, which is the next hospital service available to them; and the fact that many patients end up being transferred to bigger hospitals, such as in Tamworth. It is putting a lot of pressure on the community and on paramedics. We heard first-hand from some of the paramedics about how that is impacting them and their work. We think it is really important that Wee Waa hospital offers those services to the community.

The terms of the review that was undertaken by the Government and the Minister was given to us on the night. I understand it is being looked at and they are now working through the implementation, but we want to understand what work has occurred within the department and within the Minister's office in relation to this review. I specifically call out the reference to transitioning the emergency department at Wee Waa hospital to the urgent care model, because recommendation 1 of the review is to introduce an urgent care model with limited subacute and non-acute beds.

The community is concerned about that and I share their angst. There are places for urgent care models to complement emergency services. It makes sense to have somewhere that people can go for more minor health issues. But members of that community, which is a good half-hour drive from the next hospital—not to mention all of the surrounding villages that feed into Wee Waa as their local hospital—are right to be concerned after being told they will have only an urgent care model on offer. The community is rightly concerned about what that will mean. We heard from local businesses and community members about that.

We want to understand what has gone on, particularly the justification behind potentially transitioning Wee Waa hospital to an urgent care model. We also want to know about the implementation plans, the timelines and what will happen in terms of community consultation. I am also curious to find out whether there are other plans afoot to look at changing emergency room offerings in rural and regional hospitals to urgent care models. That would concern us greatly. We have heard that the Government is looking at doing that, and we would like to see whether that is the case.

I once again acknowledge the importance of this issue for the Wee Waa community. As I said to them on the night, they should not have to fight so hard for basic health services in their community. Frankly, a community meeting like that would not have to occur in Sydney because this situation would never happen. I do not think it is acceptable to say to a community that its hospital will open at eight o'clock and close at 5.30, and they had better hope nothing too critical happens between 5.30 p.m. and 8.00 a.m. We need to back in that community. Hopefully the documents will provide some insight and some information for the residents of Wee Waa and for the Save Wee Waa Hospital group. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (20:08): I thank the member for her motion and acknowledge the importance of this issue to her and to the Wee Waa community. I place on record my thanks to the member for her openness to the amendment to 28 days and join with her in singing the praises of the staff in the office of the Minister for Health. They are extremely professional and hardworking staff, and they do an amazing job. The Government agrees to support the motion as amended. Rural hospitals and health services play a crucial role in keeping rural communities healthy and safe and ensuring that they have access to safe and high-quality care. We also know that they face significant staffing challenges across the State, and Wee Waa Health Service is no exception. I take note of the initiatives that the Minns Labor Government has introduced around staffing in health facilities in regional areas. Some of the health workforce incentives that have been introduced, and which have been taken up across the State, have shown good signs of heading in the right direction.

I also note the importance of making sure we have competitive wages in New South Wales. I state for the record that we are seeing some green shoots when it comes to the significant staffing challenges across the State. Nonetheless, I acknowledge the concerns in the Wee Waa community. Improving access to care in our regional, rural and remote communities remains a key priority for the Government. Since taking office, we have introduced a number of initiatives to rebuild the regional health workforce—and not just in hospitals. There have been a number of initiatives around regional paramedics, such as the additional paramedics that have been rolled out

across the regions and the important pay and recognition for paramedics across the State. That being said, I acknowledge that there is significant pressure on paramedics in places like Wee Waa. That is something that our Government takes very seriously. With those words, I commend the amended motion to the House.

Dr AMANDA COHN (20:11): I indicate that The Greens will be supporting the motion. I think the inequity that exists between rural, regional and remote communities and their metropolitan counterparts in terms of access to health care is really well established. However, the community, including local healthcare workers in Wee Waa, are really concerned that the situation is not just inequitable but is getting worse rather than getting better. The community is seeking reinstatement of their 24-hour emergency department with an on-call doctor in town. The Government has talked about some of the challenges that it has in staffing these health services. I do not want to minimise or deny those challenges. However, the kinds of initiatives that the Government is taking—which are positive, which are welcome and which I do not want to criticise—feel like rearranging the deckchairs on the *Titanic* when we still do not pay healthcare workers what they would earn in other States.

We cannot convince staff specialist doctors, psychiatrists, nurses and midwives to work even at Sydney hospitals anymore, let alone at Wee Waa. The same issues that exist in my local community of Albury-Wodonga—where nurses, midwives and doctors choose to work across the river in Victoria—also exist on the Queensland border. When a nurse or midwife can earn 18 per cent more across the border in Queensland, it is a huge challenge to adequately staff those services. The community and the mover of the motion, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, are asking important questions about how decisions like the changes to service levels at Wee Waa have been arrived at. It is really important for the Government to be accountable and transparent about how those decisions are reached. Is this truly the best option for healthcare services in this community? If not, how can that be improved? This is an important motion, and The Greens support it.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (20:13): I speak in support of the motion moved by the Leader of The Nationals in this place. I am well aware that the community wants more answers about the status of the hospital in Wee Waa. They want to know what is being done to their hospital and why. Last week I joined the Hon. Sarah Mitchell at the town hall meeting in Wee Waa to discuss the future of the hospital. Some 200 to 300 people were there. Some had not been home from work and others had brought their kids along. Those people did not really want to have to sit on hard chairs in a school hall on a cold night in order to have their voices heard on access to what most people in this State would consider a pretty expectable service. They should not have to do that. The fact that they had to reeks of further Government neglect of our regional communities.

I acknowledge that charge does not apply to every individual in the Government. However, as a whole, that neglect is laid bare time and again. We do not hear of people living to the east of this place having community meetings to demand access to emergency health care. That just would not happen. But right across regional New South Wales, more and more people are feeling that they have to shout really loud to have their voices heard. I was in Parkes recently, where people wanted their voices heard on the proposed incinerator. There are people screaming out about solar panels smashing the value of their land at Geurie, but no-one seems to be listening. So here we are again, asking for information on behalf of the people of regional New South Wales—in this case the people of Wee Waa and surrounds, who want access to health services that most of the State takes for granted.

In making that point, it is very important that I state that regional New South Wales is by far the best place to live, work and raise a family. That remains the case despite this neglect, and despite the need for us to constantly demand respect from this Government. I urge all healthcare workers and any other good people—teachers, labourers, farm workers, accountants, shop assistants, bakers, candlestick makers—to move to regional New South Wales because they will love it. They should move to Wee Waa—it is such a great place, with such great people, and evidently a strong community. They will be welcomed there with open arms. Anyone who moves to those towns will have The Nationals to fight for them every step of the way. We will fight to get the services we need and the services we expect. Together, we will continue to grow and see our regional communities thrive as the wonderful places they are.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (20:16): I thank the Hon. Sarah Mitchell for moving the motion and I also acknowledge the importance of this issue. Rural health services face significant staffing challenges, and Wee Waa Health Service is no exception to this. In February this year the Minister for Health announced an independent review of the Wee Waa Health Service to get to the bottom of the contributing challenges and decisions around services and models of care. It was led by a review team of experienced health leaders.

The process included visits to Wee Waa during April and May; in-depth conversations with community members, staff and stakeholders; and a review of successful models of care from across New South Wales. In July the Minister for Health, the Hon. Ryan Park, announced that the review had delivered 20 recommendations to ensure the Wee Waa community and surrounding areas have access to safe, high-quality care now and into the future. The work done as part of that review provides a clear path forward to rebuilding services. The Minister for Health has publicly expressed his thanks to the staff and the local community for their support.

Local voices must remain completely in the centre as we shape the future of health care for the Wee Waa community. A new local health committee will play a key role in shaping how care is delivered, and recruitment is currently underway to bring that important group together. The district will work closely with the community as they develop and implement their response to the recommendations, keeping everyone informed as we move forward.

I note that the Minister for Health has acknowledged that while there is more work to be done, this review has put us on the right track in terms of rebuilding the health services that the community needs and deserves. In conclusion, I again thank the Hon. Sarah Mitchell for moving the motion and acknowledge that this is a most important issue for the Wee Waa community. People have mobilised around the issue and shown their real concern for their community and the health service. The challenges of staffing in rural health are complex and difficult, but it is good to know that the independent review has paved a way forward.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (20:18): In reply: I thank members for their contributions and support for this call for papers. As I said in my original contribution, this is about getting information for members of the Wee Waa community. They are concerned about what is happening at their health service and want to make sure that they have an opportunity to understand the decisions that are being made. They want to be involved and listened to. They want to have a health service that is open 24 hours a day with a doctor on call. It is not unreasonable. Hopefully, these papers will give us some insight into the inner workings within government and the Department of Health about that particular hospital service. I am happy to stand in Parliament and back in the Wee Waa community, and I look forward to receiving the documents.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): The question is that the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Business of the House

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: By leave: Pursuant to Standing Order 75, I give notice of a motion to extend the reporting date of the Select Committee on PFAS Contamination in Waterways and Drinking Water Supplies Throughout New South Wales.

Bills

LOCAL COURT AMENDMENT (JURISDICTION) BILL 2025

Returned

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Assembly returning the bill without amendment.

