

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Wednesday 10 September 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.

Business of the House

WITHDRAWAL OF BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT: I inform the House that the Hon. Penny Sharpe has withdrawn the formal business request regarding business of the House notice of motion No. 1.

Motions

FOSTER AND KINSHIP CARE WEEK

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (10:04): I move:

- (1) That this House recognises 31 August 2025 to 6 September 2025 is Foster and Kinship Care Week.
- (2) That this House acknowledges the incredible role played by the thousands of foster and kinship carers in New South Wales who are giving children safe and loving homes.
- (3) That this House congratulates the Government on securing \$143.9 million in the budget for a 20 per cent increase to the foster care allowance, the first in two decades, which means a carer of a typical 14-year-old will receive \$4,576 more per year.

Motion agreed to.

NATIONAL SKILLS WEEK

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (10:05): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) 25 to 31 August 2025 was National Skills Week, a national celebration of Vocational Education and Training in Australia;
 - (b) the number of inmates in New South Wales correctional facilities completing traineeships has more than doubled in the past four years, with offenders learning new skills and improving their job prospects post-release; and
 - (c) while many inmates enter prison with limited education or work experience, traineeships inside correctional centres address these gaps and provide them with nationally recognised qualifications and practical job skills, with the aim to reduce reoffending across the State.
- (2) That this House further notes that:
 - (a) education and skills training plays an important role in reducing recidivism, with NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research data from 2021 revealing that 12 months after inmate trainees were released from custody there was a 45 per cent reduction in property offending among all groups of trainees;
 - (b) the Department of Education's Training Services provides funding and regulatory support for these vocational education programs, delivered to inmates through Corrective Services Industries;
 - (c) through the Smart and Skilled program, the Government is also giving inmates access to quality training that builds real-world skills and supports rehabilitation;
 - (d) a strong partnership between the Department of Education and Corrective Services NSW has meant training providers such as TAFE NSW can deliver courses in areas of skills shortage, with fees waived for eligible inmates; and
 - (e) in the past financial year there were 906 inmate trainee participants within Corrective Services NSW correctional facilities, a significant increase since 2021, when there were 250 inmate trainees.

Motion agreed to.

LEGACY WEEK

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (10:05): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) Sunday 31 August 2025 until 5 September 2025 marked Legacy Week, an appeal to support the families of veterans who lost their lives in service;
 - (b) since the 1940s Australians have shown their support during Legacy Week for the widows and children whose loved ones have served our country;
 - (c) Legacy supports 10,000 partners and children of veterans across New South Wales, and 34,000 nationwide, who gave their lives or health serving our country;
 - (d) data from the 2021 census shows that there are 4,519 people living in the Central West who have served in the Australian Defence Force, with slightly more than 89 per cent of those males; and
 - (e) the Central West has 18 Returned and Services League of Australia sub-branches and two Legacy clubs.
- (2) That this House further notes that:
 - (a) in 1923, Legacy Australia committed to helping veterans' families carry on with their lives after the loss or injury of their loved ones and, 102 years later, Legacy continues this promise, providing the same stability, guidance and assistance that a partner would normally provide to their family; and
 - (b) Legacy badges were sold across New South Wales last week, with funds raised helping to support families in their darkest moments and giving them hope for a brighter future.

Motion agreed to.

NEW SOUTH WALES COUNCIL FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES

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

That this House notes that:

- (a) on 28 August 2025, the New South Wales Council for Civil Liberties [NSWCCL] hosted its annual dinner;
- (b) the dinner was an excellent showcase of the important work NSWCCL does in advocating for free speech, the right to protest and other democratic freedoms;
- (c) powerful speeches were made by Amal Naser of the Palestine Action Group, Sarah Schwartz of the Jewish Council of Australia, and author and journalist Antony Loewenstein; and
- (d) the event was well attended, including by the Hon. Cameron Murphy, MLC, the Hon. Stephen Lawrence, MLC, the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine, MLC, the Hon. Anthony D'Adam, MLC, Ms Sue Higginson, MLC, Nathan Hagarty, MP, and Jenny Leong, MP.

Motion agreed to.

HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI ATOMIC BOMBINGS EIGHTIETH ANNIVERSARY

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (10:06): I move:

That this House notes that:

- (a) on 17 August 2025 the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons and the Tom Uren Memorial Fund held an event in Sydney with Hiroshima survivor Ms Keiko Ogura to mark the eightieth anniversary of the nuclear bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki;
- (b) the late Tom Uren witnessed the Nagasaki bombing as a prisoner of war and became a lifelong champion for nuclear disarmament;
- (c) the event honoured the victims and survivors of the United States' bombings of Japan as well as Mr Uren and his unique story, and also brought people together to work towards the elimination of nuclear weapons;
- (d) Ms Ogura spoke of her personal experience witnessing the bomb in Hiroshima on 6 August 1945, when she was only seven years old, and surviving the time of explosion as she was approximately two kilometres from ground zero and protected by a small hill;
- (e) Ms Ogura spoke of the lack of warning beforehand and of the total devastation to the landscape in the blast zone, including the instant deaths of tens of thousands of civilians, and recalled the horrible, agonising deaths of many from radiation in the days and months after the event and the ongoing effects it has had on survivors;
- (f) in excess of 350,000 people were killed and each year more are added to the death toll as they are identified, including American servicemen who succumbed to radiation-related sickness acquired from working in the blast zone years afterwards; and
- (g) in attendance were Ms Cate Faehrmann, MLC, Ms Susan Templeman, MP, Ms Jenny Leong, MP, the Hon. Cameron Murphy, MLC, along with former Minister and member for Hughes the Hon. Robert Tickner, many representatives from local government and community leaders.

Motion agreed to.

GREAT IRISH FAMINE COMMEMORATION

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (10:06): I move:

That this House notes that:

- (a) on 16 August 2025 the Great Irish Famine Commemoration Committee held its annual commemoration at the Australian Monument to the Great Irish Famine at Hyde Park Barracks in Sydney;
- (b) the monument was established in 1999 as a tribute to all those who died in Ireland or fled overseas, including to Australia, to find a better life, free from starvation;
- (c) president of the committee Patrick Corr spoke of its important work and evolution over the past 30 years, Martyn Killion spoke on behalf of Museums of History NSW, Dr Jeff Kildea delivered the keynote address, "This monstrous injustice: Colonial resistance to the Earl Grey famine immigration scheme", and Dr Anne Casey read her poem *Idir Oispidéal Galair agus Teach na mBocht*;
- (d) there were several beautiful musical performances by Evelyn Shanley and Jimmy McLoughlin throughout the ceremony;
- (e) relatives of the orphans laid floral tributes at the monument, and wreaths were laid by Patrick Corr on behalf of the commemoration committee, by the Deputy Consul-General on behalf of the Government of Ireland, and by Dr Marjorie O'Neill, MP, and the Hon. Cameron Murphy, MLC, on behalf of the NSW Parliamentary Friends of Ireland; and
- (f) the service concluded with a minute's silence for the orphans.

Motion agreed to.

Documents

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Tabling of Report of Independent Legal Arbitrator

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I move:

- (1) That the report of the Independent Legal Arbitrator entitled *Disputed Claim of Privilege—SafeWork NSW investigation of the University of Sydney*, dated Tuesday 2 September 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. Natasha Maclaren-Jones has withdrawn the formal business request regarding private members' business items Nos 2299 and 2301 standing in her name.

Motions

NSW YOUNG LABOR YOUTH COUNCIL

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (10:08): I move:

- (1) That this House acknowledges that:
 - (a) on 9 August 2025, NSW Young Labor hosted a youth council focused on the chapter "A Healthy Society" from the Young Labor policy platform;
 - (b) the event brought together young people from across New South Wales to discuss and debate policies on health, wellbeing and social equity, including mental health, public health initiatives and access to care;
 - (c) the House recognises the efforts of the Central Coast Young Labor Association executive Chloe Oliver and the senior vice-president of NSW Young Labor, Chiara Moore, for organising this important event;
 - (d) the House also acknowledges the contributions of "A Healthy Society" policy chapter chair, Januka Suraweera, and secretary, Eleanor Low, for their insightful questions and guidance during the discussion; and
 - (e) this initiative highlights the importance of involving young people directly in policy development, giving them a meaningful voice in the decisions that affect their communities.
- (2) That this House congratulates the NSW Young Labor youth council, the event organisers, all members of the NSW Young Labor leadership team and all other young participants on their active engagement, thoughtful contributions and commitment to building a healthier, more equitable society in New South Wales.

Motion agreed to.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BICENTENARY REGIONAL ROADSHOW

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (10:08): I move:

- (1) That this House acknowledges that:
 - (a) 2024 marks the Bicentenary of the Legislative Council, Australia's oldest legislative body and the upper House of the New South Wales Parliament;
 - (b) to celebrate this milestone, the Parliament of New South Wales has taken democracy on the road through its Bicentenary Regional Roadshow;
 - (c) the roadshow has visited communities across the State, including Lismore, Port Macquarie, Bathurst, Batemans Bay, Armidale, Wagga Wagga and, most recently, Cessnock;
 - (d) the Cessnock youth forum and public speaking competition provided local students with the opportunity to build their skills, express their views and engage directly with the democratic process; and
 - (e) the energy, insight and passion shown by the students of Cessnock demonstrate the strength of the next generation of leaders in the Hunter.
- (2) That this House thanks the students, teachers and schools of Cessnock for their enthusiastic participation and acknowledges the Parliament of New South Wales for bringing the bicentenary celebrations to the Hunter.

Motion agreed to.

Committees

STANDING COMMITTEE ON LAW AND JUSTICE

Establishment

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: I move:

That the resolution of the House of 10 May 2023 appointing the Standing Committee on Law and Justice be amended by inserting after paragraph (4):

- (5) For the purposes of section 276C of the Work Health and Safety Act 2011, the committee is the designated Legislative Council committee to supervise the operation of the work health and safety scheme established under this Act.
- (6) In exercising the supervisory function outlined in paragraph (5), the committee must report to the House in relation to the operation of the scheme at least once every Parliament.

Motion agreed to.

Motions

HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE RACISM REPORT

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

- (1) That this House notes the *Standing together against racism: Exploring NSW nurse, midwife, and AiN/care worker experiences with racism at work* report, which found that:
 - (a) of 3,289 survey participants, three in five had witnessed racism as a bystander;
 - (b) of 1,231 culturally and linguistically diverse and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survey participants, 64 per cent had been a direct victim of racism at work; and
 - (c) 88 per cent of participants who reported an incident of racism said they received no support.
- (2) That this House also notes that racism in health care is a structural issue, as highlighted in the recently released Australian Human Rights Commission scoping review into health inequities in Australia.
- (3) That this House endorses the recommendations of the *Standing together against racism: Exploring NSW nurse, midwife, and AiN/care worker experiences with racism at work* report that:
 - (a) psychosocial workplace hazards, including racism, be identified and actioned;
 - (b) policies and training on incident reporting ensure workers are knowledgeable about and supported to report psychosocial hazards, including racism;
 - (c) employers ensure all staff complete bystander action education;
 - (d) employers implement and monitor the effectiveness of co-designed anti-racism training;
 - (e) an anti-racism framework is co-designed with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers;
 - (f) elimination of institutional racism be prioritised by implementing policies that promote diversity, equity and inclusion;
 - (g) regulatory bodies governing the practice of nurses, midwives and aged-care workers should enhance data collection to enable identification of potential systemic racism, taking remedial action where this is suggested; and
 - (h) systems be implemented to assess and report on the personal and fiscal impacts of racism on workers and the workplace.

Motion agreed to.

CHILDHOOD CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

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

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) September is Childhood Cancer Awareness Month;
 - (b) over 350 children from New South Wales are diagnosed with cancer each year, and cancer remains the leading cause of disease-related death in children; and
 - (c) the Children's Cancer Institute, based at the University of New South Wales, is the only independent medical research organisation in Australia wholly dedicated to research into the causes, prevention and cure of childhood cancer.
- (2) That this House commends the work of the Children's Cancer Institute in the belief "that a life should be long".

Motion agreed to.

*Budget***BUDGET ESTIMATES 2025 TIMETABLE AMENDED**

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (10:11): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) on 26 June 2025, the House adopted a schedule of initial budget estimates hearings for 2025-2026 over 12 working days from to 19 August 2025 to 3 September 2025;
 - (b) the following hearing was unable to be conducted as scheduled by Portfolio Committee No. 8 – Customer Service due to the unavailability of the Minister:
Day Six: Tuesday 26 August 2025
PC 8 Small Business, Recovery, North Coast
 - (c) following this, Portfolio Committee No. 8 – Customer Service rescheduled the original hearing to the following date:
Day Thirteen: Friday 5 September 2025
PC 8 Small Business, Recovery, North Coast
- (2) That in view of the inability of Portfolio Committee No. 8 – Customer Service to conduct the original initial hearing, the House endorse the rescheduled hearing held on 5 September 2025.

Motion agreed to.

*Documents***UNPROCLAIMED LEGISLATION**

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: According to standing order, I table a list detailing all legislation unproclaimed 90 calendar days after assent as at 9 September 2025.

AUDITOR-GENERAL**Reports**

The CLERK: According to the Government Sector Audit Act 1983 and the Local Government Act 1993, I announce receipt of a Performance Audit Report of the Auditor-General entitled *Coastal management*, dated 10 September 2025, received out of session and published this day.

*Business of the House***POSTPONEMENT OF BUSINESS**

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I postpone business of the House notice of motion No. 1 until the next sitting day.

CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (10:41): I move:

That debate on business of the House notice of motion No. 3 relating to the adoption of report No. 100 of the Privileges Committee entitled *Citizen's Right of Reply (Mr Brett Whitworth)*, dated August 2025, be conducted as follows:

- (a) the mover of the motion may speak for not more than five minutes;

- (b) any other member may speak for not more than three minutes; and
- (c) if the motion is not sooner disposed of, after 30 minutes the President is to interrupt proceedings to allow the mover of the motion to speak in reply for not more than three minutes.

This motion proposes to set what I would suggest are very reasonable time limits on debate of the substantive motion, including that the mover speak for no more than five minutes and that any other member speak for no more than three minutes. It is Wednesday, when there is a lot of business before the House. The substantive motion is really a procedural one, and I will talk more about that in due course. I suggest that the time limits being proposed are reasonable and that all the things that members may wish to say in the circumstances could be adequately addressed in those time frames.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (10:42): I appreciate the contribution of the Hon. Stephen Lawrence. Having raised this matter persistently at the budget estimates hearings both in February and more recently, I pay tribute to the work of the Privileges Committee and everything it does. I acknowledge the extraordinary circumstances in which Mr Brett Whitworth, one of our senior bureaucrats and public officials in New South Wales, has furnished this citizen's right of reply. Many of us have read it as a message in a bottle to try to tell the truth, an opportunity that was denied him in answer to various questions arising from the budget estimates hearing on 28 February. In the key phrase on page 5, Mr Whitworth said:

... the timing of the hearings and any public knowledge of the proceedings, were raised with me by Minister Hoenig ...

He also made reference to the Labor Party preselection schedule for determining local government candidates for the Bayside Council. I raised the objection to this motion being moved as formal business so that those points could be made. It is a matter of grave concern that, at the recent budget estimates hearings, Minister Hoenig outright denied this testimony from his head of the Office of Local Government that he had effectively misused ministerial office by raising those preselection schedules as a way to get rid of Councillor Saravinovski from the Labor ticket and effectively install Ed McDougall from the office of the Minister for Sport as the new Mayor of Bayside.