Documents

SYNTHETIC SPORTS FIELDS

Production of Documents: Order

Dr AMANDA COHN (20:21): I move:

That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 21 days of the date of passing of this resolution the following documents in the possession, custody or control of the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, the Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Heritage, the Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, Minister for Sport and Minister for Jobs and Tourism, the Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning and Minister for Western Sydney, the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, the Department of Education, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, the Environment Protection Authority or the Office of Sport relating to relating to synthetic sports fields:

- (a) all documents created since 1 January 2021 regarding the assessment or approval process for determining funding allocations for synthetic fields and their replacements, including all records of who was responsible for approvals;
- (b) all correspondence or ministerial briefings created since 5 August 2022 regarding synthetic fields, including all documents relating to responses to questions;
- (c) all applications or correspondence created since 1 January 2021 regarding funding for all sporting facility upgrades, including synthetic fields at the North Turrumurra Recreation Area, Fred Caterson Reserve, or Callan Park;
- (d) all submissions received during public exhibition of the draft synthetic turf sports fields guidelines in public or open spaces;
- (e) all correspondence created since 1 January 2021 relating to the independent review into the design, use and impacts of synthetic turf in public places by the NSW Chief Scientist or synthetic turf in public places guidelines for decision makers, as exhibited in draft for public consultation;

- (f) all documents created since 1 January 2024 regarding research on microplastic pollution, including Broadscale Microplastic Assessment, bushfire threat, or heat or health impacts of synthetic fields;
- (g) all documents created since 1 January 2024 regarding synthetic fields being repurposed or recycled at end-of-life;
- (h) all documents relating to meetings, presentations, trips or events since 1 January 2021 involving industry representatives or academics with any minister, agency representative or public service employee regarding synthetic fields or sportsground upgrades; and
- (i) any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.

This is an order for papers relating to synthetic sports fields. My concerns about synthetic sports fields have been pretty well ventilated in here before. They are extremely hot. They pose a heat risk, particularly to children and young people playing on these surfaces, but there is also an increased risk of matches getting cancelled on hot summer days. I have seen absolutely horrifying videos from citizen scientists showing the temperature of the plastic turf in summer being hotter than the adjacent concrete pavement, and we are asking kids to play sport on those surfaces. Members would have seen the media reports of what happened to the synthetic pitch at Chatswood High School, where it actually fell to bits and big clumps of it were coming home on kids' cleats. There are also the environmental issues. Those pitches are a really concerning source of microplastic pollution in terms of runoff into waterways but also airborne and through inhalation.

Add to that the significant risk of having vested interests involved, with a very small number of companies that manufacture and install those pitches in New South Wales. I have really significant concerns about the process that is being undertaken to regulate these pitches and roll them out. I acknowledge that the Government has done some work on that issue since coming in, and it produced draft synthetic turf sports field guidelines, which went on public exhibition and were then updated. While that has provided some guidance to the sector, it has not responded completely to the Government's own chief scientist's report on the matter. Despite the fact that I have for some months been seeking publication of the submissions made during that process, the Government has declined to do so.

The decisions that are being made about this issue should be transparent. Communities should understand the process that was undertaken to develop those guidelines and what work is or is not being done in response to the chief scientist's report. The community deserves reassurance that these really serious issues are being adequately considered by decision-makers in all of the settings where those fields are going in. That includes local councils, sport clubs and recipients of State Government grants through the Office of Sport. It also includes schools and educational facilities through the Department of Education and others. Given how widespread synthetic turf is and the significant risks it poses, the community deserves transparency. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (20:24): The Government will not oppose this call for papers moved by Dr Amanda Cohn, and I understand that the Opposition is not opposing it either. I place on record a couple of issues. In the context of the call for papers, it is important to know that the Government has released guidelines to support decision-makers considering applications for synthetic turf in public open spaces. That follows the advice prepared by the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer. As members may know, those guidelines do not mandate or require synthetic turf to be used in public open space. Any decision on the application of synthetic turf for playing fields is made by the relevant land manager; as we know, that is usually the local council. Rather, those guidelines provide assessment guidance to councils and other parts of government that wish to include synthetic turf in their open spaces. They have been developed following investigations into the use and impacts of synthetic turf by the Chief Scientist and Engineer. That included consultation with councils, key stakeholders, the community and industry.

As demand grows, synthetic turf means that sporting fields and ovals are able to be used more frequently across more climates and more parts of the year. I think that is really where the rub is on how we use these turfs. We have real challenges across a whole range of places, and it is not just a city issue; it is also a regional issue. We want kids to be able to participate in sport and play every weekend. We want thousands of them to do so. There are two real challenges: One is the capacity to accommodate as many kids as want to play; the other is the impact of weather on cancelling sport all over the State. I am lucky that my children are of the age now where they do not play sport. I do not have to spend all Saturday running around.

The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine: Me too. Yay!

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine understands that freedom, but those who have little ones—the Hon. Emily Suvaal, it is coming for you—would know that spending time doing that is a huge issue. But we also know that, even this year, sport has been cancelled for many people because it has been so wet. That is what we are trying to balance: How do we make sure that we have participation and safe synthetic turf?

The Government has been working through that really carefully and will continue to do so. We believe the guidelines are important, and they were based on all of that information.

To be fair to Dr Amanda Cohn, this is a very big call for papers that requires a lot of different information. We will, obviously, abide by the deadline. For whatever reason, negotiations around extending it have been challenging. I say up-front that the Government is not opposing the motion. We understand there are big issues here. The previous Government had a go at addressing them. We have continued to do so, and we will try to find the right balance that allows participation safely, with no microplastics going into the environment while making sure that kids can play sport when they need to.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (20:27): I indicate that the Opposition will be supporting this request for papers under Standing Order 52, in the interests of accountability and transparency.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (20:27): I make a brief contribution on the matter. I note the contribution from the Leader of the Government about how seriously the Government is taking this issue, and I will also raise a few points about it. A council in one of my duty electorates has been quite concerned. In fact, Georges River Council has announced that it will fund a synthetic field rubber crumb trial to see how it can help stop rubber crumb from migrating into the environment. That issue affects so many places and so many fields, so we need to take it seriously. That is a reflection of what happens when we think we have a solution for something but do not necessarily understand the consequences down the track.

The idea was that synthetic fields allow more access and they do not have the same kinds of issues as fields with real turf. But, often with solutions that are focused on plastics, we do not necessarily understand the consequences down the track. The consequences are potentially very serious, not only in terms of the heat and wellbeing of those playing on the surfaces but also for the environment. We are increasingly seeing evidence about the impact of microplastics on human health, but we do not really know exactly what that means yet. I can open a newspaper or an international journal on almost any day and see a new study about the amount of microplastics entering our bodies and being found in various organs.

I had a quick look today and discovered some research that shows that athletes are likely to have higher levels of PFAS after playing on artificial turf. This research is from a small study, which we must always be cautious of. It is particularly distressing that the results found elevated levels of PFAS on "the skin of six-year-old soccer players and their coach". Because we are not entirely sure what the long-term consequences of PFAS are, that may not be an issue. I have spoken in this place before about my concern with PFAS levels in items of clothing, but there is so little understanding in this area and the science is evolving. The Government is trying to be as ahead of the science as it can. This is an important issue, and I am glad to get as much information about it as we possibly can.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (20:30): I do not oppose the call for papers moved by Dr Amanda Cohn. She has quite passionately pursued this issue for the entirety of her time in this place. She has spoken about synthetic turf a number of times, and I know she feels very strongly about it. I acknowledge that the Opposition does not oppose the motion. The Government has released guidelines to support decision-makers who are considering applications for synthetic turf in public open spaces. I married into a hockey-playing family so I know full well that some sports are only played on synthetic turf. Whenever I am home on the weekend, I am dragged down to the Newcastle International Hockey Centre, which is a wonderful state-of-the-art facility. It has three synthetic turf hockey fields.

The place is filled with hockey all week. Many players descend upon the fields, including school-age kids and people playing in the Hockey Australia Masters tournaments. It is a wonderful facility that we are happy to go to every weekend. Hockey is played on synthetic turf with the presence of water sprinklers, although these have not been used over the past couple of wet weekends. This important sports facility is a hive of community activity that brings people together. It is an important source of social connection and economic activity for the Newcastle area. I fully recommend it to my colleagues as a weekend sports venue that has an operational bar. It is one of the few sports facilities that I do not mind going to on the weekend.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: We don't have that at our hockey.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: It is second to none.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: I ought to talk to someone.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: You will have to talk to someone. It is a highly important facility that I regularly enjoy going to.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (20:34): I thank Dr Amanda Cohn for moving this motion. This is a hugely important and vexed issue. I have two kids under the age of 12 who play soccer. My son Finbar's game

was cancelled two weeks ago because he was playing on a normal field, but my daughter's game on a synthetic field was able to go ahead. Synthetic turf provides an advantage, but there are so many legitimate concerns. I am a member of the committee inquiring into PFAS, which is chaired by Ms Cate Faehrmann. We have heard about the prevalence in all walks of life of this terrible material. It is alarming the things it is found in. Most people do not know that PFAS lines the inside of microwave popcorn bags. It is in the film that makes the popcorn bag work.

PFAS is in all sorts of synthetic material, including carpet, curtains and other textiles like synthetic turf. It is prevalent in firefighting equipment, cooking implements, textiles, paint and other items. If we are going to use synthetic turf in the future, then we have to be able to create a form of it that is free of PFAS and that is environmentally friendly. If we put it down, then we ought to be able to remove it without environmental destruction. I do not think it exists at the moment, but it might in the future. I use this brief contribution to say that this is a vexed issue. Synthetic turf is a saviour on a rainy weekend when you have kids. It saves my household from a lot of grief. My kids love playing sport on the weekend. All week they look forward to being out there, and synthetic turf makes sure that that happens. But we also have to look after the environment. We have to make sure that any synthetic turf we use in the future is made of something environmentally friendly.

Dr AMANDA COHN (20:37): In reply: I thank members for their contributions to the debate. I appreciate that neither the Government nor the Opposition will oppose this call for papers. I take this opportunity to respond to and clarify some of the points that were raised during the debate about the substantive issue of synthetic turf rather than the call for papers. I firstly clarify that The Greens do not want to prevent anyone from playing hockey. Synthetic turf has for a long time had limited and specific uses, which is not the subject of this inquiry. My interrogation of this issue is about the widespread replacement of entire ovals. Natural turf on footy and cricket ovals is being replaced by synthetic turf. That is creating enormous urban heat islands and stopping people from using those facilities for other types of access.

Multiple members spoke about the need for balance of access. Synthetic turf can be great for this, but people cannot picnic on it. People cannot walk their dogs on synthetic turf. Green space is precious and at a premium in this day and age, particularly in metropolitan areas. It needs to be shared as widely as possible to maximise community use. Installing synthetic turf is actually limiting use to only one sporting group or club. It is even more concerning that the Chief Scientist and Engineer report on the guidelines states that synthetic turf needs to be shaded because of the heat risk and the risk of plastic sitting in the sun. That may be feasible in specific and small-scale uses, but no-one is talking about shading entire football pitches. It is not practical, and it will not happen. Pitches are not being installed in line with either the guidelines or the advice from the Chief Scientist and Engineer.

Even more concerning is the idea that the performance is better in wet weather. That is absolutely not true. The vast majority of pitches that members would be familiar with, that their kids are playing on, are not best practice. With best practice drainage, the performance of a synthetic pitch in wet weather is no better than that of natural turf. We need to be supporting clubs and local councils to upgrade natural turf surfaces to best practice drainage to improve their playing capacity, rather than replacing grass with plastic on a really large scale across the State.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): The question now is that the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Production of Documents: Order

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (20:40): I seek leave to amend private members' business item No. 2188 standing in my name on today's *Notice Paper* by omitting "14 days" and inserting instead "21 days".

Leave granted.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Accordingly, I move:

That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 21 days of the date of passing of this resolution the following documents created since 1 January 2025 in the possession, custody or control of the Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales and Minister for Western New South Wales, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, the Premier's Department or the Cabinet Office relating to the proposed reduction of Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development roles:

- (a) all correspondence, briefings, meeting notes or internal communications regarding the rationale for the proposed reduction of approximately 165 roles from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development;

- (b) all correspondence, briefings, meeting notes or internal communications regarding which positions will be cut and where they are located;
- (c) all correspondence, briefings, meeting notes or internal communications regarding service impacts, risks to biosecurity, the impact on agriculture, or the impact on regional development programs as a result of the proposed reduction;
- (d) all documents regarding consultation or communication with unions, affected staff, or regional stakeholders regarding the changes;
- (e) all briefings or modelling on the impact of staffing changes on regional service delivery, including biosecurity programs; and
- (f) any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.

This is a very self-explanatory motion, so I do not intend to speak to it for too long. It is about getting more information about the proposed reduction of roles at the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. The Government has announced that it will be cutting approximately 165 roles from within that department. The Nationals are very keen to understand what has led to the decisions around those positions, where they are located, what consultation has taken place with affected staff and regional stakeholders, and what impacts there will be on service delivery, particularly around biosecurity, agriculture, and regional development programs.

We have asked the Minister these questions. I note that she is in the Chamber. I am sure that she will speak to the motion. We want to understand the rationale behind these decisions. So far, we have asked questions of the Minister. I acknowledge my Nationals colleagues in the Chamber who have also been pursuing this, along with the Leader of The Nationals, Mr Dugald Saunders, the shadow Minister for Primary Industries. Unfortunately, there has not been a lot of information forthcoming from the Minister. Whenever we ask her about it, the Minister's response is, "It's a decision of the department. It's a decision of the secretary." The Minister says, "It's not up to me. This is up to the department, how they want to do it and what the secretary is doing." That is concerning. What is the point of having a Minister if they are just going to delegate all authority and responsibility to the secretary of the department?

As I said, we are keen to understand the rationale behind this decision, what the Minister knew and what her involvement was. I find the timing of the announcement quite curious; I think it was the week after the NSW Farmers Conference. A number of The Nationals members were there, as was the Minister, the Premier and the Leader of the Government in this place. But lo and behold, the next week the Government suddenly decided to let the cat out of the bag that it is axing those jobs. Obviously, this department has a lot of regional staff. We are concerned that these are country people who will be losing their jobs. They are very worried about what their future holds. This motion is about getting to the bottom of the Government's decision. Hopefully, the House will support this call for papers.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (20:43): The Government does not oppose this call for papers. There is no conspiracy here. There is nothing to hide. We have been clear about the announcement that has been made by the secretary. The process has only just begun, so it is a bit odd for The Nationals to be pursuing a call for papers to get an indication of what consultation has happened when things are only just happening now. The staff who are impacted are being engaged with now.

But the Government is happy to provide the requested documents within the 21-day period. Given the financial state inherited from the previous Government, this Government has to take and is taking fiscal responsibility very seriously—as the most recent budget shows. Everybody has to live within their means. That is in stark contrast to how this department was run by the current Opposition. Over the past eight financial years, the Coalition overspent the budget for the Department of Primary Industries, as it was then called, by \$230 million. Taxpayers, especially in regional New South Wales, know that you cannot continue to spend beyond your means.

The recent announcement by the secretary of the department reinforces the Government's position on fiscal responsibility. It is important to note that the staff management plan announced by the secretary will not have an impact on frontline services. The changes will ensure the department is operating in a fiscally sustainable and responsible manner, while maintaining service levels. I am confident that will be the case. Some staffing changes relate to temporary roles; others impact back-office administration roles and roles where duplication exists. I stress that all impacted staff will be appropriately supported through the process. I acknowledge that this is tough for those people who are impacted. All impacted ongoing employees will have the opportunity to be redeployed across the department or to other parts of the New South Wales public service, consistent with the New South Wales Government's Workforce Mobility Placement policy.

Comprehensive consultation is being undertaken with impacted staff and public sector unions, with feedback being incorporated into final plans. No final decisions have been made; that process is underway. Our

Government is making the hard decisions necessary to ensure fiscal sustainability. While those opposite sold off New South Wales assets but still managed to blow the budget by spending up like drunken sailors, this Government is instead ensuring that taxpayer dollars are being spent to provide services that are appropriate for the people of regional New South Wales, within the budget that we have been allocated.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (20:46): I strongly support this motion because I want to see what evidence there is to back up the Minister's claim yesterday that cutting 165 jobs out of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development will not affect delivery and that it will be able to keep doing what it has been doing. The proof the Minister pointed to was a grant for the Hunter Livestock Exchange, which we welcome. But that grant was administered before this mass sacking and out of a grant pool of which 10 per cent so far has been allocated to the Newcastle Cruising Yacht Club. I am sure that has them popping the Moët out at the Trangie research station, as they pack up their desks and shut down the projects they have been working on. That is proof of the total disconnect between this Government and the needs and priorities of regional New South Wales. It shows the Government's lack of understanding of regional New South Wales.

We have heard, again, that these are proposed changes and no final decision has been made. That is a hard cop for the people who have already been told that they have lost their jobs—jobs they have been working at for 10-plus years, serving the people of regional New South Wales. We heard yesterday that "most teams are not affected". How does that measure up to any sort of reality? It has affected our research teams significantly. It has affected our extensive and intensive livestock teams and our pasture management, skills, compliance and education teams—and that is just within one branch of the department. Yet Government members tell us "most teams are not affected".

We have heard consistently that these job cuts "had to happen" because the department swelled in response to COVID and bushfires. I assume, then, that the cuts will be made to those areas and not to the jobs of people who have been leading research teams, directly helping our farmers to be the best in the world. They do those jobs because they care. They care about our industries, they care about our people and they care about the communities of regional New South Wales—and they would like to see a skerrick of the same from this Government. But they are certainly not feeling that. They are distressed by the way this has been handled.

The Minister claims that "this is a matter for the department", as if the department woke up one day and decided, "Oh, what's the best thing for regional New South Wales? Let's cut another 165 jobs. We did 100 last year. Let's see if we can top it this year." If the Minister is going to take credit for the work the department is doing, she should show some respect and stand up and take responsibility for it. I strongly support the motion, and I do so on behalf of the people of regional New South Wales, particularly those affected by the job cuts.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (20:49): On behalf of The Greens, I make a contribution to debate on the motion. The Greens support the call for papers. I thank the Hon. Sarah Mitchell for moving the motion. The net figure of proposed job cuts within the department is 165. The gross figure, as we have heard, is set at 266, with 111 new jobs created. The Public Service Association reported that it has no guarantees that the new roles will be in the same regional communities where jobs have been cut. In fact, we know they probably will not be. I was fairly aghast to learn that the proposal is to completely slash the Wollongbar Environmental Laboratory. It is just going to go. That lab does really important work for agriculture and biosecurity, and it has done really important work since the floods—the great floods of 2022, as we now call them—particularly in relation to soils and resilience responses and so on.