I do not think it is appropriate for the House to debate these matters in full now. The motion can be accepted and dealt with very quickly on the basis that the Public Accountability and Works Committee [PAWC] has taken a self-referral to examine these matters. That starts on Friday. It is a serious issue about what may well be the monsterring of a public servant to prevent him providing answers to the Parliament, which is horrendous and in breach of the ministerial code of conduct. It goes to the honesty of Minister Hoenig, which will be tested at our PAWC inquiry. It also goes to what some have interpreted as a *House of Cards* strategy at Bayside Council—in many respects, the Balkans of the Labor Party these days. These strategies used to be deployed out in south-west Sydney, but they have moved to the southern and eastern districts. Perhaps the Minister has got too involved in them and his conflict-of-interest declaration has not been adequate. Those are all matters to be tested by the committee and then reported to the House, rather than being litigated in the Chamber this morning.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (10:44): I have some concern about gagging members' entitlement to speak in this place. Members would ordinarily seek efficiency on private members' day, but it is concerning to me that the motion would impose time limits after members have indicated that they will get to the point, which I think is useful. It is interesting that this motion has been moved on private members' day, although the Government has the ability to deal with Government members' motions on other days. I raise those concerns and put on record that, while I acknowledge that there is an ongoing inquiry into the matter, I feel that gagging members' ability to make a contribution is setting a dangerous and unhelpful precedent.

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

The House divided.

Ayes15
 Noes15
 Majority.....0

AYES

Buckingham	Kaine	Murphy (teller)
Buttigieg	Lawrence	Nanva (teller)
D'Adam	Mihailuk	Primrose
Donnelly	Mookhey	Sharpe
Jackson	Moriarty	Suvaal

NOES

Barrett	MacDonald	Overall
Carter	Maclaren-Jones	Rath (teller)
Fang (teller)	Martin	Roberts
Farlow	Merton	Ruddick
Latham	Mitchell	Ward

PAIRS

Graham	Tudehope
Houssos	Munro

The PRESIDENT: There being 15 ayes and 15 noes, the question is unresolved and therefore requires a casting vote from the Chair. The established principles guiding a casting vote, arising from the practice of the United Kingdom Parliament and clearly adopted in the practice of the Legislative Council, are many. The principle that I particularly reflect on is that the Chair should always vote for further discussion where possible. For that reason, I cast my vote with the noes.

Motion negatived.

*Committees***PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE****Reports**

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (10:53): I move:

That the House adopt Report No. 100 of the Privileges Committee entitled *Citizen's Right of Reply (Mr Brett Whitworth)*, dated August 2025.

I will not speak extensively except to say that the request of Mr Whitworth to respond to comments that the Hon. Mark Latham put on record was considered in accordance with the standing orders. I note that those standing orders provide the process for a right of reply. In particular, I note that Standing Order 209 (3) (b) provides that, in considering any submission, the committee must not consider or judge the truth of any statements made in the House or in the submission. I think I accurately represent the views of the committee in saying that we thought that it was a model right of reply, as one might well expect from a senior public servant. It was succinct; it was strictly relevant to the question at issue; it did not contain anything offensive in character; and, in all respects, we thought that it complied with the relevant provisions of the standing orders that we had to consider.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (10:55): On behalf of the Government and in my capacity representing the Minister for Local Government in relation to this debate, I take note of Report No. 100 of the Privileges Committee entitled *Citizen's Right of Reply (Mr Brett Whitworth)* dated August 2025. The targeting of Mr Whitworth by some members of the Legislative Council has been quite shameful and, frankly, appalling. It should not be the case that comments made in this place require public servants to defend themselves in that manner. Mr Whitworth is a highly distinguished public servant, having worked for governments on both sides of the political divide.

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

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I publicly congratulate Mr Whitworth on receiving the Public Service Medal earlier this year. The crazed conspiracy theories pursued by some members of this place in relation to the investigation of the former Mayor of Bayside are quite incredible. Following are the facts in relation to the matter, drawn directly from a document publicly available and uploaded to the ICAC website last month:

The ICAC examined an allegation that, from about 2016, then Bayside City Council (BCC) Councillor Bill Saravinovski, and others, inappropriately or partially shared or disclosed confidential information to property developers, in breach of their duties as public officials. It was also alleged that from about August 2017, Mr Saravinovski exercised his official functions by supporting an unsolicited development proposal by a property developer.

Operation Aspen did not proceed to public inquiry or public report and the matter concerning Mr Saravinovski's conduct was referred on 14 December 2022 to the Office of Local Government under section 53 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 ("the ICAC Act"). Further, on 29 August 2024, advice of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) was sought in relation to possible criminal prosecutions pursuant to section 14(1) of the ICAC Act.

The document then provides a status update or outcome:

The Commission furnished a brief of evidence to the DPP on 29 August 2024.

On 1 August 2025, the DPP advised that there was sufficient evidence to charge Mr Saravinovski with 3 offences of giving misleading evidence to the Commission pursuant to section 87 of the ICAC Act.

Court attendance notices were served on Mr Saravinovski on 13 August 2025.

The matters are listed at the Downing Centre Local Court, Sydney, on 25 September 2025.

That is a fulsome summary of the history and current status of matters that has been publicly available. As the House would be aware from previous discussions on this topic and testimony from Chief Commissioner Hatzistergos in budget estimates hearings recently, the Government has been limited in what it can disclose in relation to this matter. The secrecy provisions of the ICAC Act as well as non-disclosure orders made by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal in its judgement on proceedings concerning former councillor Saravinovski remain.

I understand the Legislative Council was informed of the commission's general concerns in relation to the sensitivity and confidentiality of material via a letter from solicitor to the commission Philippa Hook to Steven Reynolds, Clerk of the Parliaments, New South Wales Legislative Council, on 21 May 2025. In addition, there are now active court proceedings. The shots taken at Mr Whitworth have been cowardly and unwarranted. I applaud his courage and conviction in exercising the right to defend his reputation, and I call out comments and criticism of him, by members, that have overstepped the mark.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (10:59): Now that we have a fuller debate, we can correct some of the things that have just been mentioned. Minister Hoenig cared so much about Brett Whitworth and his right of reply that he told the recent budget estimates that he had not read it. The Minister said he had not read it—that is how much he cared about it. He had not read it! As for this confected praise of Mr Whitworth, at budget estimates the Minister said that the statement on page 5 of the right of reply is false. The statement reads:

While the issues of then Councillor Saravinovski's potential pre-selection, the timing of the hearings and any public knowledge of the proceedings, were raised with me by Minister Hoenig ...

That is what the head of the Office of Local Government said: "The matters of the preselection and the timing of the hearings and any public knowledge were raised with me by Minister Hoenig." Minister Hoenig, at budget estimates, said that is false. He has effectively accused the public servant of not telling the truth in the right of reply. No amount of false praise and confected delight in winning certain medals and all that is going to save Minister Hoenig from his senior public servant having the chance to tell his truth at the Public Accountability and Works Committee hearing—his truth in this document that the Minister himself has not even bothered to read.

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

Visitors

VISITORS

The PRESIDENT: I welcome Penelope Barrett, who is the aunt, and Vasili Taosidis, who is the nephew and godson of the Hon. Courtney Houssos. They are both very welcome here today. I am sure the Minister will be on her best behaviour.

Questions Without Notice

LOCAL SMALL COMMITMENTS ALLOCATION

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (11:00): My question is directed to the Special Minister of State. Yesterday the Minister said that because he was "not aware of substantive concerns about other issues in the same way" as he was for the Local Small Commitments Allocation [LSCA] funding for the electorate of Sydney, he never took any steps to check Cherie Burton's assertion that all projects included on the 28 July 2023 list were election commitments. The House has now been provided with what Alison Morgan described on 14 June 2023 as "the original list for the Local Small Commitments Allocation". That original list includes election commitments with approval notification dates prior to 25 March 2023, which, in at least 17 electorates, were changed by the Premier's Office between 10 July and 26 July 2023. Will the Minister now investigate the changes made by the Premier's Office to the original list of election commitments in those 17 electorates and take steps to correct the substantive breach of the LSCA guidelines?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (11:01): I thank the acting Leader of the Opposition in this place for the question. I was pleased to see the Hon. Wes Fang get a question yesterday under her rule. This is a sensible question. It was extensively canvassed at the budget estimates hearings, and I gave the very clear answer that I have been briefed—subsequent to the Opposition raising these concerns—by the LSCA program

office. The facts as put in the question are not correct. They are not accepted either by the Government or by the program office. On the basis of the briefing to me, there are no matters to act on. I have approved the grants that were recommended to me on the basis of the briefs that were in front of me. Members can look at those briefs, as they are publicly available.

DROUGHT PREPAREDNESS

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (11:02): My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Regional New South Wales. Will the Minister update the House on how the New South Wales Government is supporting drought-affected communities?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:02): I thank the member for the very important question, particularly at this time. The Government has a comprehensive approach to dealing with drought in New South Wales. While the Libs and Nats are divided and fighting each other, we are getting on with the job of making sure that we are focused on delivering for communities that are experiencing dry conditions across New South Wales. Yesterday I attended the drought summit in Gawler, South Australia. It was an interesting summit, with a lot of experts providing information. It was also an opportunity to meet with most of my State and Territory counterparts, along with the Federal Minister, Julie Collins, about the work that is occurring in relation to the drought conditions that are being experienced around the country.

In New South Wales the programs are focused on preparedness, response and recovery, as well as drought monitoring and communication. Drought is unlike other natural disasters. It is slow moving and it can be spotted ahead of time. Preparation is key to dealing with drought. That is why, last month, the Premier, the Prime Minister and I announced that the New South Wales and Federal governments will fund the next four years of the Farm Business Resilience Program. That \$43 million announcement will support farmers to strengthen their drought resilience and climate adaptation. The investment will help regional communities and farming businesses better prepare for and respond to those challenges, ensuring long-term sustainability and economic stability.

Phase one of the program supported the development of more than 2,200 new farm business plans, engaged almost 30,000 participants across more than 2,300 events and helped more than 1,600 New South Wales businesses improve their operations through targeted workshops and events. Through phase two of the Farm Business Resilience Program, we will support farmers to access subsidised learning and development opportunities that will help them to prepare for drought, manage risk, build long-term operational resilience and continue to remain productive. Through personalised coaching, workshops, digital learning and peer-to-peer case studies, the Farm Business Resilience Program equips farmers with practical support to ensure they are better prepared before, during and after those very challenging periods.

Currently New South Wales is facing contrasting seasonal conditions. The production outlook remains strong for the northern winter cropping areas, whilst challenging conditions continue in parts of southern, western and central New South Wales, which are part of the ongoing larger drought event impacting western Victoria and eastern South Australia. The prospect of recovery over the coming spring is generally high across most of New South Wales, with continued easing of drought conditions in many areas and an optimistic spring rainfall forecast. Our investment in improved drought preparedness is expected to reduce economic losses in the agriculture sector and deliver broader benefits to rural communities, including increased employment and supply chain stability.

TIMBER INDUSTRY AND GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (11:05): My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment. According to the New South Wales Government website on the transitional plan for workers and industry affected by the moratorium on timber harvesting in specified State forests:

Businesses will be receiving financial assistance to ensure they can continue to pay their workers and to assist them to access other supports during a ten-week transition period.

Will the Minister confirm that financial assistance for paying impacted workers will cease after 16 November 2025?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:06): I thank the member for the question. The plan for the moratorium, as we went into in some detail yesterday, is 10 weeks. I cannot confirm that it will all be wrapped up within that period, but that is the expectation. The important point is that work is currently being undertaken, as we speak, for the six mills that are impacted. We are working through the issues. We have guaranteed that staff at those mills will not lose a cent of pay. They will be paid according to their normal arrangement while this is going on. After the moratorium period, the issue is the exit of some of those mills and the impact on those workers. As

we said, that is not insubstantial, and we take managing that very seriously. After that process is finalised, it is about redundancy payments and the top-ups and those kinds of things. Broadly, 10 weeks is right. But let us be clear: The Government is working carefully with the mills on the impacts of this decision. We will continue to work through that within that time frame. That is the broad expectation.

MEMBER FOR CAMPBELLTOWN

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (11:08): My question is directed to the Leader of the Government, representing the Premier. Why has the Premier appointed and kept the member for Campbelltown in Executive Government, despite knowing the way in which, as per these emails, Mr Warren collaborated with Jamie Clements to excuse and cover up Clement's sexual assault of Stefanie Jones in the office of the member for Campbelltown in this building in 2015 by allowing Mr Clements to visit a second time and pretend everything—

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Point of order: The question clearly contains argument and it should be struck from the record.

The PRESIDENT: I will hear the rest of the question before ruling.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Why has the Premier kept the member for Campbelltown in the Executive Government despite knowing the way in which, as per these emails, Mr Warren collaborated with Jamie Clements to excuse and cover up Clements' sexual assault of Stefanie Jones in the office of the member for Campbelltown in this building in 2015 by allowing Mr Clements to visit a second time and pretend that everything was okay and that nothing had happened the first time?

The Hon. Bob Nanva: Point of order—

The PRESIDENT: Another point of order has been taken. I require a copy of the question.

The Hon. Mark Latham: This is the mob who lecture about respect and safety for women but will not take a question and examine the documents.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Could I please have a copy of the question? I will hear the Hon. Bob Nanva's point of order.

The Hon. Bob Nanva: The question anticipates the subject matter of private members' business item No. 2278 on the *Notice Paper*, which has been given precedence by the Business Committee for debate today.

The Hon. Mark Latham: To the point of order: The item referred to is a motion calling for papers under Standing Order 52 and has nothing to do with Greg Warren. It goes to the police statement furnished by Chris Minns and Brent Thomas in relation to their close friend Jamie Clements. The motion does not mention Greg Warren or go to these emails that need to be examined and understood by the Chamber.

The PRESIDENT: Two points of order were taken. I will rule first on the point of order taken by the Hon. Bob Nanva with respect to anticipation of discussion of an item of business given precedence. I do not uphold the point of order. I agree with the Hon. Mark Latham that his question raises a different issue to that raised in private members' business item No. 2278. I turn to the point of order taken by the Hon. Penny Sharpe with respect to argument. I will allow the question asked by the Hon. Mark Latham to stand at this point. I have not had to seriously consider the issue of argument in questions until now—although, in my view, some questions asked by members have fallen on the appropriate side of the line and others have not. This opens up the opportunity for me to consider the issue of argument in a much deeper and more substantive way. I intend to do that and then advise the House on how I will treat the matter in future. However, on this occasion, I will allow the question with that caveat. The Minister may answer the question in any way she sees fit as long as her answer is directly relevant.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:13): There were a lot of assertions in that question that the Government utterly rejects. The Hon. Mark Latham has taken yet another opportunity to make accusations on this issue in a range of different formats. As I represent the Premier on this issue, I will take the rest of the question on notice and get a response for the member in due course.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (11:13): I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elaborate on her statement about accusations not being substantiated? These emails clearly show that the member for Campbelltown organised for Jamie Clements to visit his Parliament House office after the sexual assault—thereby striking fear into Ms Jones, especially given Mr Warren's email to her confirming that Clements would again visit his office on a sitting day and that Ms Jones should be "comfortable" with all the measures.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:14): I have learned to be very careful about the way the

Hon. Mark Latham reads and interprets a document and then puts it on record in this House. For that reason, I will take the rest of the question on notice.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I seek leave to table the emails that the Leader of the Government referred to.

Leave not granted.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: The Leader of the Government wants to know that much about the safety of a woman but will not allow me to table the documents.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Stephen Lawrence has the call. The Hon. Mark Latham will resume his seat.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE SECTOR

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (11:14): My question without notice is addressed to the Acting Minister for Education and Early Learning. Will the Minister update the House on the Minns Labor Government's work to improve the quality of care provided to children in the early childhood education and care sector?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:15): I thank the honourable member for his question on a very important topic. I also welcome my family members to question time. I have never had a family member come to question time, but today there happens to be two of them, so it is very exciting. Today in the Legislative Assembly, the Minns Labor Government will introduce nation-leading landmark reforms to our early childhood sector. It is appropriate that I acknowledge that this comes off the back of so much work done by the Deputy Premier. She started that work in the earliest days after our election. She commissioned the Wheeler review after an increase in the number of breaches in the early childhood sector. The legislation to be introduced today is our response to that review.

First and foremost, we are making child safety the paramount consideration that must be taken into account. That is pretty self-evident. Most childcare centres and educators would see it as a very simple, straightforward step, but it is a fundamental change to the legislative basis for the way that the regulator does its work. It is very important. The bill makes more than 30 changes, including giving more powers to the regulator and increasing the number and type of offences to which fines apply. It also triples the number of fines that will be applied and introduces a sliding scale for fines that can be imposed based on the size of a provider. If there is a serious breach by a large provider that operates more than 25 centres, then a significantly increased penalty can be imposed.

The bill is fundamentally about giving more information to parents and carers about the centre that their child attends or a centre that they are looking at. At the moment, they are limited to simply getting a single rating. The changes will allow them to see whether there has been a breach, or consistent breaches, and if any compliance action has been taken by the regulator, including steps taken to rectify the breach. It is really important work. This House has played an important role in uncovering some of the issues, along with various media outlets—and I have spoken about The Greens. There has been another notable example—Lexi, on Channel 7. I hope these landmark, nation-leading reforms, which we are proud to introduce, give Lexi's parents and other parents the information that they need.

GREYHOUND WELFARE

The Hon. EMMA HURST (11:18): My question is directed to the Special Minister of State, representing the Minister for Gaming and Racing. On 29 August 2025, the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission [GWIC] published an interim disqualification order stating that it is investigating allegations of animal welfare breaches by registered participant Mr Robert Watson. There are serious concerns that this is the same Robert Watson who was found by the 2016 McHugh inquiry to have killed up to 100 healthy greyhounds for industry participants off book while working as a senior council ranger at Kempsey Shire Council. Will the Minister confirm that this is the same Robert Watson who is now under an interim disqualification order from GWIC and, if so, explain why someone with his history was allowed to participate in greyhound racing from 2016 until this most recent disqualification?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (11:19): I thank the member for her question and acknowledge the serious concerns that she is raising about this greyhound racing industry participant. The Government believes that the greyhound racing industry must be run with the highest standards of animal welfare and integrity. I will make three quick points, that I know the member is aware of, about the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission, and then provide some information on the participant's status. The Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission is the independent regulator of the greyhound racing industry. It was established to

ensure greater oversight and enforcement of integrity and welfare issues. The commission has clear policies regarding greyhound welfare and it is running the first whole-of-life tracking system to monitor the location and welfare of all greyhounds registered in New South Wales. Importantly, the commission operates independently of government and industry in undertaking its regulatory functions.

Allegations related to participants in the industry are a matter for the commission. In regard to the particular allegation the member is asking about, I am advised that the commission has imposed an immediate disqualification on greyhound trainer Mr Robert Watson due to serious animal welfare allegations. An interim disqualification means that any and all greyhounds are removed from the participant's care and premises. I can confirm, given the question for the House, that this is the same individual who gave evidence to the McHugh inquiry in 2016. I am advised the commission has commenced an investigation into the historical operations of Mr Watson. As the investigation is ongoing, it is not appropriate to comment further on this matter. Obviously, the Government takes animal welfare breaches extremely seriously.

I thank my colleague the Minister for Gaming and Racing, who announced the appointment of the Hon. Lea Drake on 11 July 2024 as Acting Commissioner of the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission to lead an inquiry into Greyhound Racing NSW. I am advised, and the Hon. Emma Hurst is aware, that the Minister has received the report from Acting Commissioner Drake. The inquiry report's findings and recommendations will be considered carefully as part of the Government's ongoing commitment to high standards of integrity, but also of animal welfare, in the greyhound racing industry.

The Hon. EMMA HURST (11:21): I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate that part of his answer where he spoke about the commission looking into previous concerns about this participant? The Minister has confirmed that this is the same participant who was involved in the 2016 inquiry. Did the participant's history, and his continued involvement in the industry after 2016 despite that history, slip past the commission's oversight prior to this recent investigation?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (11:22): I thank the member for her supplementary question. I have provided all the information that I have on the current status of the investigation that is appropriate to share at this point. I am happy to take the supplementary question on notice to see if there is additional material that could be provided. I have to warn the House, and the member, that it is entirely possible that it will not be appropriate to comment further while this is an active investigation. Having said that, I will take it on notice and attempt to acquire further information for the member from the Minister for Gaming and Racing.

TIMBER INDUSTRY WORKERS

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL (11:23): My question is directed to the Minister for Mental Health. What mental health supports are available for workers in the timber industry who have now lost their jobs, and how can they access that support?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Youth) (11:23): I thank the honourable member for the question. As the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Agriculture, and the Minister for the North Coast made clear in relation to the really positive and important environmental conservation and local tourism announcement associated with the Great Koala National Park, for those workers who are impacted by the industry transition, obviously, things like mental health support and financial counselling are important and access to those services should be made available to them.

My understanding is that the New South Wales Government has engaged with local North Coast based financial counselling and mental health support groups. The names of those particular groups escape me at the moment, but I am happy to take that on notice. I could probably report back with the names of those groups at the end of question time. To be clear, both mental health support and financial counselling for impacted workers have been discussed by this Government and included as an important part of this announcement from the very beginning. We have always acknowledged that the full breadth of support should be available to people, because change and transition can be challenging. I will take on notice and try to come back to the member today with the specific names of those organisations.

In terms of availability, my understanding is that people will be able to access information as to how to contact those supports online. They will be able to access phone counselling, if that is of interest to them. To reiterate, we recognised from day one that these big, important announcements that involve change and transition must be accompanied by appropriate mental health and financial counselling support. Those supports have been made available and will be available both online and over the phone. I will get the exact names of those organisations and their contact details for the member.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL (11:25): I ask a supplementary question. In relation to online and telephone assistance, one of those supports is the TELUS Health Employee Assistance Program. Will the Minister elucidate her answer about access to support? When a call was made to that program's 1800 number, it took about 10 minutes before the switchboard operator could find any information about the Great Koala National Park moratorium industry support program. It was finally found listed under the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water [DCCEEW]. The operator advised that anyone calling the 1800 number for help should quote DCCEEW as the relevant employer organisation if they want to book an appointment. Why is this information not included in the advice on accessing mental health supports?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Youth) (11:26): I may need to take that on notice. Obviously, that was a specific incident. I am not familiar with it. I thank the member for bringing it to my attention. As I have indicated, the Government has acknowledged that the transition towards what will be a really important and lasting legacy for that community, which will bring a lot of tourism and other benefits, can have a challenging impact on people. If indeed there are examples of people waiting for or not being able to navigate the supports we have put in place, that is concerning. I am happy to take on notice those particular instances and work with our suppliers and providers to make sure that they have the right information at their fingertips, so that when people are contacting them they are able to provide assistance as quickly as possible. I will try to provide some more information before the end of question time.

GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK CARBON CREDITS

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY (11:27): My question without notice is addressed to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer outline to the House the way our great forests will continue be a resource that New South Wales can draw on, even as we protect them?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (11:28): I thank the member for his question. As the House knows, on Sunday the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Agriculture made a landmark announcement about the establishment of the Great Koala National Park, which also contained within it the opportunity for New South Wales to earn, potentially, long-term income from carbon credits. This is a good thing. For an economy that is decarbonising, particularly in those energy-intensive sectors that are on the hunt for high-quality carbon credits to achieve their safeguard mechanism outcomes, the prospect of being able to potentially buy carbon credits from the Government is a good thing. That is a potential long-term income source for the State of New South Wales.

It would potentially see New South Wales lead the development of this market. That is part of the reason why, in the wake of the announcement on Sunday, former Federal Treasury secretary Ken Henry said, quite aggressively, that there is potential to use our forest estate as a long-term source of jobs, economic wealth and economic prosperity. As much as I am pleased that this Government was able to edge further on that frontier, I should acknowledge that some work began under the previous Government. In fact, it turns out that the Perrottet Government also had a plan to use carbon credits. What I find most fascinating is that when we came to power, it was revealed that the Perrottet Government was developing a policy of ending native forestry logging to take to the March election but the effort was blocked by The Nationals before it could go to Cabinet. Disappointingly, none of that was known to the people of New South Wales prior to the last election.

Equally, it was not known to the people at the last election that the former Cabinet was also commissioning Frontier Economics to examine how the cost of reducing logging could be covered by carbon credits. According to the modelling obtained by the former Cabinet, that income source could provide 180 jobs in tourism. I draw that to the attention of the House to ask why the National Party and the Liberal Party are going to war over this policy. If the Liberals were working on it in government, it is disappointing that they are walking away from it in opposition. This Government thinks that there is a good opportunity for the State. We think that that bipartisanship should be— [*Time expired.*]

ASBESTOS DISPOSAL

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN (11:31): My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment. Too often, asbestos waste in New South Wales finds its way to strange and inappropriate places such as national parks, State forest, Crown land and even—as we all know—playgrounds, all due to the enormous expense of disposing of this insidious material legally via approved landfills. Will the Government consider utilising part of the enormous funding set aside from the waste levy in order to fund an asbestos amnesty, where people could dispose of asbestos properly, without incurring the enormous costs they currently do?

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 the question. It is a really good

question. We are always trying to find that balance between ensuring that we divert things from landfill and ensuring that we do not drive difficult outcomes. The member is right when he says that we have challenges with people disposing of asbestos in inappropriate places. Recently I was with the member for East Hills, looking at an illegal dumping site inside the boundaries of one of the national parks in her electorate. It is an issue. Cleaning it up is the short-term measure, but we do not want it there in the first place, so we are doing a lot of work on all of that.

The challenges around asbestos cannot be underestimated. Asbestos is found in one in three homes across New South Wales built before 1990. Literally millions of homes around the country have this deadly substance within them. The Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency estimates that up to 50 per cent of the asbestos used in building materials over that time is still in situ. It is a big challenge. In relation to the question about the waste levy, the member may be aware that the Government has undertaken a waste levy review. We are finalising that and hope to release it soon. I got a question yesterday about when we can tell local government and industry about the changes to the waste levy more broadly so they can factor them into their budgets. How we deal with asbestos waste is being considered, but I am not in a position to announce it today.

Finding that balance is important. How do we get people to deal with hazardous materials safely? There is also a big difference between the local householder dealing with a small amount of waste in a bathroom that costs a lot of money versus how waste is dealt with by larger companies who, firstly, are aware of the waste and, secondly, may have contributed to it in the first place. The member has nailed it with the right question. We are taking it seriously. The work we are doing around asbestos generally, which has been informed by the Office of the Chief Scientist and Engineer, continues. We will continue to talk about that, and I will provide more information when I am in a position to do so, when the Government makes a final decision.

The PRESIDENT: I welcome to the gallery students from two schools, the Wadalba Community School and The King's School in Parramatta. Both schools are participating in the Legal Studies and the Legislature program, conducted by the Parliamentary Education and Engagement team. They are very welcome.

LOCAL SMALL COMMITMENTS ALLOCATION

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (11:35): My question is directed to the Special Minister of State. The June 2023 Local Small Commitments Allocation [LSCA] list shows that on 18 March 2023 approval was notified of a commitment in the electorate of Epping that NSW Labor deliver up to \$400,000 to local councils across the electorate towards upgrades to playgrounds and parks. That would have resulted in the City of Parramatta receiving \$336,000 in LSCA funding. That election commitment was deleted from the spreadsheet by the Premier's office on 21 July 2023 after consulting with the Federal Labor member for Bennelong, Jerome Laxale, and all funds were directed to a single project in Hornsby. Will the Minister now apologise to the City of Parramatta for depriving it of \$336,000 in promised funding for park and playground upgrades?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (11:36): I thank the member for his question. He asked a number of similar questions in budget estimates hearings, all of which were based on facts that just do not bear out. I have sought a briefing from the program office. The briefing from the public service does not accord with the conspiracy theory that the member wants to advocate for. The list being administered is clear. That has been placed on record. It is not at all clear that the Federal member who the member refers to is the contact for the program. As I said in the course of budget estimates hearings, the Premier's office is on record saying it was asking people to provide the contact details for a range of organisations. The member's facts need checking.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Members will come to order.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I simply place on record that I have sought information, as I have done on each occasion that the Opposition has raised concerns. I have acted on some of those where I believed there was an issue to act on. This is not one, based on the briefing to me, where there has been a need to act.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (11:37): I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate whether he personally has now looked at the list described in an email dated 14 June 2023 by Alison Morgan as the original list, to check if that list showed that the election commitment was for \$400,000 to local councils across the electorate of Epping or only to a single project in Hornsby?

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): I have been briefed on the list.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Government members will cease interjecting.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: That briefing indicated that is not the list from which this program is being administered. The decisions I have made are based on the briefs that are publicly available. The member knows

that. He asked those questions and they went absolutely nowhere in budget estimates hearings. That is where the matter rests.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (11:38): I ask a second supplementary question. Will the Minister elaborate on the briefings he received from the program office? To Minister Honest John's credit, he has been very good at publishing all the documents. Will he now table or make publicly available the briefing he has received on this matter from the program office?

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): I certainly would, were it a written briefing. It was a verbal briefing. All of the documents that have been provided to me have been made public.

That has been my direction to the public service and I believe it has complied with that. But it was appropriate to—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Minister will resume his seat. The Hon. Sarah Mitchell was being very good during question time yesterday and has been for much of today, but not for the past 10 minutes. The Hon. John Graham has the call.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I have concluded my answer.

ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER HEALTH CARE

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (11:39): My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Mental Health. Will the Minister update the House on the progress the New South Wales Government is making to ensure that people with ADHD can access medication more cheaply and easily than ever before?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Youth) (11:39): I thank the honourable member for the question. I am pleased to update the House on the progress of this reform. Many people have loved ones in their lives who have experience of neurodivergence. ADHD is an obvious example of a mild and manageable neurodivergent condition that definitely does require intervention to make sure that people living with ADHD can have the most fulfilling and impactful lives that they are capable of. One of the barriers to doing that has historically been how difficult it has been for people to receive an ADHD diagnosis and then—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Natalie Ward and the Hon. Susan Carter are having a conversation that is louder than the Minister's answer.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: It is very challenging for me because I am a bit croaky. One of the barriers has been access to the specialists who have been required to diagnose and prescribe medication for ADHD. Particularly in rural and regional areas, access to those specialist paediatricians and psychiatrists is very challenging. It takes a lot of time and it costs a lot of money, and that has been the consistent feedback. The Government has introduced a new regime where general practitioners are able to assume a role, well within their scope of practice, managing those mild neurodivergent conditions for the general community.

We opened an expression of interest portal and, pleasingly, well over a thousand—at this stage, 1,330—general practitioners in New South Wales have expressed interest in playing that role. That very high level of interest is indicative of the fact that general practitioners know and recognise that they are very capable of playing that role for local families in their communities. We have worked with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners to develop a very straightforward training and accreditation module to allow general practitioners to update their skills to manage this condition—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Susan Carter will cease talking.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Now, pleasingly, general practitioners who are assuming the role of managing ongoing medication are coming online right across the State. That is the first step. People who already have an ADHD diagnosis—or whose loved one or child does—and who have a prescription for medication are now able to receive repeat scripts from their general practitioner. They do not have to wait for that appointment with a psychiatrist or paediatrician to manage an ongoing diagnosis, often waiting a long time for a very short appointment that costs a lot of money. Now that can all be done through their general practitioner. More and more GPs are coming online. The feedback from clinicians is fantastic but, more importantly, so is the feedback from parents and people living with ADHD. This is a really important, game-changing intervention to allow access to health care for everyone in the community.