It is a bit of a slap in the face to my community of the Northern Rivers. I have seen what the department's agricultural station at Wollongbar does. It is a hub, it is a culture and it is an institution. The very idea that the Wollongbar lab will be moved to, apparently, Wagga—there you go, Wes—and the people of the Northern Rivers will move there so that they can have a job or job security is absurd. It is not going to happen. Hopefully, the call for papers will probe what appears to be an incredibly flawed process. It concerns me that the Minister has said, "This call is too early." She has announced the cuts, so there has to be a plan. There has to be something detailed. There has to be a strategy.

I think what this call for papers will not show is perhaps what it should show: a government's vision for building the department to better support agriculture, our food-producing capacity and security—particularly in my region, the Northern Rivers—and the biosecurity threats that right now are crippling, or posing a serious threat of crippling, agriculture and food production. It is just not the direction we should be going. We could be having incredibly vibrant food and fibre futures and systems, but we need the department to be bigger and better, with more investment, not less. But it seems that we are heading in the other direction completely. We are divesting from primary industry resourcing, and that does not fit with what is required at the moment.

The communication about it has been really poor. When I was heading to Sydney last, I heard on the radio someone from the department say, "Oh, we have been taken a bit by surprise. There are some job cuts," so I think

the Government needs to cop some criticism early on and be told that this has started really badly. The Greens definitely support the call for papers but, unfortunately, it does not sound as if we will find what we ought to be able to see.

The Hon. WES FANG (20:52): If we were to look at a sum of, say, \$60,000 and equate it to a figure from a couple of years ago, we might call it 30 pieces of silver because that is potentially what the Minister has done in giving the secretary a \$60,000 pay rise to sack 165 people. That is what we are seeing at the moment, and it is why we need those papers. As Ms Sue Higginson said, the Minister has come into the Chamber and said, "This call is too early." She said, "We're just getting started." How many more jobs is she going to cut? She said, "We're consulting widely. We're just starting." But she has already announced the cuts. How many more cuts is she going to make?

This call for papers is vitally important for rural and regional New South Wales, because we have a Minister here who does not have her hands on the wheel. When we asked her why the jobs are being cut and who instructed it to happen, she threw her hands up in the air and said that it was the secretary's decision—the same secretary that she has just give a \$60,000 pay rise to. Members must be asking themselves: What secretary takes a \$60,000 pay rise whilst telling 165 of their employees that they are out the door? What Minister comes into this House and tries to wipe their hands of it by saying, "I don't know. It's not my problem. We're just getting started."?

That response is this Government all over, and it is why the papers are required. We want to understand why the Government needs to make the job cuts, who will be affected, which communities are going to suffer and whose idea it was, because it is not the rural and regional communities and those frontline workers that the Government is helping. Those frontline workers do not want the jobs cut, so it is either the Minister, the Government or the secretary—the same secretary that just got a \$60,000 pay rise. Who has sold out rural and regional New South Wales? That is what we are going to find out when we see the papers.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (20:55): In reply: I thank members for their contributions to the debate and their support of the motion. I make a couple of comments in reply, particularly about the Minister's contribution to the debate. It is really telling when a Minister has to go back in time and talk about things that happened under the Opposition's watch to explain what led to decisions being made in the present and whatnot. At one point, I heard the Minister say the Opposition were "spending like drunken sailors" on investments in regional areas.

I would love for the Minister to clarify which projects did not deserve to be funded. Which regional communities that got money from us when we were in government did not deserve that investment? The ridiculing of investment in rural and regional communities by a Minister for Regional New South Wales is something I never thought I would see. It is quite extraordinary, and it reiterates why calls for papers like this are so important, because there clearly is not a champion for regional New South Wales sitting around that Cabinet table. There was radio silence from the Government in relation to the cuts when they were first announced. I cannot say how many media reports I saw or heard that indicated that the Government or the Minister had been contacted for comment.

The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones: Crickets.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, crickets. There was no public commentary about it. There was an article in *The Daily Telegraph* a couple of days ago, I think, in which the Minister basically indicated that they were making the decisions to—I did actually write it down—"enhance their evolution into a smarter and financially sustainable organisation". That is the biggest way to throw shade on existing public servants: "We actually need to become a smarter organisation. Sorry to all these people who have worked in a dedicated role for years and years; you're going to lose your job."

I also comment on the contribution from Ms Sue Higginson in relation to the Wollongbar lab. That was a really good point. Particularly when it comes to primary industries, the research and development arm is critical. For full disclosure, when I first met my husband many years ago, he worked for the department of primary industries in Tamworth. He worked in agricultural research and worked for the grain industry after that, so I have seen firsthand how important that work is and what it can do to support strong and sustainable farming practices.

When the guts are ripped out of some of those research stations, particularly the one up on the North Coast and its work around biosecurity, it is a concern. The Opposition wants to get to the bottom of what has gone on. If the Minister says that there is more consultation and we are coming in too early, we are happy to come back for a further call for papers. We will do it again and again until we get to the bottom of what is going on and until people in those jobs understand how this Government treats them as second-class citizens. I look forward to getting the papers. If we need to ask for more, we will be back here to do that.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): The question is that the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Committees

SELECT COMMITTEE ON RURAL HOUSING AND SECOND DWELLINGS

Establishment, Membership and Chair

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): I advise the House of some typographical errors in private members' business item No. 2218 on the *Notice Paper*. Paragraph (1) has two subparagraphs (h). The second of those should be (i), and the subsequent subparagraphs will then be (j), (k) and (l). Paragraphs (5) and (6) should be numbered (4) and (5) respectively. They are purely clerical things. This is relevant because some amendments will be proposed.

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (20:59): I move:

- (1) That a select committee be established to inquire into and report on reforms to facilitate the construction of second dwellings in rural zones, and in particular:
 - (a) planning instruments and development controls to facilitate the construction of second dwellings in rural zones in New South Wales, excluding Greater Sydney, with an emphasis on outer metropolitan local government areas, and in particular the document entitled *State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing) Amendment (Second Dwellings in Rural Zones) 2025*;
 - (b) potential amendments to the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing) 2021* (Housing SEPP), the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Exempt and Complying Development Codes) 2008* (Codes SEPP), and related instruments to enable flexible, streamlined, and liberalised approval pathways for second dwellings on rural-zoned land;
 - (c) the benefits and risks of permitting second dwellings on RU1–RU6, C3 and C4 zoned lands, including via complying development;
 - (d) the suitability of using the Housing SEPP and/or Codes SEPP to override inconsistent provisions in local environmental plans under section 3.28 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979;
 - (e) the impact of removing restrictions on dwelling size, attachment and internal lot distance, and implications of enabling second dwellings to be larger than, or function as, the primary dwelling;
 - (f) the role of elevation criteria and one-in-100-year flood mapping in determining permissibility and the use of performance-based solutions for flood-prone lands (e.g. elevation certification), other land-based hazards and environmental impacts;
 - (g) the interaction between second dwellings and potential impacts on rural activities and productive capacity of land for agriculture, including feasibility and implications of allowing second dwellings without subdivision;
 - (h) the use of non-discretionary, zone-specific development standards to eliminate merit-based assessment in complying pathways and legal frameworks for tenancy in common, co-ownership and strata-like arrangements on rural land;
 - (i) mechanisms to streamline the development application and complying development certificate processes;
 - (j) the adequacy of existing infrastructure (e.g. sewerage, access roads) for servicing second dwellings and potential impacts of reforms on housing affordability, multigenerational living and rural population growth;
 - (k) transitional arrangements and monitoring of policy outcomes; and
 - (l) any other related matter.
- (2) That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the standing orders, the committee consist of seven members comprising:
 - (a) three Government members;
 - (b) two Opposition members; and
 - (c) two crossbench members, one being the Hon. John Ruddick.
- (3) That the chair of the committee be the Hon. John Ruddick and the deputy chair be elected at the first meeting.
- (4) That, unless the committee decides otherwise:
 - (a) all inquiries are to be advertised via social media, stakeholder emails and a media release distributed to all media outlets in New South Wales;
 - (b) submissions to inquiries are to be published, subject to the committee clerk checking for confidentiality and adverse mention and, where those issues arise, bringing them to the attention of the committee for consideration;
 - (c) attachments to submissions are to remain confidential;

- (d) the chair's proposed witness list is to be circulated to provide members with an opportunity to amend the list, with the witness list agreed to by email, unless a member requests the chair to convene a meeting to resolve any disagreement;
 - (e) the sequence of questions to be asked at hearings alternate between Opposition, crossbench and Government members, in that order, with equal time allocated to each;
 - (f) transcripts of evidence taken at public hearings are to be published;
 - (g) supplementary questions are to be lodged with the committee clerk within two business days following the receipt of the hearing transcript, with witnesses requested to return answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions within 21 calendar days of the date on which questions are forwarded to the witness;
 - (h) answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions are to be published, subject to the committee clerk checking for confidentiality and adverse mention and, where those issues arise, bringing them to the attention of the committee for consideration; and
 - (i) media statements on behalf of the committee are to be made only by the chair.
- (5) That the committee report by 13 February 2026.