RIDESHARE SAFETY

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (11:43): My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. On 25 March 2025 the Legislative Council moved a motion calling on the New South Wales Government to develop a policy to protect unaccompanied minors who use point to point transport and to examine prioritising protecting unaccompanied minors who use point to point transport by amending the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 to ensure that all drivers with a passenger transport licence code have a Working with Children Check clearance. Will the Minister update the House on the Government's progress to date and confirm whether point to point drivers are now required to hold a Working with Children Check clearance when transporting unaccompanied children in rideshare and taxi trips?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (11:43): I thank the member for her question. As she indicated, she raised this issue during the course of budget estimates. I thought she made a strong point about some of the issues that members would be aware of; I referred to them earlier in the week in the House. In relation to the action that has been taken since then, I had already been having discussions with the Point to Point Transport Commissioner in the early days of taking the portfolio. But, since the member raised the issue, I have issued the statement of expectations to the commissioner. Elements of the statement of expectations are now being shaped by this issue and the advocacy that the member raised.

I now expect that the Point to Point Transport Commissioner will take some additional account of safety issues—not just for children, but I thought the point the member made about children was a good one—and I expect to be able to update the member and the House further on that matter. That was broadly about the safety issues that the member drew attention to. I can give her some additional, specific information on the Working with Children Check point. Obviously, point to point transport drivers must be licensed. They also have to pass medical and criminal background checks to ensure that they are able to drive. If they are found guilty of a disqualifying offence—including any specified criminal, serious driving or point to point safety offence—they are automatically prohibited from driving a taxi, rideshare or other hire vehicle.

While point to point transport law does not require drivers to have a Working with Children Check, relevant disqualifying offences largely mirror those in the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012, with the addition of other criminal offences, driving offences and point to point safety offences. The Act specifies which types of child-related work require a Working with Children Check. They include transport services that are especially for children, but not specifically point to point transport drivers. That is the answer to the very specific matter that the member raised, but some of the broader issues she raised were serious ones. That is why the Government has taken the action that it has in regard to the statement of expectations. My hope and my expectation as Minister is that the Point to Point Transport Commissioner will report back on those issues, and I will be happy to further update the member at that point.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (11:46): I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate where in the statement of expectations he refers to the issue of unaccompanied minors and the Working with Children Check?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (11:46): I will take the question on notice so that I can draw to the member's attention the specific elements of the statement of expectations. As I said, they relate to the broader issue, not specifically to the Working with Children Check. The member raised a number of concerns, but I took her point about safety, particularly of children. I have raised other concerns with the point to point commissioner. But I will take the question on notice and provide the member with specific guidance about the statement of expectations.

LOCAL SMALL COMMITMENTS ALLOCATION

The Hon. WES FANG (11:47): My question is directed to the Special Minister of State. In June 2023 the Local Small Commitments Allocation [LSCA] list—which the Minister has told the House that he has not personally looked at—showed that on 18 March 2023, approval was notified of a commitment in the electorate of Orange that NSW Labor would deliver up to \$400,000 to local councils across the electorate for upgrades to parks and playgrounds. That would have resulted in the city of Orange receiving \$216,000 in LSCA funding. A document dated 20 June 2023 shows the member for Orange as the contact for that electorate. On 21 July 2023 Paul Mills from the Premier's office deleted the original election commitment from the spreadsheet and substituted five specific projects, with the city of Orange now allocated only \$100,000. Will the Minister personally look at those two lists and investigate the discrepancies?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (11:48): I thank the member for his question. Again, the facts just do not bear out what the member is suggesting. I put these questions to the program office. They have been clear about the list from which this is administered. Having looked at it, they just did not agree, in the briefing to me, with the conspiracy theory that is being put. If members want to see why the projects were recommended to me and the basis on which the decision was made, they can examine the briefs that are out in public. I discourage the member from taking the Whip's lead on this, given he is a member of the Liberal Local Government Oversight Committee and given some of the concerns that were raised about his activity. Concerns were raised in the committees of this House about the role of lobbyists, developers and factional operatives working together, including concerns about donations to factional organising, to branch membership—

The Hon. Chris Rath: Point of order: I have absolutely no idea what the Minister is talking about and I do not think anybody in the Chamber actually does. It is clearly not related to the very specific question that the Hon. Wes Fang asked about the Local Small Commitments Allocation.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The question was quite broad-ranging, I have to say.

The Hon. Chris Rath: Not that broad-ranging.

The PRESIDENT: I agree with the point that was just made. I fail to see how the Minister was within a bull's roar of the question. The Minister has the call and will come back to the question.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I have concluded my answer.

The Hon. WES FANG (11:50): I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate that part of his answer where he spoke about the LSCA grants? Cherie Burton has been shown to have misled the LSCA program office about the election commitments for Sydney, which she changed after consulting with the member for Sydney. Why does the Minister refuse to consider that Ms Burton is similarly misleading the program office in relation to the changes made in Orange?

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: Point of order: The preamble and the question contained argument and, therefore, the member has once more fallen prey to what was seen in Committee yesterday: The question is incapable of being answered because it is so replete with argument that, once you strip all the argument out, there is no question left.

The Hon. Wes Fang: To the point of order: Any of the keen watchers of the LSCA inquiry will be well aware that Cherie Burton has misled the program office. There is no doubt about the evidence that has been heard. We would love to know what the Minister has done in relation to Cherie Burton misleading the office.

The PRESIDENT: I have already made a comment about argument in this question time. I am considering the issue. I will take this matter into account as I consider the issue. That having been said, I rule the supplementary question out of order for an entirely different reason, which is that it is an entirely new question. The fact that it comes under exactly the same grants program does not mean that the member can ask any question about that grants program as a supplementary question.

SOLAR PANEL RECYCLING

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (11:52): My question is addressed to the Minister for the Environment. Will the Minister update the House on how New South Wales is leading work to develop a national solar panel reuse and recycling scheme?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:52): I thank the member for his question. Members would be aware that Australians, and particularly people in New South Wales, love solar panels. They have many thousands of them on their houses. We also are building large and important solar farms across the State. We have not dealt properly with the waste from those panels. The analysis that we and others have done predicts that the annual panel waste in Australia could exceed 50,000 tonnes just this year. And it is likely to grow to more than 90,000 tonnes by 2030.

Local communities and councils have raised this issue with me as they do not want large amounts of solar panel waste in their landfill. The important thing, though, is that there is a completely different way and much that we can do about this. There is an incredible amount of economic opportunity when it comes to the end of life of solar panels. This opportunity can drive the creation of industry and jobs as well as drive more solar capacity and provide access for people who, at the moment, struggle to afford to put solar on their roofs. The good news is that more than 95 per cent of panels can be recycled to recover their valuable components. This is worth about \$1,000 per tonne of panels. Many of the panels that are coming off as people are installing new batteries and

upgrading their systems have many years of life in them and they can be reused to boost our solar capacity using community organisations and to develop a second-hand market for solar panels that people will have access to.

The local recycling and reuse sector for solar panels remains limited in size. That is why I am pleased to report to the House that New South Wales is leading the work to establish a national mandatory product stewardship scheme for solar panels. New South Wales is doing this together with the Commonwealth, with the goal that all jurisdictions can ensure end-of-life solar panels are reused, recycled or remanufactured and not landfilled or exported. Just like the Container Deposit Scheme, such a scheme would ensure that industry helps to take responsibility for panels at the end of life and there is not waste build-up in regional communities. We can do this in New South Wales because earlier this year we passed the important piece of legislation—the Product Lifecycle Responsibility Act—with multi-partisan support, for which I thank members. I acknowledge that that Act had broad support across the Chamber and is something that we welcome.

The scheme will be able to be leveraged to spark growth in the domestic reuse, recycling and remanufacturing sectors to match the projected increase in the volume of end-of-life solar panels. It will also address a large part of the waste management concerns for large-scale solar facilities and could mean that calls for things like decommissioning bonds will find a cheaper and better way to deal with end-of-life solar panels. This work is really important and I look forward to updating the House as we roll it out.

The PRESIDENT: Before I call the Hon. Mark Latham, I advise members that the Hon. Mark Latham is taking the Hon. Rod Roberts' question, which is why he is asking a second question.

ELECTION CAMPAIGN FUNDING

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (11:55): The Hon. Rod Roberts is off doing very important research and I am just filling in temporarily. My question is directed to the Special Minister of State, who is in charge of the State's electoral laws. Especially given the Minister's background, was he aware of his Labor candidate for Kogarah, Chris Minns, calling head office—and the ALP general secretary Jamie Clements, in particular—asking him to wash the cash left over from his Sunny Seafood Chinese fundraiser for the 2015 elections? Is the Minister aware of the ICAC document showing that the now Premier's campaign cash was laundered by Jonathan Yee and Ernest Wong with the exact same straw donors used for the infamous Aldi bag Chinese fundraiser in March 2015—

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Point of order—

The PRESIDENT: I will hear the end of the question.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Accordingly, given this remains a very serious offence under the State's electoral laws, what action will the Minister take?

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: There are imputations and assertions in that question. It is not appropriate for them to be made during question time. The member is well aware of his ability to make these kinds of assertions through notices of motions. There is just not a standing order under which the member will not try to impute the reputations of many based on this information. He is not allowed to do that during question time.

The Hon. Mark Latham: To the point of order: The Leader of the Government accuses me of abusing the standing orders. Which one? A motion has been moved relating to this matter. It is painful for her, time after time, to cover up the Premier's corruption, of course. That is her great pain in this place. This is another example of it where the Premier should be held to account—

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Point of order—

The Hon. Mark Latham: —given the ICAC documents and the new information I have provided to the House—

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Mark Latham will take his seat.

The Hon. Mark Latham: —which will be taken further, I can assure you.

The PRESIDENT: That is not helpful.

[A Government member interjected.]

The Hon. Mark Latham: You? You know. You're happy to sit with these people in Cabinet.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I call the Hon. Mark Latham to order for the first time.

The Hon. Mark Latham: Ethical Daniel.

The PRESIDENT: To ensure the good running of the House, I say this: First, when a member takes a point of order, no other member will stand or speak. Secondly, when a member asks a question, no other member will take a point of order during the question. They will wait until the end of the question and then I will hear the point of order. There must be order in the House, otherwise there will be chaos. There are clearly imputations in the question asked by the Hon. Mark Latham. Your questions are a challenge, Mr Latham—and I am not saying that this is out of order, but with your handwriting and the constant—

The Hon. Mark Latham: It's a secret code.

The PRESIDENT: It is a challenge. I will now broaden my consideration of argument and include inferences and imputations. Clearly, there needs to be some clear direction on all three matters. To give the Hon. Mark Latham some comfort, I refer him to Standing Order 65 (1) (b), (c) and (d). Obviously, there is a line for all three of those issues—argument, inference and imputation—which we have tried to navigate over the last 2 ½ years. It is now time to provide more specific advice on those matters and how I will deal with them in the future. On this occasion, I will allow the question for the same reason as I allowed the last one, with the caveat that I will be considering these issues and I will report back to the House.

The Hon. Emily Suvaal: Point of order: As I understand and recall the question, it was about the management of donations by a general secretary of a political party. I seek your ruling on whether that falls foul of the precedent that has been set, that questions put to Ministers should not refer to the internal workings of a political party.

The Hon. Mark Latham: To the point of order—

The PRESIDENT: I do not need to hear further on the point of order. I do not uphold the point of order. The final part of the member's question asked the Special Minister of State about electoral funding laws, for which he has responsibility. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (12:00): Firstly, I reject the assertions in the question and the way the member has put the question—as he has put a range of attacks on the Premier in this House. I do not accept a range of the facts and premises that he has put. I am aware of some of the issues that the Independent Commission Against Corruption has looked at and I have listened carefully to the issues that have been raised in the House. I place on record my view about the character of the Premier. I hold him in very high regard. I say that as someone who works with him as Special Minister of State in relation to a number of Acts that cover the integrity agencies. I have found him personally, but also in the way he has directed the Government, to be a person of the highest integrity. As the member knows, the Electoral Commission is an independent authority. He is entitled to refer whatever he likes to the Electoral Commission.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The time for questions has expired. If members have further questions I suggest they place them on notice.

RIDESHARE SAFETY

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (12:01): In relation to the question asked by the Hon. Tania Mihailuk, I place on record the statement of expectations to the Point to Point Transport Commissioner. I refer specifically to this section:

This should especially investigate enhancements for protecting women, young people and children using the services - including alone - or passengers with a disability. I would expect a review on additional measures and powers, including collaboration with other government departments, by end of 2025.

I seek leave to table correspondence from the Hon John Graham, MLC, Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and the Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy and the Hon. Jenny Aitchison, MP, Minister for Roads, and Minister for Regional Transport to Mr Anthony Wing, Point to Point Commissioner, entitled "2025 Statement of Expectations", dated 8 April 2025.

Leave granted.

Document tabled.

TIMBER INDUSTRY WORKERS

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Youth) (12:02): I provide more information in relation to the

question asked by the Hon. Nichole Overall. I confirm that wellbeing and financial support is available for workers impacted by the Great Koala National Park announcement. The TELUS employee assistance program that the member referred to in her supplementary question offers free, confidential 24/7 mental health, financial and legal counselling services to affected employees and their immediate families. The program can be contacted on 1800 835 871 or via one.telushealth.com. People should cite the Great Koala National Park moratorium industry support program. Rural financial counselling services can also be accessed by impacted forestry industry businesses at rfcsmr.org.au. In relation to the specific issue that the member referred to in her supplementary question, where someone contacted TELUS and was unable to immediately navigate support, I have taken that on notice and will follow up any instances of people attempting to access that support and being unable to quickly connect with the support available.

Supplementary Questions for Written Answers

TIMBER INDUSTRY AND GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (12:03): My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Minister for the Environment. In relation to assistance for affected timber workers after the 10-week transition period and the Government's foreshadowed 100 new jobs in the National Parks and Wildlife Service, how many—if any—of those new jobs will be in place by 16 November 2025 when that transition period ends?

LOCAL SMALL COMMITMENTS ALLOCATION

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (12:04): My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Special Minister of State about the answers he gave regarding the seats of Epping and Orange. In addition to talking to the program officer, why has the Minister not consulted Cherie Burton in the Premier's office, given that she held the master list and made alterations to it, seemingly seeking favour with the crossbench in the other place for the minority Minns Government?

LOCAL SMALL COMMITMENTS ALLOCATION

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (12:04): My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Special Minister of State. How many electorates show changes in Local Small Commitments Allocations between the list described by Alison Morgan on 14 June 2023 as "the original list" and the 28 July 2023 list? Why were these changes made?

RIDESHARE SAFETY

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (12:04): My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Minister for Transport. Will the Minister confirm whether the Point to Point Transport Commission holds any data on drivers with a passenger transport licence code who either have or do not have Working with Children Check clearances?

Questions Without Notice: Take Note

TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I move:

That the House take note of answers to questions.

TIMBER INDUSTRY AND GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

TIMBER INDUSTRY WORKERS

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (12:05): I speak about the answers to questions from me and my National Party colleague the Hon. Nichole Overall in relation to the impact on timber workers after the Government's announcement of the Great Koala National Park over the weekend. We also raised this issue yesterday. Today I wanted specific information from the Minister for the Environment about the transitional plan for workers and industry and the financial assistance that the Government says will be made available to those impacted businesses to ensure they can continue to pay their workers and to assist them to access other supports during what the Government calls a 10-week transition period. It is the 10-week transition period that we are incredibly concerned about. Let us be frank: There is a lot to do with this national park that we are incredibly concerned about.

The Nationals are the only party standing up for timber workers and asking the important questions. As I said in my contribution yesterday, there are hundreds of workers and their families who are in limbo at the moment. They are concerned, worried and traumatised after these announcements by the Government over the weekend. What we heard from the Minister today is effectively a confirmation that this support—this JobKeeper-style payment that the Government refers to—will only be in place for a 10-week transition period.

The Government is calling it JobKeeper-style payments. It should be calling it "JobCutter-style" payments because there is no way to keep these businesses open. JobKeeper was about trying to keep businesses afloat and people employed to get through a rough period during COVID.