I promote the establishment of a select committee on rural housing and second dwelling reform. New South Wales is in a housing crisis, which is appalling considering we have so much land in this State. Property prices forever accelerate and so do rents. Young families struggle to buy a home in the communities they grew up in, which creates distance. Many families would prefer elderly parents to live close to them but with a degree of independence and dignity. If we can encourage families to be geographically closer, that will reduce demand for aged care systems and child care. The current rules make it difficult to build a second home on rural properties. Governments at every level are wringing their hands talking about affordability, while the simplest, lowest cost reform is right in front of us: getting out of the way and letting rural property owners build a second residence.

This is not a handout, it is not a subsidy, and it is not a high rise; it is rural property owners saying, "Just let us build." The solution is not in some glossy planning report; it is sitting on hundreds of thousands of paddocks across New South Wales. What is missing is a series of minor but impactful regulatory and legislative changes that this inquiry will consider. Let us empower rural landowners to build a second residence. Obviously some rural landowners will not be interested but, as a country boy originally, I am pretty sure many will relish the opportunity. It will increase the value of their land, likely provide some rental income, let seasonal workers stay onsite and keep families closer. It will also spur local industry, with an increase in demand for building supplies et cetera.

All good reform needs to be carefully thought through, which is why we need an inquiry to get the details right. The committee's primary task would be to assess the draft model instrument State Environmental Planning Policy (Rural Housing) Amendment (Second Dwellings) 2025. The draft instrument is designed to, one, liberalise second dwelling construction on rural zoned properties, RU1 to RU6, without subdivision; two, permit second dwellings as complying development in all rural zones; three, remove requirements for a second dwelling to be attached to the principal dwelling; four, eliminate size limits, allowing a second dwelling to be either smaller, equal or larger than the principal dwelling and potentially function as the primary dwelling; five, relax or remove distance restrictions; six, allow second dwellings on properties above a specified elevation or outside one-in-100-year flood zones; seven, enable flexible legal title arrangements, for example, tenants in common and strata title agreements without subdivision.

There are more than 250,000 rural lots of over five acres in this State. This reform could directly affect over 350,000 citizens. It has economic benefits, environmental safeguards and rising public support, as demonstrated in the Port Macquarie and Hawkesbury local government areas, where local initiatives are exploring similar solutions. The measures are low cost, bipartisan and long overdue. This instrument gives property owners the dignity of choice over their assets. Under the current planning straitjacket, you cannot build a second home for mum and dad as they age, you cannot help your kids get a start in life and you cannot house farm workers to attract staff and keep your business viable. You may even be forced to remove mature trees when a perfectly suited open space is available somewhere else on the same lot. Why? Because some bureaucratic council or statewide policy has decided one house is enough, even on 100 acres, unless it is attached to the main dwelling. This is for reasons unknown and by force of habit because it has always been that way.

I congratulate members on the collaborative way in which they have approached amending the terms of reference for the inquiry. In short, the amendments have my full support. They will enhance rather than hinder the inquiry. For that I am grateful. I would also like to thank the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces and his staff for their assistance. The Libertarian Party is not an oppositionist party that automatically opposes the Government. Because of that, the planning Minister is our favourite Minister. I have even heard a rumour that, given his staunch support for private property rights, he is on a shortlist for the libertarian of the year.

I seek an extension of time.

Leave granted.

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK: Let me highlight what this instrument would do. It would allow a second home on a rural block, detached or attached, bigger or smaller—whatever suits the family—in whichever location on the property is best suited to the new home. It would legalise dual occupancy without forcing people to subdivide and enable the family to be kept intact. It would open the door to affordable multigenerational living without costing the taxpayer a cent. It would streamline approvals, offering a complying development certificate pathway instead of landowners having to beg their local council for permission. It would continue to help councils supply local infrastructure through section 7.12 levies—a win-win.

Some might say, "What about floods or bushfire risk?" This instrument does not throw out such controls. It is built on evidence-based risk criteria, but the inquiry will look into those as well. For those worried about agricultural land being swallowed, the policy includes zone-specific standards to protect agricultural productivity. In fact, in peri-urban local government areas that face urban sprawl pressures, like Hawkesbury, it may act as a bulwark against the more intensive greenfield developments, which can be undesirable to those communities. The draft instrument encourages second dwellings without fragmentation. Councils suffer inertia, stall reforms, apply blanket bans and use one-size-fits-all rules that choke sensible development. Even when council staff want to approve sensible new approaches, they find themselves hogtied by obscure relic rules. Property owners need to be free to use their land in the manner of their choice.

I thank Councillor Nathan Zamprogno of Hawkesbury City Council, who has been very helpful in formulating this initiative, and Councillor Mark Hornshaw, who is a Libertarian councillor at Port Macquarie Hastings Council who helped us come up with the idea. I also thank the Hon. Ross Cameron, who is in the gallery, a former Assistant Treasurer of Australia, who has helped facilitate this project and get it to this point. I commend the motion.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (21:06): I lead for the Legalise Cannabis Party on this issue and commend the honourable member for an excellent and overdue idea in this State. One thing that we have an abundance of in this country, and that should not be at an exorbitant price, is our land. Land in this country should be far cheaper. If we were to enable our rural and regional communities to better develop that land, to bring it to market through this type of reform, we could make significant inroads into the housing crisis in this State, create economic development in some of the areas that desperately need it and create opportunity for more housing in places that are suffering from housing, and especially rental, stress.

As a former Orange City councillor, I was always alarmed that although rural zoning allowed farmers and the holders of land the opportunity to develop that land and build a second dwelling, they could not subdivide it, so they did not do it. They have the infrastructure there—the road, the power, the water and the like—but they do not go out and build the property because they cannot subdivide due to out-of-date, draconian planning laws on the basis that it is going to alienate the productivity of agricultural land and create competition between urban development and agricultural enterprise. But that is ridiculous. The vast majority of rural zoning is pasture land. It is grazing land. A lot of it is very low productivity. Farmers and landholders would rush into this development. It would lead to tens of thousands of new houses and economic development in the regions if we were to follow the path that the Libertarian Party is proposing. It is an excellent idea.

I have raised the idea with the planning Minister. It is an opportunity to create housing in places that desperately need it. Some of our regional areas are experiencing the same sort of housing and rental pressures as the city. People are being forced out of regional areas because they cannot get the housing they need. It is a great idea to build housing in the places we desperately need and provide economic development in the regions. I commend the motion to the House.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (21:09): The Greens do not oppose establishing a select committee to examine reforms for second dwellings in rural zones. In many rural zones in particular local government areas, the changes are already happening. In Lismore we already have second dwelling provisions. We know there is a real and pressing need for flexible housing options in rural and regional New South Wales. Many families want to support ageing parents, keep young people on the land or provide affordable options for the next generation. At the same time, we must be clear about the exceptional risks to biodiversity that come with poorly regulated development in rural areas. Rural New South Wales is home to some of our most important and vulnerable ecosystems. Inappropriate or rushed planning reforms can fragment habitats, increase pressure on threatened species and undermine the resilience of our landscapes.

We also cannot ignore the extraordinary contradiction that is occurring, for example, in the Northern Rivers. Just today, in the midst of a housing crisis, the NSW Reconstruction Authority, acting on the wishes of Premier Chris Minns, boarded up safe and liveable homes and has had others demolished. I would have preferred the inquiry to be undertaken by Portfolio Committee No. 7 - Planning and Environment, the most orderly

and professional committee of the House. It already has carriage of planning matters. That would have avoided the creation of an additional select committee and prevented an unnecessary duplication of work for our hardworking committee staff. We have done the work before.

In 2013, Lismore City Council, led by then Mayor Jenny Dowell, worked very closely with the community to allow farmers in RU1 zones to build a second detached dwelling. It gave older farmers the option to stay on their land. It allowed families to live close to and support each other. The provision included careful planning conditions so agricultural use was not compromised. Importantly, the provision was developed from the ground up, with the State giving effect to locally driven reform. Accordingly, I move:

That the question be amended by:

- (1) Omitting paragraph (1) (d) and inserting instead:
 - (d) the suitable interaction between the Housing SEPP and/or Codes SEPP and provisions in Local Environmental Plans under section 3.28 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979;
- (2) In paragraph (1) (h) omitting "to eliminate merit based assessment" and inserting instead "and their interaction with merit based assessment".
- (3) Omitting paragraph (2) (c) and inserting instead:
 - (c) two crossbench members, being the Hon. John Ruddick and Ms Sue Higginson.

With those amendments and the contribution I have made, The Greens will support the motion. With careful, community-driven reform, we can achieve the balance rural communities need. [*Time expired.*]

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine): There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Members will listen quietly or take their conversations outside.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (21:13): On behalf of the Government, I make a brief contribution to the motion moved by the Hon. John Ruddick proposing the establishment of a select committee and its terms of reference. The Government is happy to support the proposed select committee inquiry and the proposed terms of reference. I understand there is broad support for the motion in the Chamber, which is good. The Government is grateful to the Hon. John Ruddick for working with the office of the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces in productive discussions on the proposed terms of reference before introducing the motion to the House.