The reality is there is no future for these mills under this Government. There is nothing available. There is a 10-week period that the Government has identified. It is yet to tell us the monetary value of the package. My colleague asked the Minister a question on notice about that yesterday as well. The response was "We will work directly with impacted businesses" and "Businesses will get financial assistance". There is no dollar figure and no detail. This is not a well thought out or well-consulted plan to support a vital industry on the Mid North Coast. It is a Sunday morning announcement to appease Greens voters, with little to no regard for timber workers and their families.

I am also very concerned about the mental health impacts in these communities. I am sure my colleagues will speak about that. I acknowledge the member for Myall Lakes, Tanya Thompson. Her community has been devastated by floods. They are now being devastated by the impact of job cuts and timber mill closures. It is not something I say lightly, but I know from speaking to Tanya that there are people in her community who are literally on the brink. This is a devastating time for the Mid North Coast. The Government needs to do better. It needs to provide support and it needs to provide answers to our questions. [*Time expired.*]

MEMBER FOR CAMPBELLTOWN

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (12:08): I take note of the answer given by the Leader of the Government concerning the Jamie Clements matter. It is curious—some might say hypocritical—that a government that lectures us until it is blue in the face about respect for women's safety in the workplace was not willing to accept the tabling of these important documents. They show the culpability of the member for Campbelltown, who agreed to a strategy—some might say a strategy too smart by half—by Jamie Clements to say after he sexually assaulted Stefanie Jones in this building in 2015, he could return a second time to the same office and show there was no problem, that nothing had really happened and nothing could have gone wrong the first time because he was safely coming back a second time.

On Friday 31 July 2015, in the electorate office, Stefanie Jones was told by her boss, the member for Campbelltown, about the impending visit when Parliament next sat. She then emailed Greg Warren to say:

... you informed me that Jamie Clements would be "dropping into the office next week in Parliament", I request that you inform me of when he will be coming, so I will not be present at that time.

As you are aware, following the incident I reported to you on Thursday 25 June in Parliament, when Jamie intimidated and assaulted me in the office during question time, I do not feel safe or comfortable around him at any time.

She said she would be locking the Parliament House office door if she was left alone, and that she was concerned Jamie Clements would take the opportunity to drop in and check on her again during question time. She had fear struck into her about her boss allowing this sexual assaulter to visit a second time, trying to show in his defence that nothing was wrong the first time. Greg Warren's response later that evening on Sunday 2 August at 9.45 p.m. was absolutely extraordinary.

The Hon. Bob Nanva: Point of order—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: What about respect for women's safety in the workplace? These are things on the record.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): Order! The Hon. Mark Latham will resume his seat while I hear the point of order.

The Hon. Bob Nanva: I am reluctant to take a point of order, but I refer to Standing Order 96 (3) regarding personal reflections on members, including those in the other House. The Hon. Mark Latham has made a personal reflection and imputation against the member for Campbelltown. I ask that the point of order be upheld.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: To the point of order: It is supported by documents. There is no imputation when you are reading out the factual documents, including an emailed response that Greg Warren made on 2 August 2015 saying that he wanted Stefanie Jones to be comfortable with all measures. This is the point that needs to be made.

The Hon. Bob Nanva: Further to the point of order: That may be so, but it needs to be done by way of substantive motion.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): I have heard enough. I will take advice. As the President indicated during question time, he will come back to members with his thoughts on such matters

being raised in the House. Normally, these matters would be raised by way of substantive motion. In any case, the time for the member's contribution has expired.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I seek an extension of time, given the interruption.

Leave not granted.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I seek leave to table the emails that I cited.

Leave not granted.

TIMBER INDUSTRY AND GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

The Hon. WES FANG (12:12): I take note of answers given today on the Great Koala National Park. It is fantastic to see that the Minister responsible for forestry is in the Chamber. We know she was absent yesterday, and I accept that was because she was at a drought summit. I applaud her for looking at drought, but it is interesting that the Minister is finally doing something about it after we raised the issue many months ago in this House. I hope it is not going to be the case that the same Minister that is responsible for forestry is going to leave it many months before the workers that have been impacted by decisions of this Government find out what they will receive in JobKeeper-style payments, as the Government describes them.

There is no detail on the table for those workers. They are still unclear as to what they will receive. They do not know what package they are able to receive from this Government, and that creates anxiety. We are now a number of days into the moratorium on the harvesting of timber. The Minister says it will run for around 10 weeks. But in the same way there is no detail about the funding that is on the table for those workers, there is no detail about the moratorium. There is no detail about when forestry will return—if it will return—and which mills will be closed. The Minister with responsibility for forestry has sat through a whole question time without providing any responses to the—

The Hon. Tara Moriarty: Point of order: It is true that I sat through question time. The Opposition did not ask me any questions about this, so I ask that the member withdraw those comments and stick to debating what was covered in question time.

The Hon. WES FANG: To the point of order: The Labor Party gets as many questions in the House as we do. The Labor Party refused to provide any detail. The Minister for the Environment has not provided detail. The Government should be asking the Minister with responsibility for forestry to provide that detail.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): The Hon. Wes Fang will continue his contribution.

The Hon. WES FANG: The Minister has a responsibility to tell those workers what they are going to receive. It is now Wednesday lunchtime. Those workers have been told they do not have jobs, but there is no clarity about what they will receive. The anxiety that they are experiencing is unacceptable. [*Time expired.*]

RIDESHARE SAFETY

OPERATION HECTOR

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (12:15): I comment on the question that I put to the Minister for Transport about the Point to Point Transport Commission. I thank him for his response. I also make clear that, yes, he has tabled a statement of expectations that he has put to the Point to Point Transport Commissioner and, yes, he has made a vague comment asking the commission to address safety issues concerning women and children, but my questions to him were as specific today as they were in budget estimates. For the benefit of the House, in Tasmania point to point drivers, be they taxi drivers or Uber drivers, have to have a Working with Children Check clearance. My concern is that this is not the case in New South Wales. My other concern is that we do not collect data, and we have no idea whether our point to point drivers in New South Wales have a Working with Children Check.

Many unaccompanied minors utilise Ubers and taxis. If the Government is serious about protecting children and young people, it is important that it does what Tasmania has done and mandates Working with Children Check requirements for those drivers. We passed a motion earlier in the year. I want to see the Government act on this and put pressure on the Point to Point Transport Commission. I thought the commissioner's responses to me in budget estimates earlier in the year were woeful. They need to understand this is a serious matter. We do not want to wait for serious issues to arise in New South Wales. We want to get on the front foot, as the Government has done very recently with the Working with Children Check changes that the Premier has been boasting about in the past few days.

I also note a written question that I put to the Premier on the legislative responses to Operation Hector. The Chief Commissioner of the ICAC has written to the Premier and the Special Minister of State, and a document

relating to the ICAC report has been tabled where the commissioner made clear that changes are needed to section 8 (2A) and the definition of "public funds". I am asking the Special Minister of State, because the Premier said in his response that the ball is in the Minister's court. We need to act on this. There is now a clear recommendation in the report that says the Government must amend section 8 (2A) of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act to ensure the term "public funds" is properly defined. [*Time expired.*]

LOCAL SMALL COMMITMENTS ALLOCATION

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (12:19): I take note of the answers given today by the Special Minister of State. This House finally received the documents relating to the Local Small Commitments Allocation program, which included the original 14 June 2023 list. After three requests under Standing Order 52, the documents were finally received. We should have received them in January when all the documents summonsed from the Government were due but we only got them a couple of weeks ago. What did we find? What we found was the basis of the questions to the Special Minister of State. We found that between 14 June and 28 July 2023 the amounts that were supposed to be given to each electorate by each Labor candidate had been doctored. In particular, there were certain electorates for which no amounts had been committed during the 2023 election campaign.

That money was supposed to be evenly distributed based on population to each of the local councils in those electorates to be used for parks and playgrounds. That did not happen in a whole range of different electorates across New South Wales. It did not happen in Orange, which the Hon. Wes Fang asked about today. The contact person on the original list was Phil Donato and the amount was changed by 28 July 2023. The amounts were also changed in the electorates of Sydney, Murray and Wollondilly. What do the members representing those four electorates have in common? They are all Independents, and they are all on the crossbench. The Minns Government is a very precarious minority government that needs members like those to keep itself in power. Those amounts were changed, and they were doctored. We believe it was done to prop up the precarious minority Minns Government.

It also happened in other electorates such as the Federal electorate of Bennelong, which had a 0.1 per cent margin at the last Federal election and overlaps with the State electorate of Epping. The contact person on the list on 14 June 2023 was none other than someone called Jerome. I ask members of the Labor Party whether they know any Jeromes in the Epping or Bennelong electorates. The Minister even admitted in budget estimates hearings that it probably refers to Jerome Laxale, the Federal Labor member for Bennelong. Why did a Federal Labor member have any role in determining the Local Small Commitments Allocation for the State electorate of Epping? The whole thing stinks. [*Time expired.*]

TIMBER INDUSTRY WORKERS

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL (12:22): I take note of the answer given by the Minister for Mental Health to my question relating to the mental health supports available for those impacted by the headlong rush to create the Great Koala National Park. I raised the issue yesterday, hence my question to the Minister today about the supports that should be in place—and must be in place—prior to the Government advancing the great, wonderful plan and its untold benefits that it keeps talking up. We have not yet seen concrete detail on how it is unfolding. While I appreciate that the Minister for Mental Health suggested she would look into supports and the fact that they are not easily accessible, they should have already been in train. That lack of accessibility should not be further impacting those who are already going through so much. Families, timber workers, businesses and communities are already dealing with anxiety, stress and uncertainty, yet it is up to them to navigate how to find the help to deal with it. It is not good enough.

As I raised yesterday, it is about more than koalas, trees and land being locked up; it is about the human cost, the social sacrifice and that the anguish and ongoing trauma that this issue is clearly producing. It needs to be better addressed and dealt with. It is as though Labor is so focused on the forest it fails to see not the trees but the people. If the example of Murray is anything to go on, best intentions do not necessarily deliver the best outcomes. In that example, 42,000 hectares were locked up but none of the great promises made about protecting the environment, enhancing communities and building tourism came to pass. Most importantly, one of the things overlooked in this debate is that transition packages were also promised yet many of them failed to be fully realised or fully provided. That is not good enough. It is about people, communities and those involved in the timber industry. It is about jobs, but it is more than just pay cheques; it is about livelihoods, lifestyles and lives being dramatically impacted. This is not the way it should be done. Labor needs to do better and listen to the voices of the people affected.

TIMBER INDUSTRY WORKERS

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (12:25): I take note of the answer given by the Minister for Mental Health in relation to the question about the New South Wales Government's transitional plan for workers and

industry impacted by the timber-harvesting moratorium in the State forests in the Great Koala National Park assessment area. I recognise the strong representations made by my colleagues the Hon. Nichole Overall, the Hon. Wes Fang and the Hon. Sarah Mitchell about the impacts on the workers and the consequences of the moratorium. The New South Wales Government website confirms that financial assistance such as JobKeeper-style payments will cover the salaries of impacted workers and are designed to support workers and businesses during a 10-week transition period.

That transition period is stated to end on 16 November 2025. The assistance targets approximately 300 workers across the six mills—of the region's 25—that are affected by the moratorium, but workers today are asking, "What's next, after the 10 weeks? Is there a future plan? What about the industry? What does it mean to our bottom line, or to harvesting, the cost of timber and construction?" Those questions remained unanswered. The Minister must clarify whether additional funding will be available, and what the situation will be after 16 November.

I recognise that the Minister acknowledged the issues relating to mental health support. I welcome her interest in examining exactly what is available. It is concerning that we have reports from the community that when they seek mental health support services, they wait for 10 minutes, are redirected and are then told that nothing is available. I commend the Minister for acknowledging that it is absolutely critical that the mental health support service issue is addressed. I also acknowledge the Australian Workers' Union, which has said that the support is "nowhere near enough". I share the concerns of the regional communities reliant on the \$3 billion hardwood timber industry and what the changes means for them. We owe it to them to let them know the future plan and what is next. I commend my colleagues for their representations.

TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (12:28): In response to the take-note debate today, I note the bizarre contributions from the Opposition, given that it cannot seem to get its act together on what its position is on protecting koalas or on the Great Koala National Park. We watched the joke that played out in the other place yesterday when it could not even commit, as a coalition, to support a single position.

If that is the case, I do not know why people would consider anything members opposite had to say. They cannot even manage their own Coalition or work out their own positions on these issues. Meanwhile the Minns Labor Government is getting on with the job of delivering its significant election commitment to create the Great Koala National Park. Government members are working together. As the Minister responsible for the industry, I am working across government with the environment Minister, the Premier and others to ensure that we deliver our election commitment to protect koalas.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): I call the Hon. Wes Fang to order for the first time.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: While we do that, we are working through a detailed process to ensure that, as much as we possibly can, we minimise the impacts on jobs, which we know is very sad news for the people who are impacted. There is a comprehensive support package, including full payments for the workers who are unfortunately impacted by this decision. There is financial support provided to workers and businesses directly impacted. We will continue the work to ensure the fewest possible job losses when rolling out this park. We are committed to a sustainable forestry industry in New South Wales, and work is well underway to outline a plan for the future of the industry. A sustainable industry is in the interests of New South Wales, our economy, the workers employed in it and the businesses and communities that rely upon it.

The contrast could not be more stark. Members of the Minns Labor Government are working together to deliver what we committed to deliver for the people of New South Wales. We are supporting workers through this transition, which I will continue to advocate for. Meanwhile, we watch the Opposition being unable to get any kind of coherent policy together. How can anyone who is contemplating voting this weekend or at any other time trust a rabble that cannot even govern itself? We will continue to deliver for regional New South Wales. There were also some comments made today about drought funding. I am very proud that our Government has delivered, together with the Federal Government, \$43 million worth of financial support for farmers impacted by drought. It is getting on with the job.

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

Motion agreed to.

*Written Answers to Supplementary Questions***WORKPLACE GENDER EQUALITY**

In reply to **the Hon. NATALIE WARD** (9 September 2025).

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer)—The Minister provided the following response:

I am advised by the Minister for Industrial Relations:

I refer you to my answer provided at budget estimates on 1 September.

The transcript can be found at:

[https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/transcripts/3567/Transcript%20-%20PC1%20-%201%20September%202025%20-%20Budget%20Estimates%20\(Cotsis\)%20UNCORRECTED.pdf](https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/transcripts/3567/Transcript%20-%20PC1%20-%201%20September%202025%20-%20Budget%20Estimates%20(Cotsis)%20UNCORRECTED.pdf)

TIMBER INDUSTRY AND GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

In reply to **the Hon. WES FANG** (9 September 2025).

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage)—The Minister provided the following response:

The New South Wales Government is working directly with impacted businesses that are affected by the reduction in timber supply resulting from the moratorium. Businesses will be receiving financial assistance to ensure they can continue to pay their workers and to assist them to access other supports during the transition period. We are working with impacted businesses to provide funds as a priority. It is anticipated that payments will commence next week in consultation with impacted businesses.

These payments will be made while the New South Wales Government continues discussions with impacted mills and harvest and haulage businesses about long-term options for their business and providing appropriate support for workers.

*Documents***TABLING OF PAPERS**

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I table the following paper:

- (1) Government Sector Employment Act 2013—Report of Kate Eastman, AM, SC, entitled *Special Ministerial Inquiry into the Office of the Children's Guardian: Part 1, Report*, dated 5 August 2025

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY**Report of Independent Legal Arbitrator**

The CLERK: According to the resolution of the House this day, I table the report of the Independent Legal Arbitrator, entitled *Disputed Claim of Privilege—SafeWork NSW investigation of the University of Sydney*, dated Tuesday 2 September 2025, together with a submission.