Part 5.5 of the Standard Instrument—Principal Local Environmental Plan already contains an optional clause for planning controls for secondary dwellings on land in rural zones, enabling councils to elect maximum floor area controls and the maximum distance between the principal and secondary dwelling. Councils establish the planning controls for rural zones based on general subdivision patterns and infrastructure servicing within rural areas. Some local government areas permit secondary dwellings in rural zones and have applied part 5.4 of the optional standard instrument control for floor area and distance controls. The protection and enhancement of rural towns and villages should also be considered—particularly whether permitting secondary dwellings in rural zones will have an impact on principal dwellings—as well as demand for infrastructure, should secondary dwellings be permitted. Of course, current and future land-based natural hazards and environmental impacts are all very important considerations.

Again, in the context of this debate, the Government notes that any proposal to expand the complying development pathway [CDC] for secondary dwellings to include rural and conservation lands will require careful consideration to ensure the rural and conservation values of the lands are not compromised through development by, for instance, impacts on primary production. Secondary dwellings newly permitted through the CDC process without any limitation on size may be inconsistent with the land-use objectives and the productive capacity of rural lands. Any reviews should consider land-use conflicts and potential impacts on rural activities, supply chains and agriculture. Similarly, impacts on conservation land should be considered. Second dwellings newly permitted through the CDC process on conservation lands may be inconsistent with the objectives of conservation zones and result in adverse environmental impacts.

However, the Government is satisfied that all of those and other issues will be thoroughly examined during the public inquiry—with the agreed terms of reference—in a balanced manner, with stakeholder submissions and evidence provided by the witnesses. There will be many strong views presented to the select committee during the public inquiry. Good luck to the committee members! The Government looks forward to hearing all views and the evidence presented. The Government will, as it does with all committee reports, consider the findings and recommendations once the select committee report is published. I again thank the Hon. John Ruddick for engaging positively with the Government on the drafting of the terms of reference. The Government does not oppose the amendment moved by Ms Sue Higginson.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (21:16): On behalf of the Opposition, I make a brief contribution in support of the motion moved by the Hon. John Ruddick to establish an inquiry, as well as the amendment moved by Ms Sue Higginson. As we have heard from other members, the House supports the intention of the Hon. John Ruddick in this motion, which is to create more housing in regional areas and on rural land. The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham talked about the housing crisis in rural and regional New South Wales. Funnily enough, today I met with a stakeholder from Bellingen about the housing crisis in that region. We often get caught up thinking about the need for housing in the city, which is, of course, essential. But the issue can be even more stark in some regional areas, because there are far fewer options. However, there are some options, as the Hon. John Ruddick identifies in this motion and the proposed inquiry. Those options may not include a housing estate. They may include a secondary dwelling, a tiny house or a caravan put on a property. They are all opportunities to increase the housing supply in our regions.

In recent years, post-COVID, while property prices have increase dramatically in the city, they have also increased dramatically in the regions. In some regions, prices have increased more dramatically. That has caused acute problems for regional communities, where incomes have not risen anywhere near as much. We need alternatives on the table. No doubt that is what the inquiry will consider. I note Ms Sue Higginson's comments about the wonderful, powerful Portfolio Committee No. 7 - Planning and Environment. I believe the proposed select committee will include the same members, but perhaps a different chair. There may be a swap. Perhaps Ms Sue Higginson can be deputy chair. I may nominate her straightaway so she can take the position the Hon. John Ruddick holds in Portfolio Committee No. 7. I have a feeling that all members of the committee will have good intentions and good will to look through some of the issues raised by the Minister.

Not for a second do I think that everyone across regional New South Wales will embrace the proposed changes. As with every idea, there are many supporters, but there will be detractors as well. There is no doubt that we will encounter them throughout the inquiry. Hopefully the committee will come to some good resolutions and good recommendations with good will. I hope we can work constructively to give the Government a good blueprint for what we can do with rural and regional housing and secondary dwellings. I commend the Hon. John Ruddick for introducing the motion to the House.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Youth) (21:18): I indicate my real enthusiasm for this inquiry. I thank the Hon. John Ruddick for bringing the motion to be considered by members of this House. I am unambiguously in favour of supply. For me, a dwelling is a dwelling, and that is not just a freehold, freestanding, new dwelling, of which I am in favour. I am also in favour of build-to-rent, affordable rentals owned by institutional or other investors that are available on the rental market, and secondary and other dwellings on established properties.

The member is absolutely right: If he wants to describe the New South Wales planning system as byzantine, try comparing, council by council, regulatory frameworks for the delivery of secondary dwellings on land. I have had a bit of engagement in that with people who were enthusiastic about doing those kinds of secondary dwellings in their local government areas but came come up against a wall of regulatory complexity. This could be an opportunity for us to move through and standardise some of that with a framework, which is not about making everyone happy. This is the art of the possible. We are not here to make absolutely everyone happy; we are here to confront the issues facing the State. The exodus of young people and the next generation from New South Wales and, in particular, our regional areas, is of real concern.

I am very enthusiastic about this work and the recommendations of this committee. They will need to look at the approach of local government. There is a lot to do there, and the State Government should play more of a role in standard setting for local government. It is not just about permanent secondary dwellings. As the Hon. Scott Farlow said, a range of organisations in rural and regional New South Wales have talked about using tiny homes or other forms of temporary and transitional housing for people who might otherwise have experiences of homelessness. Again, we should embrace that. If landowners are willing to have those kinds of temporary or transitional homes on their dwellings, or small pods for people in particular communities, to wrap arms around them and look after them, that is a really interesting opportunity as well. All of that can be captured in the committee.

The main reason I support the motion is Homes NSW is doing this. The modular housing program that I talk about in this House all the time is starting with secondary dwellings on the large blocks of land that we own. We have identified this opportunity and are working through that complexity in a very time consuming way. We think this is very important work and love the idea of a committee of this House providing us recommendations about how we can streamline it and make it easier. I thank the Hon. John Ruddick for moving the motion. I support the motion.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (21:21): I briefly lend my support to the motion as well. It is a good idea to start having these conversations, particularly from a rural and regional point of view. Some amazing councils are working with local communities, charities and property owners to look at ways to be flexible. If we get those people in and have those conversations, they will provide advice and assistance to Government to look at more opportunities. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (21:22): In reply: It feels like the atmosphere is good and we are off to a good start. We pass many motions and bills in this place, but I think that this one will seriously impact hundreds of thousands of people in a positive way. I thank the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham for his enthusiastic support and for telling us about his lived experience at Orange City Council. I am pleased to hear that Ms Sue Higginson from The Greens are reasonably enthusiastic about it, and I take on board her concerns about biodiversity impacts. I am generally confident that landowners will be aware of where there is biodiversity that needs to be protected, but I do agree. It sounds like she is enthusiastic to be on the committee, and she will be very welcome.

I also thank the Hon. Penny Sharpe. I agree that this sounds good at the conceptual level but that there are lots of nitty-gritty details, and that is why this will be a helpful inquiry. I was happy to hear that the Hon. Scott Farlow sounds like he is willing to be on it, because I have been very impressed working with him on Portfolio Committee No. 7. I think he used to be a local councillor and he knows a lot about these issues. I also thank the Hon. Rose Jackson. Most often, the Minister and I have acute differences but, on the few occasions that we agree, we do not just agree; we enthusiastically agree. That is always encouraging. I also thank one of my oldest friends in politics the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones for her support. I commend the motion to the House.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine): The Hon. John Ruddick has moved a motion, to which Ms Sue Higginson has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine): The question now is that the motion as amended be agreed to.

Motion as amended agreed to.

Adjournment Debate

ADJOURNMENT

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (21:24): Tonight I wish to speak about my visit to France earlier this year to undertake my Commonwealth Parliamentary Association study tour. I have spoken in the House before about some of the other visits I did while on this trip, but tonight I want to draw the attention of members to some of the work that is happening by organisations in Paris to support people with fertility challenges and also some of the research that is being conducted to better understand some of the social inequities around fertility challenges.

While in Paris I had the opportunity to spend some time with a really fantastic lady. Marie-Joëlle Gross is a board director of BAMP Collectif, an association that represents patients who have accessed assisted reproductive technology [ART]. Founded in 2013, this volunteer-led organisation is primarily made up of women who advocate for people facing infertility. Their work is really interesting, spanning medical advocacy, awareness campaigns, workplace rights and policy reform. They also organise France's annual infertility awareness week, and work closely with health professionals and government stakeholders.

When I met Marie-Joëlle she generously shared with me her personal experience of conceiving her son through ART in 2013 in the Czech Republic. We talked about some of the broader fertility challenges in France, which are not dissimilar to what we are seeing in Australia, particularly the increasing number of women in their thirties who are turning to ART. Often they are doing so due to endometriosis, premature ovarian failure or male infertility factors. They also have issues with a growing shortage of donated eggs. An estimated 15 per cent to 25 per cent of French couples are considering ART, so infertility is a very significant issue in that country.

The French Government offers financial support to reimburse the cost of IVF cycles and insemination procedures. Egg preservation for women has also been free for a couple of years. However, there are some challenges around services being accessible in rural and remote areas. Again, that is similar to what is happening in New South Wales and across Australia. Couples often travel abroad, particularly to Spain, to access treatment faster.

BAMP is pushing for further reforms. One key area it is looking at is better workplace support. It is also looking at more paid leave for fertility appointments and a better understanding by big businesses and employers that people need to access these appointments freely without feeling the stigma of saying why they are taking leave. How human resources departments can better support individuals and couples going through this process is really interesting and we should be looking more at that in New South Wales. They are also pushing for better training and tools for doctors to support patients through infertility, like embryo screening, to get the most potential for a successful pregnancy.