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***BUSINESS CONNECT PROGRAM**

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (14:02): The Labor Government's recent decision to terminate the Business Connect program on 30 September 2025 is not only short-sighted but also increasingly damaging to the future of the State's economy. Since 2017 Business Connect has provided trusted, independent and tailored advice to tens of thousands of small businesses across New South Wales. In fact, 10,980 businesses were assisted last year. It is one of the few programs where a business owner—whether they run a cafe in Newcastle, a mechanic in Wagga or a startup in Cronulla—can sit down with an expert who understands the challenges that they are facing, the industry that they are in and, most crucial of all, what kinds of steps need to be taken to help their business not only survive but flourish.

The average failure rate for small businesses is currently around 13 per cent. Before accessing Business Connect, 12 per cent of all participants were similarly considering closing or selling their businesses. But after accessing the program, only 1 per cent went through with it. That is an extraordinary result. Despite that proven track record and demand for the program, the Government has decided to defund the service. Small businesses account for 97 per cent of all businesses in New South Wales, employing approximately 1.8 million people and contributing more than \$535 billion to our economy. Removing the only free, localised, one-on-one advisory program available to them not only is illogical but also sends a troubling message about the Government's priorities.

The program costs \$10 million a year; that is all. Let us put that in context. The Minns Government has spent \$3 million to support music festivals, many of which have organisers based overseas, and committed \$16 million to host Ultimate Fighting Championship events in Sydney. I am not here to argue against music or sport; they are important. But are they more important than the survival of tens of thousands of small businesses across the State? Just a few weeks ago Chris Minns told the Legislative Assembly, "In any event, I do not see the cost of Business Connect as hugely prohibitive." If that is the case, I ask the Premier why the Government is cancelling it.

Moreover, when NSW Treasury commissioned Accenture to prepare a detailed report on Business Connect, it calculated a net economic benefit of \$14.1 million. The benefit clearly outweighs the cost, and that was confirmed by NSW Treasury itself. We have to spend a dollar to make a dollar. When we invest in small business, we are not throwing money away; we are keeping jobs, innovation and local communities alive. Small businesses are the very foundation of our economy. Without them, New South Wales would be left with little other than large multinationals that take their profits elsewhere. They do not care about reinvesting in our local towns and suburbs as much as small businesses do. On behalf of small business and every person who relies on the free advice offered by Business Connect, I urge the Government to reconsider its decision to scrap the program.

FARM FIREFIGHTING VEHICLES

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (14:05): It is just three weeks until the start of another bushfire season and, despite numerous promises from the Government, there is still no scheme in place for conditional registration of farm firefighting vehicles. The initial promise was to have a scheme in place last summer that would have seen conditional registration of firefighting assets for use within a short distance of homes. Those assets are often trucks, trailers and water tanks that would go on the roads only during such an emergency. As such, it is not practical to keep them fully registered throughout the year. An initial trial took place almost two years ago, during the 2023-24 bushfire season, with a promise on the department's website to have the scheme made permanent before the start of the next bushfire season.

That is coming up on 12 months ago now. In response to that broken promise, the House debated a motion in November last year calling for the scheme to be made permanent immediately. The Government decided that the best course of action was another trial and amended the motion to reflect that. That second trial was, of course, completely unnecessary, but if that was what it would take to get the scheme off the ground then so be it. The second trial ran until March this year, with Minister for Roads Jenny Aitchison telling budget estimates on 1 April:

We have made commitments to NSW Farmers that we would look at this and we'd have something in place before next fire season.

Of course, that is just three weeks away. In June, after no action from the Government, we learnt through a question in this place that the report on the second trial had been completed and was submitted to the Minister for Roads. That is where that report sits; that is as far as we got. Twelve months on from the initial fire season, when a scheme was meant to be in place, there is no scheme in place. We have a litany of empty promises from members opposite, and it is three weeks until the next bushfire season begins.

Even today, with rain across much of New South Wales, there are six advice-level fires. Most of them are in northern areas, where the threat generally starts earlier. We cannot afford to be complacent about bushfires and we cannot afford to wait any longer. I ask members opposite to deliver on their promise. We are not asking for much, just that they do what they said that they would do: Make the farm firefighting vehicle scheme permanent immediately, so that rural communities and farmers can help one another safely during the coming bushfire season.

KIAMA BY-ELECTION

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINÉ (14:08): We all know that there is a by-election in Kiama this Saturday. I have been the duty MLC representing the Labor Government in Kiama for the past two years, and I take the chance to reflect on that experience before Saturday. For those outside the Labor Party, there is a tendency to refer to our organisation's unit and organising capacity as the "party machine", but that is really a misnomer. The Labor Party is less a machine and more a community. The closer one gets to our rank-and-file members, the truer that holds. Indeed, the members of Labor branches in the Kiama electorate exemplify what it means to be part of the Labor community.

What they have demonstrated to me is not only their unwavering commitment to Labor values, but also their unwavering commitment to each other. Whether we win or not on Saturday, those members have worked tirelessly to get Katelin elected, not just because she is the Labor candidate but because she is a member of the Kiama Labor family, as are her parents, Paul and Clare.

Both the effectiveness and the camaraderie evident in Kiama Labor are encouraged by the efforts of our branch leaders, including Alison Mansell, Cathy Russell, Anne Talbot and Mitch Purser. It is not possible to talk

about Labor leaders in the Kiama electorate without mentioning life member Rick Gainford, president of the Kiama State electorate council, president of the Federal electorate council and president of the Berry branch. Rick, the unofficial mayor of Berry, can only be described as irreplaceable. Whatever the event or wherever in the electorate, it does not matter: Rick will be known and greeted like an old friend. That is an ongoing tribute to his warmth and generosity. I cannot thank Rick enough for the friendship, mentorship, advice and general support—not to mention the laughs—that he has given to me since I came to this place.

I am in the unusual position of winning whatever the outcome on Saturday. If Katelin McInerney wins, then the party I love gets a smart, determined and compassionate caucus member. But if we are not successful, then I get to keep being the duty MLC for Kiama, which is both a privilege and a joy. I thank all the Labor Party members and supporters who have worked so hard, not just in the past few weeks of the campaign but over so many years. Whatever the result on Saturday, I know that they have given their all—that they will leave nothing on the field. Their commitment to making the electorate of Kiama, from Albion Park to Bomaderry, a more accessible, equitable and beautiful place to live and work means that, win or lose—maybe after having a rest on Sunday—come Monday, they will be back at it, identifying issues and solutions that help the community. I love those guys for that.

POLITICAL PROTESTS

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (14:11): Australian politics has recently been rocked by two large and very different public protests: a march across Sydney Harbour Bridge opposing the war in Gaza, and the nationwide protests against excessive immigration. For most, the Gaza march was coded as left-wing, while the march against excessive immigration was coded as right-wing. Both rallies attracted tens of thousands of people, but surely only a handful attended both. Perhaps there is a Venn diagram with one person in it: me. I copped flak for those decisions. My critics are wrong. I will explain why.

First, there is nothing inconsistent about being against war and against excessive immigration. The pro-war right across the West cheers on every one of the forever wars. They never have time to admit error because by the time it gets to that, they are already cheering on the next stupid war. And then they bemoan excessive immigration! Can they not see that war create refugees, poverty and failed states, and that turbocharges the desire to get out and come to the West? If the right wants to end excessive immigration levels, they should stop cheering on every war the propaganda machine tells them to cheer on.

Second, it is absurd and dishonest to paint a protest in the light of the most radical attendees. Some on the right condemned the anti-war protest because it attracted communists and Islamists, while some on the left condemned the anti-mass-immigration protest because 0.01 per cent of the attendees were Nazis. That criticism is blindingly hypocritical. The mindless game of guilt by association is always morally wrong and intellectually sterile. I typically have high regard for the sincerity of my colleagues the Hon. Anthony D'Adam, the Hon. Mark Buttigieg and Ms Sue Higginson, but this week they have all used this Parliament to smear those who marched against excessive immigration because of a dozen attendees.

It is as though they are the public relations agency for the Nazis by desperately wanting to inflate a bogeyman. Using their precise logic, those who marched against the Gaza war are supporters of the ayatollahs, Hezbollah, ISIS and Hamas. They resort to smears because they are trying to demonise and not debate those who want a sober discussion around optimal immigration levels—which, in my view, is well over half of the country. Instead of theatrical condemnations of Hamas or Hitler, we should treat the manufactured outrage with the respect it deserves, which is to ignore or mock it.

I proudly identify with the anti-war right in Australia. War is hell, and the Gaza war is no different. The Australian Government should not be involved in foreign conflicts—but, as an individual, I believe the Gaza war needs to end. Israeli public opinion also overwhelmingly supports that. At the same time, our recent experiment with excessive immigration levels is hurting Australians. I support a five-year immigration pause. That will give us time to have a serious discussion about the links between migration, infrastructure, housing and culture. War and excessive immigration are two ways to destroy a society. I oppose both, and that is why I marched at both protests.

FATHER'S DAY

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (14:14): Last Sunday we celebrated Father's Day: a day to honour fathers and their vital role in raising children. Father's Day is an important part of our calendar where, as a society, we stop, even just for the day or for a few hours, to recognise the contribution fathers have made to our lives. Fathers are pillars of strength, guidance and love within their families. Today, I address the critical importance of fathers in our families and a few of the challenges they face. Members would be aware that in New South Wales, the total fertility rate has dropped to a historically low 1.55 babies per woman in 2023, threatening our demographic and

economic future. In 2008 it was a whole 0.5 births more per woman. Fathers are essential to reversing that trend by fostering stable, nurturing families.

Research from the Australian Institute of Family Studies [AIFS] shows that the involvement of fathers enhances children's cognitive, social and emotional outcomes, reducing the risks of poor school performance, delinquency and substance abuse. An engaged father is a huge asset to our society. Yet, as we have seen over the years, fathers can find it difficult to get a fair go from the Family Court. AIFS data reveals that in 2019, mothers were granted sole parental responsibility in 45 per cent of cases, while fathers received it in only 11 per cent. In 18 per cent of cases, children live full-time with mothers and have only daytime visits with fathers, compared to just 3 per cent where fathers have near-full custody.

Quite frankly, that disparity reflects a historical bias, despite the Family Law Act promoting shared parental responsibility. Such bias harms fathers, with many reporting emotional distress and financial strain from legal battles, and alienates them from their children, contrary to the court's "best interests of the child" principle. Children can suffer profoundly without fathers. I am the proud mother of two daughters. I passionately believe in empowering women in our society and ensuring girls and women maximise their potential. Yet I am also acutely aware of the need to recognise the vital importance of the dads in our society. The presence of a loving father builds a foundation of trust and confidence in children and is so important in fostering their ability to form healthy relationships in adulthood.

Our governments must act to support fathers. Policies like affordable child care, flexible work arrangements and housing support have seen Sweden's fertility rate increase from 1.54 to 1.67. They can empower fathers to engage actively. By valuing and empowering fathers, New South Wales can nurture healthier families and stronger communities. We also need the Family Court to ensure equitable outcomes in its decision-making, celebrating the role of fathers in building strong families. Let us honour Father's Day every day by fostering a society where fathers thrive, securing the future of New South Wales.

ISRAEL-PALESTINE PROTESTS

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (14:17): Early last week I received inbox messages from a woman who is a member of Jews Against the Occupation '48, the Jewish group that held the community event at Bondi Beach on Sunday that was the subject of a nasty counter-protest and then the subject of much media coverage. The messages she sent me were an expression of concern that the event at Bondi Beach would be the subject of violence, but they also included screenshots of social media posts from two organisations.

The first came from the so-called Australian Jewish Association [AJA], a small far-right hate group that mainly exists on social media, where it propagates a fairly constant stream of misinformation and support for extreme positions on the Israel-Palestine issue. Such positions include endorsing the ethnic cleansing of the West Bank and strident support for annexation of Palestinian land. The second came from Stand With Us, a right-wing, pro-Israel organisation formed in the United States. The screenshots from both organisations were concerning. The AJA one stated:

The Jewish community is not going to sit by and allow a bunch of trouble makers to bring their hate to Bondi Beach.

If they come to Bondi looking for trouble, the Jewish community won't be hiding away.

Members of the Jewish community have plans to confront this hate.

The Stand with Us one said:

Funny thing... we're having a paddle out at the same time. What a coincidence! Come and join us, details to follow.

A few things need to be said immediately. Firstly, the messages are carefully worded but the threat and menace are obvious. They procured exactly what they sought: a menacing and threatening mob, ready for confrontation and violence. Secondly, no-one—and no one community—owns our public beaches and places, and no ethnic or religious group—or, more precisely, a small number of their group—has any right to attempt to veto the presence of other people—indeed, other Australians—in any part of this city, this State or this country.

It matters not that people might be intending to assemble to express a political opinion that others strongly disagree with. Those people have the right to do that.

The pro-Israel mob that attended Bondi to counter-protest this small community event, which was organised by Jewish people, included many people who behaved in a disgraceful way. They screamed racist taunts. They told people to "go back to Lakemba". They claimed ownership of the area and demanded that people from another ethnic group leave the area. It needs to be called out. It does not matter that the organisers of the original event were Jewish or that some, and perhaps many, were local to Bondi.

Muslim Palestinian Australians from Western Sydney had every right to be there as well. The original event was peaceful. It involved paddling out into the water on Father's Day to mark all the Palestinian fathers who have been killed. The counter-protest was vile. Media coverage has not accurately represented the event and its circumstances, so I therefore put these matters on record. Members can well imagine what the media reaction would have been if key facts of this scenario were reversed. It would have been very different.

SHARK MANAGEMENT

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK (14:20): Today I talk about a great white predator of a different kind. Not the one behind bars, but the one lurking behind the nets. Another shark attack rattles our coast. Parents pull kids from the water. Surfers think twice before dawn. Cafes, hire shops and whole beach towns feel the pinch. The same question is asked every time: Are we really using every tool to keep people safe? The truth is that our great white management is stuck decades behind. The blanket protection ban was brought in without a clear population baseline. It was well-intentioned, but it was not based on the science we would demand today. Science has moved on. Tagging, genetics and modelling give real insights into shark behaviour, and yet our laws have not budged. We are still tied to old assumptions and old fears.

I am not calling for a free-for-all. I am calling for a small, tightly controlled trial fishery that is surgical, not sweeping. It will operate in known hotspots during known risk periods and be run by the most compliant operators under the toughest conditions. It would be a modern, rules-driven safety net alongside the non-lethal measures we already use. Here is how it could work: We would have a handful of top-tier commercial operators, professionals with proven compliance and a low, statewide catch limit with sub-caps in high-risk regions. When the cap is hit, it is over. Seasons will open and close based on data, shark movements and beach use and not on headlines. We will mandate hook sizes, leader types, set times and release protocols. If you cannot operate inside the rules then you do not operate.

We already use real time compliance tools, including daily e-logs, geofenced vessel monitoring, hail-in and hail-out and random checks with real penalties. Monthly public summaries would show communities what is happening. There would be a true sunset clause, maybe of three years, so we can judge the results. Did attacks drop? Did bycatch stay low? Did compliance hold? If it did not, then it stops. This does not replace drones, patrols, alerts or SMART drumlines. It adds one more calibrated tool to the kit. I know some argue that any lethal take is a hard red line, but it is not fair to tell families to accept the risk while we cling to 1930s nets and 1990s laws. A trial fishery is a middle ground. It is not "do nothing", nor is it "do everything". It is a controlled and targeted step forward.

To be clear, this plan has brakes that include a low total allowable catch, regional caps, strict seasons, mandated gear, vessel monitoring on every boat, real time reporting and a hard sunset review. This will prevent drift before it starts. Fishers must be treated as part of the solution. They are on the water every day. They can report accurately, operate under tough rules and help build the dataset we never had when the ban was imposed. They are not enemies of conservation; they are partners in safety and science.

Here is the choice: We can keep running the same, tired playbook and hope for a different result, or we can run a small, transparent and strictly policed trial that puts people first, supports coastal communities and brings shark management into the present. No-one wants another stretcher on the sand. We want fewer encounters, fewer injuries, fewer closures and fewer nets. A controlled great white fishery, alongside proven tools, offers a practical and no-nonsense path to reduce risk. Let us choose common sense over the stalemate we have now.

AUSTRALIAN FATHERING AWARDS

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (14:23): I share a theme with my colleague, because I will speak about the Australian Fathering Awards that I attended on 4 September. The awards were a special occasion to recognise and celebrate the fathers, father figures and organisations that are making a significant difference to the lives of children across the Australian community. The Fathering Project, which hosts this event, is a national not-for-profit organisation dedicated to improving children's physical, mental and environmental wellbeing by advocating for engaged fatherhood.

This year the Fathering Project and the Australian Father's Day Council gave awards to three fathers and one workplace that demonstrated outstanding support, guidance and love to their children or the community. The Australian Father of the Year was awarded to Dr Arne Rubinstein, who has experience as a former GP and emergency doctor. He saw firsthand the consequences when boys lacked a strong male role model in their lives. This led him to found the Rites of Passage Institute, which has programs offering mentorship, meaning and connection for boys who feel disconnected during the transition to adulthood. His bestselling book, *The Making of Men*, has inspired fathers around the globe. It was wonderful to hear his heartfelt speech. One of his sons was also in attendance when he was given the award.

Australian Community Father of the Year was awarded to Brett Beasley. Brett is well known to many members in this place. He experienced what no parent should ever go through. After the devastating loss of his 17-year-old son, Jack, in a fatal stabbing in 2019, Brett was determined for Jack's life not to be defined by tragedy. His advocacy led to Jack's law. His mission is to tell Jack's story to young people and give them the courage and tools to choose a safer path. The Australian Sports Father of the Year award went to Jason Schmidt, who has spent countless time ensuring that sport is a place where everyone is included. His work with Blind Cricket Australia has given athletes with vision impairment the opportunity to compete, connect and thrive. He has put his energy into multiple sport events, including the Special Olympics. He builds spaces where ability is celebrated and community is strengthened.

Finally, Australia's Best Workplace for Fathers 2025 went to the Australian Financial Complaints Authority [AFCA], which has given fathers the time, flexibility and support they need to be there for the moments that matter most. Many fathers miss invaluable moments due to work. AFCA believes that fatherhood matters. It offers 20 weeks of paid leave for eligible parents regardless of gender. That time off is very important for families when children arrive. AFCA does not see this time as a perk, but rather as essential for healthy children, strong relationships and thriving communities. It understands the need for parents, including dads, to discover a balance between work and caring responsibilities.

I congratulate all of the award recipients. These remarkable fathers, role models, organisations and workplaces all share the same motive: to shape Australia's future and provide a safe, loving and supportive environment for children. I hope we can all be influenced by these fathers and moved by their stories. I celebrate their contributions to our community.

WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (14:26): Today, on World Suicide Prevention Day, we pause to remember every life lost to suicide and the families, friends and communities left behind. Every suicide is a tragedy and never just a number. It is the loss of a child, parent, partner or friend. That loss ripples outward through families, workplaces, classrooms and neighbourhoods. We know that suicide is complex. There is no single cause, and there will never be a single solution.

About half of the people we lose each year in New South Wales have not had contact with health services in the year before their death. That is a sobering truth. It reminds us that prevention cannot rest with hospitals and clinics alone. It is a responsibility that must be shared across government, services and communities. We can see what that looks like across our State. People in distress can walk into Safe Haven, a calm and welcoming space, and speak with someone who has walked in their shoes.

Outreach teams are meeting people at home, in the community or wherever they feel safe, because care should never depend on walking into a hospital. Recovery does not happen in a single moment. Aftercare services are now reaching out to people after a suicide attempt or crisis to make sure they are not left to face the journey alone. In Aboriginal communities, suicide prevention is being led by Aboriginal voices. Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations are delivering programs built on culture, country and self-determination.

These initiatives matter. They show what is possible when government, communities and people with lived experience work together. But today is about more than programs or policies. Today is about people. It is about listening to the voices of those who have survived, supporting those who are grieving and reminding those who are struggling that they are not alone.

World Suicide Prevention Day is both a moment of reflection and a call to action. If even one life can be saved, if one family can be spared that heartbreak, then every attempt is worth it. I say this to anyone who may be listening today and is in pain: You are not alone. Your life has value. Your story matters. There is help and there is hope.

PARKES ENERGY RECOVERY FACILITY

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK (14:29): Today I speak about the proposed Parkes incinerator, which threatens to turn one of our proudest agricultural regions into Sydney's dumping ground. The project will pump out PFAS, dioxins and furans—poisons that do not break down and will seep into our soil, our air and our water tables. They will enter crops, livestock and the food chain, putting the health of local families at serious risk for generations. Within 20 kilometres of the toxic proposal sits a school. Do we want children growing up in the shadow of a waste burner, inhaling chemicals known to cause cancer, birth defects and immune disorders? The incinerator will devalue land, destroy property prices and undermine the reputation for clean, safe, world-class

produce that farmers in Parkes and across the Central West have built over decades. Who will buy lamb, beef or grain grown next to a toxic waste stack? Who will invest in a community branded as a waste site for Sydney?

Our rail lines are already struggling to move the large grain harvests and other shipments that feed the nation. Now they will be clogged with trains hauling Sydney's rubbish across the State, leaving a toxic trail from the city to Parkes. Local infrastructure should serve local industry, not foreign waste multinationals. This is not just a technical debate; it is a moral one. Why should Parkes shoulder the burden of Sydney's disposable culture? Why should regional families carry the risk while the city carries on without change? Where is the local Independent member in all of this? Why is there radio silence from his office? Why is he yet to commit either way, when the community needs him to stand up and stop the sellout? The people of Parkes deserve a representative who will fight for their health, their livelihoods, their land and their future, not go into hiding and roll over for overseas corporations who see rural Australia as nothing more than a dumping ground. We cannot accept this and we will not accept this. Parkes deserves better.

Committees

PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE

Reports

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (14:32): I will not delay the House long because it is a private members' business day, and this is essentially a matter to do with the Government and Minister Hoenig. Before debate was interrupted for question time, I was reflecting on the indignation of the Minister when claiming that others have vilified Mr Whitworth. If Minister Hoenig believes his wonderful character assessment of Mr Whitworth, then he has to explain why Mr Whitworth said in his extraordinary citizen's right of reply that the Minister was the one who raised the preselection and made that a consideration in the treatment of Councillor Saravinovski in going to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

The other mystery that needs to be solved, of course, is what happened to the capacity of Mr Whitworth to answer the question outstanding from the budget estimates hearing on 28 February, rather than doing it six months later through the extraordinary citizen's right of reply. I put the question to Mr Whitworth at that budget estimates hearing whether the Minister raised the election and preselection schedule. Mr Whitworth said, "I'll take that on notice. I'll go and test my memory about it and give you an answer." How hard was it for him to come forward with that answer? The answer is in his citizen's right of reply. That is why I have described it as a message in a bottle, because it was delayed so long. The public servant was frustrated in his capacity to get the obvious, straightforward answer out.

Following the non-answer from budget estimates, another three questions sit unanswered on the *Questions and Answers* paper. It is the same non-answer to a simple question: Did the Minister raise the preselection schedule in interfering with the Saravinovski matter? That was followed by two melodramatic nights in this Chamber, with different motions moved, uproar in the Chamber and filibusters from the Government. We heard about the Hon. Anthony D'Adam's train trips through Europe and other such exciting journeys. It seemed quite bizarre that the answer could not be provided. The question was asked once at budget estimates, three times on notice and twice in debate on a Wednesday night of filibusters galore. After all of that, it took this citizen's right of reply for us to eventually find out that the answer was, yes, the Minister did raise the preselection timetable.

The Public Accountability and Works Committee [PAWC] inquiry will go to how this happened and what frustrations and obstacles the public servant experienced in getting that straightforward answer out. It seems remarkable that a Minister who is also the Leader of the House in the other place would do so much to obstruct information coming to this Chamber that, now that it is produced in this particular document, is so straightforward and simple. There is a whole story as to what has gone on here, with questions raised under the ministerial code of conduct. It is clear that a Minister cannot monster a public servant to prevent them providing answers to a parliamentary Chamber. That in itself is wrong.

There is the whole question of why the Minister intervened in the Saravinovski matter. He declared a partial conflict of interest regarding his wife's long-term employment at Bayside Council, but why not declare a full conflict of interest by saying, "I've known Saravinovski for 30 years, it's a matter in my patch, I was a long-term mayor of Botany and I'm not going to get involved at all"? Why the ministerial interference leading to the election of Ed McDougall as the Mayor of Bayside, replacing Saravinovski? These outstanding questions arise from the citizen's right of reply. Thank goodness for the self-referral by the PAWC to get to the truth, and we will start that process on Friday.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (14:36): I will also be brief. I address the citizen's right of reply and instance one, in particular, which quotes one of the assertions that I made in the Chamber when we were debating one of the matters. I completely accept the denial by Mr Whitworth that anyone influenced his decision in relation to the matter raised in instance one. I take his response on board entirely, and I accept the position put forward by Minister Moriarty that this very distinguished public servant is the head of the Office of Local Government and has a Public Service Medal. He has made an immense contribution to the people of New South Wales. I do not think he is the villain in this story; I think he is the hero. To reiterate some of the comments made by the Hon. Mark Latham, looking at the transcript of the budget estimates hearing, who are we to believe—the eminent public servant that Minister Moriarty mentioned, Brett Whitworth, with his Public Service Medal, or Minister Hoenic? I have the transcript here. I had this exchange with the Minister:

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: ... Minister, did you ever discuss the 2024 Labor pre-selection of Bill Saravinovski for Bayside Council with Brett Whitworth?

Mr RON HOENIG: No.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: You didn't?

Mr RON HOENIG: No.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: You have no recollection?

Mr RON HOENIG: No. The answer is no.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: Minister, in Mr Whitworth's citizen's right of reply to the Legislative Council he said:

While the issues of then Councillor Saravinovski's potential pre-selection, the timing of the hearings and any public knowledge of the proceedings, were raised with me by Minister Hoenic, we were both clear it was not a matter that I was going to engage in as the decision-maker under the *Local Government Act 1993*.

Who's lying, Minister? You or Mr Brett Whitworth?

Again, Minister Hoenic rejects the premise of the question. This is the position that we are now in: Either we believe the eminent and distinguished public servant who has given a lot to the people of New South Wales, who went to the extraordinary length of providing us with this citizen's right of reply, or we believe Minister Hoenic. I think we all know who is probably telling the truth in this case. It just seems like they are completely at odds with each other. We need to get to the bottom of who is lying and who is telling the truth. It was an interesting read. A citizen's right of reply has very rarely been done.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: There used to be heaps of them.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: There have been heaps, have there?

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Yes.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: Well, it is not regularly done. It is the first I can remember, but I have only been here for three and a bit years. It is quite an extraordinary step. We also asked the Minister in budget estimates hearings whether he ever discussed the citizen's right of reply or had any knowledge of it before that reply was made, and the Minister said that he had not. Again, this is quite extraordinary. One of the most senior public servants in the Minister's portfolio area did not give him the heads-up that he was exercising a citizen's right of reply to the Legislative Council. It is all a bit strange. We certainly have more questions, which we will explore through the committee process.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (14:39): I make a few comments, which go to some of the comments of the Hon. Chris Rath. At various points in time the citizen's right of reply has been more in favour or less in favour, often depending on the constellation of individuals who are voted into this House by the people of New South Wales. When a member makes an allegation or imputation about, or aggressively criticises, a private citizen under parliamentary privilege, the citizen's right of reply is an incredibly important tool for that person to deal with those sometimes very unjustified attacks on their reputation. It is right that we have not had one this term, but I can tell you that in the past they used to be quite regular, for a range of reasons.

I make two points in relation to the adoption of the report. It is very clear that it is not an opportunity for members to make judgements about the response that has been provided by Mr Whitworth. That is not the intention behind the right of reply. It is about this House providing a private citizen, who does not have the privileges that we have, the ability to respond to comments made about them by members of this place. That is exactly what the citizen's right of reply is for and why it is very important that we allow Mr Whitworth to use it.

Finally, I say that Mr Whitworth is a very fine public servant who has worked for all sides of politics for a very long time. It is a matter of great regret that he has felt it necessary to defend the imputations that have been made against his good character by members of this House—one member, in particular. Some members seem to

think that parliamentary privilege is an opportunity for them to pursue their own issues and traduce very good public servants, and it is a bit sad that we are dealing with that today. The Government puts firmly on record that Mr Whitworth is a very fine public servant, and the fact that he needed to use the citizen's right of reply should perhaps make some members think about the way in which they choose to use parliamentary privilege to attack the fine public servants of this State.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (14:42): In reply: I thank all members for their contributions. I do not think I can edify the House any further, so I will make that my contribution.

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

Motion agreed to.

Pursuant to standing orders the response of Mr Whitworth was incorporated.

Appendix 1 Reply to comments made in the Legislative Council by the Hon Chris Rath MLC and the Hon Mark Latham MLC

Under Standing Order 208 I make the following responses regarding six references that have been made about me in the Legislative Council over the last 3 months, and the impacts on my reputation.

Instance one

On 26 March 2025, the Hon Chris Rath MLC said:

During the proceedings it was discovered that the deputy secretary, Brett Whitworth, apparently changed his mind on his recommendation to suspend Liverpool City Council. I understand that between 11.27 a.m. and 5.17 p.m. on 10 July, Mr Whitworth had an apparent change of heart from recommending that the council is not suspended to recommending that it is suspended. Was the Minister involved in that change of heart? Perhaps the deputy secretary received advice from another public servant. Rather than speculating, the approach of this House is to let the truth set the Government free. Sunlight is the best disinfectant, after all.

(Legislative Council, *Hansard*, 26 March 2025, p 65.)

Response:

I deny that my advice was influenced by others as asserted by Mr Rath.

At the December 2024 supplementary budget estimates hearing for the local government portfolio, I was questioned extensively by the Hon Scott Farlow MLC about my role, my advice, and how I formed my views relating to the recommendations associated with Liverpool City Council.

(Portfolio Committee No. 8 – Customer Service, *Transcript*, 5 December 2024, pp 2-10.)

Instance two

On 26 March 2025, the Hon Mark Latham MLC said:

The allegation made in this Chamber by the Hon. Chris Rath is that between the times of 11.27 a.m. and 5.17 p.m. on 10 July—the times are so precise it is like a crime thriller—Mr Whitworth, the head of the Office of Local Government, had an apparent change of heart from recommending that the council not be suspended to recommending that it be suspended. What happened there? I do not think it matters too much that there is an inquiry underway.

(Legislative Council, *Hansard*, 26 March 2025, p 67.)

Response:

I deny any impropriety as suggested by Mr Latham through references to "*it is like a crime thriller*".

At the December 2024 supplementary budget estimates hearing for the local government portfolio, I was questioned extensively by the Hon Scott Farlow MLC about my role, my advice, and how I formed my views relating to the recommendations associated with Liverpool City Council. My responses are contained in the transcript to the hearing.

(Portfolio Committee No. 8 – Customer Service, *Transcript*, 5 December 2024, pp 2-10.)

Instance three

On 7 May 2025, the Hon Mark Latham MLC said:

What is going on here, especially given the knock-on consequences of this matter for Labor preselections in Bayside and potentially Labor State preselections down the track? Why has Minister Hoenig involved himself in this matter, with his own conflict of interest at three levels? He told the OLG to get a criminal barrister. It thought that was a joke. He told it to accelerate the matter. He also, on this mystery third matter that he talks about, said he asked for "certain things" and nobody knows what they are. Let us find out what the documents might show in that regard. The double standard is apparent. Saravinovski is sent to NCAT. They do a plea bargain. He gets a slap on the wrist for a matter from which he recused himself at the council meeting. I think that is adequate in terms of those circumstances. Mr Hoenig has a direct conflict of interest involving himself in the Office of Local Government matter. He told it to get a criminal barrister and to accelerate it. There is a mystery third matter to get certain things and, also, the head of the office, Brett Whitworth, twice now will not answer the question: Did Hoenig tell you to accelerate this because of the election and Labor preselection?