Another issue that Marie-Joëlle and I spoke about is that there is zero surrogacy in France, which is quite different to Australia. Surrogacy is completely prohibited under French law, whether it is altruistic or commercial. Even though France has a declining birth rate, the French are not looking to change this law anytime soon. These learnings will be very useful in supporting the work of the Select Committee on Fertility Support and Assisted Reproductive Treatment, of which I am chair, because it is always good to understand what other jurisdictions are doing.

In Paris, I also had the chance to visit INED, which is France's national demographic institute. The institute is involved with really interesting work, not just in France but also around the world with different universities and organisations, to understand what best practice is and what are some of the challenges of infertility. It does amazing work in a range of spaces, but I was particularly interested in some of the institute's work around pregnancy loss and fertility support. One researcher I met is doing really interesting work into social inequalities involved in the risk and aftermath of miscarriages. The research is funded by the European Union. Research teams from Helsinki, INED, University College London and the University of Edinburgh are really trying to understand some of the factors for data collection on miscarriage, including the social risk factors, the inequalities and the health consequences. Some really great work is happening in this space internationally. It was great for me to learn about it firsthand during my visit to Paris.

BLUEBERRY INDUSTRY

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (21:30): Recently I visited residents of the Mid North Coast who have been fighting to stop an industry wrecking everything they love about that beautiful part of New South Wales. I am talking about largely unregulated intensive expansion of industrial-scale blueberry farming. Between 2001 and 2016, intensive blueberry farming in New South Wales skyrocketed by over 400 per cent with nearly 90 per cent of that expansion happening around Coffs Harbour. Since then, the industry has rapidly spread inland towards Bellingen, south to the Nambucca Valley and further south to Kempsey shire. The blueberry industry is clearing sensitive bushland, including habitat for threatened species, like there is no tomorrow, polluting waterways with chemicals so toxic that other countries banned them years ago, and farming right up to neighbouring property, including by erecting massive net structures and plastic tunnels, spraying pesticides and fungicides, and bullying members of the community who dare speak out against the blueberry industry.

I met with several Nambucca Valley residents who spoke to me about how they were living an idyllic life in their little patch of paradise until the blueberry industry moved in next door. I have received emails in recent days from distressed residents who are witnessing koala habitat being cleared right now, today, for even more blueberry farms. It is dozens and dozens of hectares, with no approval process, no notification, no requirement to look out for threatened species—nothing. The environmental impact of this industry is devastating. Researchers at Southern Cross University have found nitrogen levels in a creek downstream of blueberry farms up to 800 times higher than safe levels.

High levels of arsenic have been found in creek sediments, and methylmercury concentrations doubled from 2017 to 2020. Methylmercury bioaccumulates in fish and is highly toxic to humans. The waterways feed into Solitary Island Marine Park, which is one of the most biodiverse marine environments in the State. In Hearnese Lake, imidacloprid, which is a banned insecticide in the European Union and the United Kingdom, was found at concentrations higher than anywhere else in the world. It was the site of a mass fish kill in 2018. The combination of these chemicals has never been properly researched.

There is no requirement to lodge a development application [DA] before this industry covers entire hillsides and valleys with white netting and plastic polytunnels in the Nambucca Valley. Coffs Harbour City Council now requires a DA—after years of community outcry. There are no laws requiring buffers between horticulture and surrounding land uses or residential dwellings in the Nambucca Valley. It is extraordinary. You have to see it with your own eyes. I visited one property in Eungai Creek where the landowner had lived for 40 years. She had a beautiful outlook from her back deck of rolling hills and valleys until a few years ago. Now white netting and black polytunnelling is as far as the eye can see, starting just 20 metres from her back deck.

In 2017 Nambucca Valley councillors voted for changes like buffer zones and won by one vote. Less than 24 hours later, three councillors moved a rescission motion that was passed at the next meeting. Concerns have

been raised about pecuniary conflicts of interest of some councillors who voted for the rescission. At the time the blueberry industry talked up a draft industry code of conduct, prepared by the Australian Blueberry Growers Association, whose then vice-president was Gurmeh Singh, who is now the National Party member for Coffs Harbour. He told the ABC:

We'll continue to work with council and develop much better tools to help minimise land use conflicts.

We don't believe that development applications are a good way at all to minimise land use conflicts.

The draft code of conduct was intended to promote best practice operations, including with regard to buffers. It did not. Last year Nambucca Valley Council lodged its submission with the department of planning to amend its local environmental plan to require development consent for horticulture in RU1 and RU2 zones. It has been rejected. I have not even mentioned slave labour or the allegations of bullying. Thousands of Mid North Coast locals have done everything they can to stand up to this industry. They have made thousands of submissions, held meetings and led campaigns. They have raised the alarm for years. But their voices continue to be drowned out by an industry that puts profits before people, and elected and unelected officials that do its bidding. I call on the Minns Government to stand up to this industry and regulate it.

GENDER IDENTITY

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY (21:35): Last year on 4 September, following the handing down of the judgement of the Hon. Justice Bromwich of the Federal Court of Australia on 23 August in the case that has become known as *Tickle v Giggle*, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, Ms Reem Alsalem, made the following statement:

I am gravely concerned over the decision of the Federal Court of Australia in the case of *Roxanne Tickle v. Giggle for Girls Pty Ltd and Sally Grover*, which ruled that the exclusion of a male who identifies as a woman and is recognized as a female under the law from a female-only social media platform constitutes unjustified indirect discrimination.

The ruling demonstrates the concrete consequences that result when gender identity is allowed to supplant sex - and override women's rights to female-only services and spaces.

The Federal Court of Australia's ruling concerned the Australian Sex Discrimination Act. While the Act differentiates between the concepts of sex and gender identity, this distinction is abandoned in practice. The Act also severed the term sex from its ordinary meaning of biological sex, operating what I would describe as a built-in and fictitious premise that every human being has a gender identity. Consequently, the Federal Court has argued that the Convention on Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), ratified by Australia in 1983, was irrelevant to certain aspects of the case, on the pretext that gender identity discrimination was not alleged in favor of a man or men. However, it is my view that the Court ignored the fact that the CEDAW Convention recognizes that women suffer discrimination on intersecting grounds and that there are women that are more vulnerable to discrimination as a result of the interplay between sex and other factors that affect their lives.

Furthermore, the Federal Court relied on a general anti-discrimination provision of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), article 26, next to Australian legislation to argue the prohibition of discrimination based on gender identity. However, as noted by the United Nations Human Rights Committee, "not every differentiation of treatment will constitute discrimination, if the criteria for such differentiation are reasonable and objective and if the aim is to achieve a purpose which is legitimate under the Covenant" (General Comment No. 18 (1989) on non-discrimination, para. 13).

I take the opportunity to refer to the position paper I issued at the request of the Australian Human Rights Commission in March 2024, in relation to this court case, which highlighted that "where tension may arise between the right to non-discrimination based on sex and non-discrimination based on gender identity, international human rights law does not endorse an interpretation that allows either for derogations from the obligation to ensure non-discrimination based on sex or the subordination of this obligation not to discrimination based on sex to other rights".

I am also concerned that the court decision could make it potentially harder for women and girls to argue for the proportionality, legitimacy and necessity of female-only spaces in some circumstances. Even if unintentional, the ruling by the Federal Court may have made it potentially harder for women and girls in Australia to avail themselves of the full breadth of protections provided by the international human rights treaties that Australia is part to, including CEDAW and the ICCPR, and which require States to ensure equal rights for men and women and not to discriminate on the basis of sex.

The Sex Discrimination Act contains provisions that could potentially justify the maintenance of single sex services or the reasonableness of distinguishing on the basis of biological sex. They were unfortunately not relied on in this case, leaving it unclear whether Australian law is fully compatible with international obligations to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls.

I hope that if the case moves to the appeal stage, all parties would consider applicable international laws and their obligations, as well as the circumstances in which exceptions can be applied.

The appeal of last year's decision is being heard in Sydney this week by the full bench of the Federal Court of Australia. At the heart of what is being considered is whether women and girls in this country have an entitlement to biological sex-based rights. There is no doubt whatsoever that the landmark case is the most significant fight of our era for women's and girls' rights in Australia. Its outcome will impact on their privacy, security and safety for decades to come. Sally Grover, who has been tenaciously fighting this matter for four years, deserves our encouragement and backing. I urge all those who support biological sex-based rights for women and girls to dig

deeply and visit gigglecrowdfund.com to directly assist Sall to bring the best case she can. If necessary, that will involve taking the matter all the way to the High Court of Australia.

ISRAEL-HAMAS CONFLICT

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (21:40): People are starving in Gaza; we have clear evidence of this sad fact. In the past week we have seen shocking photographic proof of the emaciated in Gaza. I speak, of course, of the chilling videos of the Israeli hostage Evyatar David shared by Hamas this week, which show his skeletal frame and the psychological torture of being asked to dig a hole that he believes to be his own grave. David is 24 and was kidnapped from the Nova music festival on 7 October 2023. He has been held in captivity for almost two years. He was not captured as a combatant in war; he was dancing at a music festival. That was his crime.

An extremely emaciated and almost unrecognisable David tells the camera that he has not eaten for a few days in a row. At one point he is handed a can of beans and told to make it last for two days. He is one of 50 hostages still held by Hamas, which is proud to brag publicly on video that it is prepared to use starvation as a tool of warfare, inflicting pain on David and psychological pain on his family. Of course David is not the only starving hostage. Consider the shrivelled frames of those who have been returned so far. The video sent to the young man's family by Hamas is proof that the terrorist organisation is prepared to use starvation as an act of intimidation, as a strategy to achieve its goals.

If Hamas is willing to boast about that act of inhumanity towards one of its hostages, why do we think that it would hesitate to use it more broadly against the people of Gaza? There is significant evidence that that is exactly what has been happening. Yet, according to much of the media and certain activist groups, Israel is solely responsible for all the starvation in Gaza. I do not doubt for one moment that there is significant food insecurity in Gaza and that David is not the only starving person there. I am sure that there are children and families regularly struggling to find food. The real question is: Why is anyone starving in Gaza?

The United Nations runs a monitoring and tracking dashboard recording humanitarian aid movements into Gaza that have a UN manifest. It shows aid arriving in Gaza regularly—an average of 3,000 calories per person per day—but being intercepted just as regularly. In the three months since 19 May, 2,309 trucks carrying food into Gaza have been intercepted, either peacefully by hungry people or forcefully by armed actors during their transit into Gaza. Those armed actors are usually Hamas backed. They take the food before it can get to the starving and either stockpile it or sell it at inflated prices that poor, war-ravaged Gazans cannot afford. The United Nations' own agencies are reporting that 85 per cent of trucks going into Gaza between 19 May and 29 July this year were stolen, looted or intercepted by gangs. We will never feed the starving unless we honestly look at the causes of their hunger. We will never achieve peace by demonising one side of a conflict and not looking at the total picture.

International human rights lawyer and CEO of the International Legal Forum, Arsen Ostrovsky, writes of his recent trip to the Kerem Shalom border crossing, the main humanitarian aid gateway from Israel into Gaza. He reported at least 600 trucks, laden with flour, water, baby formula and other food and perishables that were abandoned in the desert. The food is there, waiting, with no-one to distribute it. Mr Ostrovsky notes that the United Nations continues to deliver aid throughout much more dangerous war zones and asks why they are so absent in Gaza. One answer is the guns of Hamas, turned against food convoys they do not control.

We all want peace and an end to the suffering of the innocent. Peace in Gaza requires bilateral action from both Israel and Hamas. Peace will only come when Hamas is required to step up, as well as Israel, and when Hamas is called out for stealing the food and stopping it from being given to the starving. We need to do this for Gaza, for Palestine and for Australia, too. We will not have peace on our streets and on our bridges until we are honest about the role of Hamas. [*Time expired.*]

FLYING BATS FOOTBALL CLUB

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine): Before I call Dr Amanda Cohn, I acknowledge her guests in the gallery this evening. They are members and supporters of the Flying Bats Football Club, which is celebrating its fortieth anniversary. They are most welcome.

Dr AMANDA COHN (21:45): Sport has enormous benefits for both our physical and mental health, and it brings us together. Every person should be able to participate in sport in their local community. Andrew Purchas, co-founder of the Sydney Convicts Rugby Club, articulated that beautifully. He said:

When someone can join a local team, walk into a stadium, or get involved in a sporting community without fear of judgement or exclusion, that's powerful. That's when sport is truly doing its job—not just entertaining us, but connecting us.

But sport is not a safe place for everyone. The 2024 Pride in Sport Index National Survey found that a majority of respondents had witnessed homophobia or vilification based on identity and 40 per cent had personally

experienced it. This year's survey found that LGBTQ+ participants continue to feel less safe and less included and experience poorer mental wellbeing. In particular, there is a concerted effort against the participation of trans women in sport. Trans and gender-diverse people have been here participating in sport for a long time. Over 15 years ago I played rugby union for the University of Sydney women's First XV with a trans woman on our team, who was an excellent teammate and who I am still in touch with today.

Advocates for the exclusion of trans women from women's sport claim to be protecting women and girls, but their attacks against trans women are actually making sport less safe for all women. I have spoken with women and non-binary people who have been threatened or filmed without their consent at local sport events just because they are tall or have short hair or small breasts. Women have had their weekend matches cancelled by opposing teams discriminating against their trans teammates. Women's sport needs pay equity, updated facilities, equal airtime and better resourcing, especially in the regions, not this absurd policing of our appearances. Being able to safely participate in community life, including sport, is the bare minimum that LGBTQIA+ people deserve, and it is time for politicians to stop putting them in harm's way by using them as a political punching bag.

I thank those in the community who are already leading the way in LGBTQIA+ inclusion in sport. This year the Flying Bats Football Club is proudly celebrating its fortieth anniversary of making football a safe and accessible sport for everyone. The Flying Bats Football Club was formed in 1985 as a means of providing women with a sense of support and community at a time when options were limited and lesbians were subjected to multiple forms of prejudice and discrimination. Alison Todd, one of the Bats' founders, said:

Really it didn't matter if you had any skill at all ... as long as you wanted to be there, you were welcome.

Throughout its history, the Flying Bats has provided women, including large numbers of queer women, the opportunity to play a sport they were historically discouraged from playing. It has also given so many people a sense of belonging to a vibrant and supportive community. Thanks to this inclusive and community-centred approach, the Bats has grown to become the biggest LGBTQIA+ women's and non-binary football club in the world. I thank them for their leadership from the ground up, where the Government is not doing enough. The Bats are not alone. In Sydney, explicitly inclusive clubs are leading the way in a range of sports, including the Bentstix Hockey Club, Convicts Rugby Club, Newtown Breakaways AFL Club, Outfielders softball league, Sydney Stingers water polo club and many more. These kinds of initiatives, which bring us together and get us active, are what local, State and Federal governments should be supporting, because sport, at its best, is for everyone.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine): I remind visitors in the public gallery that applause is not allowed. We appreciate the sentiment, but they will remain silent.

MARCH FOR HUMANITY

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (21:49): On the weekend I had the privilege of joining what experts estimate as between 200,000 to 300,000 people marching across the Sydney Harbour Bridge to urge the Australian Government to do more to help end the ongoing genocide in Gaza. The march was a powerful symbol of Australians standing up for humanity. People from across Sydney and the State showed up on a miserable and rainy Sunday to make their voices heard. A full cross-section of Australian society was represented at the march. People of all faiths, including many members of the Jewish community, were in attendance. People of all ages, from the elderly to young children, families, students and everyone in between, marched together.

People of all political persuasions, including members of this Chamber—the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine, the Hon. Stephen Lawrence, the Hon. Anthony D'Adam and the Hon. John Ruddick—and others from Federal and State Parliament marched in what is likely to be one of the largest anti-war demonstrations in Australian history. It was also supported by a broad range of civil society organisations, unions, community organisations and religious organisations. The so-called "approval" of the protest was the subject of much media scrutiny. The truth is that a protest cannot be approved or prevented by the Government, the police or the courts.

All Australians have a right to protest under the implied freedom of political communication in the Constitution. In New South Wales, we manage this through the form 1 process, which is meant to function as a notice that a public demonstration will be held so that police and other organisations can plan accordingly. It is not a request for permission. In fact, most protests in this State take place safely without ever lodging a form 1. The effect of the approval of a form 1 is that those protesting will be granted immunity for some offences under the Summary Offences Act such as obstruction of traffic and unlawful assembly. Authorisation of a protest via the form 1 is also important to "provide structure, support and safety to those who are keen to participate, to members of the public, and police."

As Justice Rigg noted in her Supreme Court decision approving the form 1 for Sunday's march, "the Harbour Bridge will have to be closed to vehicles for public safety whether the event is authorised or not authorised". The Supreme Court was correct to uphold the right to protest in this instance, and in doing so likely

helped avert a potentially more dangerous and volatile situation. The fact is that we cannot stop large volumes of people turning up to demonstrate for a cause as important as ending the devastation, starvation and genocide in Gaza. It is far safer for both protestors and the police to facilitate such gatherings to take place in a peaceful and orderly manner.

The right to protest is fundamental in any democratic society. Citizens should have the opportunity to freely express themselves and advocate for issues that matter to them. That includes demonstrations that may cause disruption to others. Quoting Justice Simpson, Justice Rigg stated:

It is in the very nature of the entitlement to peaceful protest that disruption will be caused to others. The fact that the proposed assembly is likely to cause significant inconvenience to residents ... is far from determinative. If matters such as this were to be determinative, no assembly involving inconvenience to others would be permitted.

All the great social movements in history included disruptive protests. Suffragettes fighting for the right to vote, civil rights protestors in the United States and Australia, and anti-apartheid activists all engaged in acts of civil disobedience to further their fights for justice and equality. All those movements involved disruptive, inconvenient protest. They were at times chaotic and were frequently derided in the media as too radical or not the correct way of doing things at the time. Today, however, one would struggle to find anyone who says they oppose the equality under the law for all people achieved through those movements. I suspect that in future decades, we will be hard-pressed to find many willing to admit that they opposed the fight for an end to Israel's genocide in Gaza, even if it was inconvenient. [*Time expired.*]

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine): The question is that this House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 21:55 until Thursday 7 August 2025 at 10:00.