(Legislative Council, *Hansard*, 7 May 2025, p 47.)

Response:

I am restricted in what I can say around my reasons for the referral of then Councillor Saravinovski to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT), under section 440J of the *Local Government Act 1993* by the non-disclosure order of Deputy President Seiden (<https://www.caselaw.nsw.gov.au/decision/194aa6b92423acd3fc62170d>), as well as the provisions of section 111 of the *Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1998*.

I reject Mr Latham's assertion that I referred the matter to NCAT to prevent then Councillor Saravinovski from being pre-selected.

During the February 2025 budget estimates hearing for the local government portfolio, I answered a question regarding the time taken to refer the Saravinovski matter to NCAT. I expressed my frustration that it had taken too long to investigate and lodge the submission. The questioning from Mr Latham and the Hon Ms McDonald MLC, as well as my responses, are available on the transcript of the hearing.

(Portfolio Committee No. 8 – Customer Service, *Transcript*, 28 February 2025, pp 37-54)

Instance four

On 28 May 2025, the Hon Mark Latham MLC said:

My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Leader of the Government, representing the Premier. Having taken on notice my question regarding Minister Ron Hoenig, will the Leader of the Government and the Premier now review the transcript of the Local Government budget estimates hearing conducted by Portfolio Committee No. 8 - Customer Service on 28 February 2025 and subsequent answers on notice where three matters of ministerial interference are evident and substantiated?

What does the review show regarding breaches of the ministerial code of conduct? As part of that review, will the Leader of the Government and the Premier now seek from Brett Whitworth, who has refused to answer three times, his knowledge of Minister Hoenig wanting the Saravinovski matter expedited to suit Labor's Bayside election timetable?

(Legislative Council, *Hansard*, 28 May 2025, p 24.)

Response:

Questions on notice are directed to the relevant Minister and not to individual public servants. It is incorrect to state that I refused to answer Mr Latham's questions.

I am restricted in what I can say around my reasons for the referral of then Councillor Saravinovski to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT), under section 440J of the *Local Government Act 1993* by the non-disclosure order of Deputy President Seiden (<https://www.caselaw.nsw.gov.au/decision/194aa6b92423acd3fc62170d>), as well as the provisions of section 111 of the *Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1998*.

I reject Mr Latham's assertion that I referred the matter to NCAT to prevent then Councillor Saravinovski from being pre-selected.

While the issues of then Councillor Saravinovski's potential pre-selection, the timing of the hearings and any public knowledge of the proceedings, were raised with me by Minister Hoenig, we were both clear it was not a matter that I was going to engage in as the decision maker under the *Local Government Act 1993*. We were both concerned at the time it had taken the Office of Local Government to deal with the matter.

I took a question on notice during the February 2025 budget estimates hearing for the local government portfolio to confirm the date in which the matter was referred to NCAT. I do not know when the pre-selection process commenced.

(Portfolio Committee No. 8 – Customer Service, *Transcript*, 28 February 2025, pp 37-54.)

Instance five

On 29 May 2025, the Hon Mark Latham MLC said:

Ron Hoenig became Minister for Local Government. In December 2022 a referral came from the ICAC to former Minister Wendy Tuckerman.

Minister Hoenig received a brief about it. For all the reasons I mentioned, the first thing he should have said is, "My involvement at Bayside means that I cannot be involved or touch this at all. I have known Bill Saravinovski as a Labor candidate for 30 years. We have got preselections coming up. I used to be the mayor down there. I have close relatives still working at Bayside. Count me out. I am declaring an interest and will have no involvement." We know from budget estimates that TikTok Ron did not do that. He got very animated and got involved in the matter, having been briefed in the middle of 2023.

"He did three things. He told Brett Whitworth, the head of the Office of Local Government, to get a criminal lawyer. For what? For minor administrative matters. He tried to ramp it up.

They ignored him and got a bloke who had only ever dealt in admin matters; he had not practised criminal law at all. The Minister for Local Government was trying to ramp it up against the interests of Saravinovski for whatever reason. The second thing was to tell Brett Whitworth to expedite the matter, interfering in the conduct of the Office of Local Government investigation to say, "Get it moving faster against Saravinovski." Perhaps he was worried about the local government preselection timetable for his own political party. The third thing was to hold out a mystery, like the Shroud of Turin, as to a third item that may be investigated elsewhere by ICAC regarding Saravinovski, without ever saying what that is but saying that he had given the Office of Local Government advice about it and expected it to all be wrapped up within a month. That was in February, and there has been no news since. I suspect that it does not even exist.

(Legislative Council, *Hansard*, 29 May 2025, p 43.)

Response:

I am restricted in what I can say around my reasons for the referral of then Councillor Saravinovski to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT), under section 440J of the *Local Government Act 1993* by the non-disclosure order of Deputy President Seiden (<https://www.caselaw.nsw.gov.au/decision/194aa6b92423acd3fc62170d>), as well as the provisions of section 111 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1998.

I reject Mr Latham's assertion that I referred the matter to NCAT to prevent then Councillor Saravinovski from being pre-selected.

Instance six

On 4 June 2025, the Hon Mark Latham MLC said:

I move:

- (1) That the Privileges Committee inquire into and report on:
 - (a) the failure of Mr Brett Whitworth, Deputy Secretary, Office of Local Government to answer a question concerning ministerial propriety from the Hon. Mark Latham regarding the Bill Saravinovski affair at the Portfolio Committee No. 8 - Customer Service additional budget estimates hearing on 28 February 2025, and his failure to answer, again when taken on notice and again in the answer to question on notice No. 3522 received on 24 April 2025 and for a fourth time, in the answer to question on notice No. 3720 received on 20 May 2025, with these answers on notice provided by the Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales representing the Minister for Local Government;
 - (b) whether section 11 of the Parliamentary Evidence Act 1901, regarding the penalty for refusal to answer, has been breached and what penalty should apply; and
 - (c) the accuracy of and any misleading of the Parliament in the answers to questions on notice Nos 3522 and 3720.
- (2) That this House notes the background to this matter, such that:
 - (a) at the Portfolio Committee No. 8 - Customer Service additional budget estimates hearing on 28 February 2025 it was clear from answers by the Minister for Local Government and the Deputy Secretary that the Minister for Local Government has interfered several times in the Office of Local Government's [OLG] handling of the referral of former Bayside mayor Bill Saravinovski to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT], even though Mr Saravinovski had been a 30-year Labor Party colleague of the Minister for Local Government, the Minister's wife was a longtime employee of Bayside Council and that the Minister had been a longtime mayor of the former Botany Council;
 - (b) the Hon. Mark Latham, believing that the Minister for Local Government had misused his ministerial office for an internal party matter, which was getting the mayor off the Australian Labor Party ticket for the September council elections, as part of a local factional and preselection manoeuvre, questioned Mr Whitworth about the Minister's urgency in dealing with this matter;
 - (c) Mr Whitworth replied, "The Minister was anxious for this to be resolved. Again he was concerned about the length of time it was taking", and Mr Latham then asked, "But did he mention the forthcoming election?", to which Mr Whitworth responded, "I would have to go back and try to recollect", taking the question on notice, and Portfolio Committee No. 8 - Customer Service would have logically expected, at this point, for Mr Whitworth to test his memory and recollect whether the Minister for Local Government had ever pressed him to expedite the Saravinovski matter because of the forthcoming September council election, and then answer in writing to the Committee;
 - (d) Mr Whitworth's answer to the question taken on notice stated "I am advised the matter was first listed for a direction hearing by the NCAT in April 2024 before the September 2024 elections. Once listed, OLG had no control over the NCAT processes." That is, he did not answer the question;
 - (e) in answer to question on notice No. 3522, Minister Moriarty, representing Minister Hoenig, repeated the non-answer, almost word for word;
 - (f) in question on notice No. 3720, the Hon. Mark Latham asked why on three occasions the question had not been answered and why the failure to answer should not be regarded as a contempt of the House, and on behalf of Minister Hoenig, Minister Moriarty answered, "During the hearing Mr Whitworth took the question on notice about the local government elections to confirm the date of his referral of the matter in relation to former Councillor Saravinovski to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal in comparison to the date of the NSW Local Government Elections. The response to Question on Notice 3522 and supplementary questions following the budget estimates hearing on 28 February 2025 makes it clear that decisions on pre-selections of Australian Labor Party candidates is a matter for the Australian Labor Party";
 - (g) Mr Whitworth did no such thing, he took the question on notice to search his memory for the Minister for Local Government ever mentioning to him the election timetable as a factor in expediting the Saravinovski matter, and as such, Minister Hoenig has caused Minister Moriarty to mislead the Legislative Council; and
 - (h) in the Legislative Assembly on 29 May 2025, Minister Hoenig said, "Often when governments fail to produce something, it is because governments do not like the scrutiny", and in this case,

the Government's failure to produce an answer from Mr Whitworth because it would further incriminate the Minister for Local Government, speaks for itself and warrants a Privileges Committee inquiry.

Given the Government's amazing, newfound, late-night enthusiasm for rail travel, my speaking time is limited, so I say that the motion speaks for itself. The motion follows things that I have previously said in the Chamber. It is essentially about respect for the upper House, and a Government Minister and a senior official who will not answer a question—not once, twice or three times but four times. There are provisions for that, and the matter should be dealt with by our new, much-improved Privileges Committee. I commend the motion to the House.

(Legislative Council, *Hansard*, 4 June 2025, pp 88-89.)

Response:

I reject Mr Latham's allegations.

I am restricted in what I can say around my reasons for the referral of then Councillor Saravinovski to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT), under section 440J of the *Local Government Act 1993* by the non-disclosure order of Deputy President Seiden (<https://www.caselaw.nsw.gov.au/decision/194aa6b92423acd3fc62170d>), as well as the provisions of section 111 of the *Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1998*.

I reject Mr Latham's assertion that I referred the matter to NCAT to prevent then Councillor Saravinovski from being pre-selected.

I reject Mr Latham's allegation that I failed to answer questions put to me. Questions on Notice asked in the Legislative Council are answered by the relevant Minister and not by a public servant. I note Mr Latham was given answers to his questions.

If called, I will attend the Privileges Committee.

Personal impact to me

I have been a public servant for over 30 years, serving both Coalition and Labor Governments. I have been a Deputy Secretary since 2018 and have directly served multiple Ministers of all parties. I have also worked hard in the planning space, in disaster recovery, and most recently in the regulation of local councils, all in service to the people of NSW and their Government. I was recently advised that I have been awarded a Public Service Medal for my service to the people of NSW.

I have been deeply offended by the six specific mentions of me in the Legislative Council, as well as the proposed referral to the Privileges Committee. I feel that it has no regard for my reputation as an honourable public servant.

I have prepared this not in my role as Deputy Secretary responsible for the Office of Local Government, but as a private citizen.

Documents

TRANSPORT ASSETS AND WORKFORCE

Production of Documents: Order

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (14:43): 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 28 March 2023 in the possession, custody or control of the Premier, the Treasurer, the Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, the Minister for Regional Transport, and Minister for Roads, Treasury, Premier's Department, The Cabinet Office, Transport for NSW, Sydney Metro, Sydney Trains or Transport Asset Manager of New South Wales relating to transport asset, workforce and operations management:

- (a) all documents relating to asset or services plans, including asset management, strategic asset or services plans for Transport for NSW or each of its operating units;
- (b) all documents relating to timelines or procurement costs to replace existing transport assets, including buses, ferries, light rail vehicles, trains or metro, over the next 20 years;
- (c) all documents relating to timelines or procurement costs of transport assets for new projects, including buses, ferries, light rail vehicles, trains or metro, over the next 20 years;
- (d) all documents relating to timelines or maintenance costs of existing transport assets, including the train network, track, buses, ferries, light rail vehicles, trains or metro, over the next 20 years;
- (e) all documents relating to Transport for NSW workforce projections, workforce planning, changes to workforce structure, operating model changes, redundancies or current or future workforce supply;
- (f) all documents relating to briefings provided to the Secretary of Transport for NSW or the Minister for Transport regarding the procurement of any new transport assets;
- (g) all documents relating to briefings provided to the Secretary of Transport for NSW or the Minister for Transport regarding the replacement of any existing transport assets;
- (h) all documents relating to briefings provided to the Secretary of Transport for NSW or the Minister for Transport regarding the maintenance or projected maintenance costs of existing transport assets;
- (i) all documents relating to briefings provided to the Secretary of Transport for NSW or the Minister for Transport regarding changes to the Transport for NSW Operating Model; and

- (j) 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 call for papers applies to documents that are in the possession, custody or control of a variety of agencies within the Transport cluster and related government departments. The Government did not suggest any amendments to this motion under Standing Order 52. It just said a hard no: "It's too big, and we won't do it." That seems to be the narrative in this place every time: "There are thousands of papers. This is terrible. This is so much work for Transport. It's insurmountable. It can't be done." Yet that is never what comes back. It is a pantomime of drama in the Chamber, acting as a protection racket for accountability, and a stone wall if we ask a question. With its focus on transparency, the Government should have no issue with supporting the motion.

There are three parts to any successful transport agency: people, a plan and performance. To be clear, the motion relates to some serious documents that are required to be maintained by Transport and its agencies. The documents are there. To be clear to the responding agencies, the documents include business case reports, other reports, procurement costs, correspondence, communications and contracts as they apply to the asset base that is controlled by Transport for NSW, including buses, ferries, light rail, trains and metros. It relates to a serious matter: How do those assets need to be replaced? What is currently funded? What is unfunded? Frankly, what is the plan?

We have already seen how procurement has gone wrong under this Government. We have seen its notice about local manufacturing but, in fact, the Government slaps a sticker on it and calls it Australian made. It says, "Let's build it in New South Wales", until after the votes are counted. Now buses are being built in Malaysia instead of Maroubra, and the Government is proud of it. It is lauding it. The Government should have nothing to hide here. To quote the Treasurer, who, in a past life, was the shadow Treasurer, "We have a new Minister who was talking about his new-found love for train manufacturing in New South Wales relative to his predecessors. But it is time to see whether the rhetoric matches the actions and whether that is the case as it applies to buses, ferries, light rail vehicles, trains and metros." Those are the Hon. Daniel Mookhey's words.

The promise to build the Tangara fleet onshore is in tatters. The promise to build buses in Nowra saw them come off the ship from China. After a lot of talk, this Government gives the least detail ever when it comes to transport. Sydney Metro West is delayed for no apparent reason. Sydney Metro Southwest is delayed and, when asked in estimates hearings, the Minister could only say, "It's complex." If a commuter wants to know when it will open, it might be any day in 2026. Just pick one. No-one really knows about the M6 Stage 1. The Government cannot confirm if it will even finish the project.

It is completely unclear what is going on with Sydney Metro Western Sydney Airport, which is heading for another Labor stuff-up. We should therefore get to the bottom of what Transport for NSW is planning when it comes to the replacement, maintenance and planned procurement of key assets. We should take every opportunity to understand this Government's rhetoric, its plans and, ultimately, its potential inaction. Therefore, as a House, we should engage our powers to see exactly what the transport department is up to.

I also touch on the matters concerning workforce in the motion. I have extremely mixed feelings about what is going on in Transport. I agree that it is a dysfunctional organisation with, at times, a culture without accountability, and the Government should have the right to design its workforce as it sees fit. However, I question the recent cuts and how those operational changes will help commuters. That is what good transport policies are about: commuters today and investing for tomorrow. The Government again says, "We're cutting nearly 1,000 staff", and apparently nothing is going to change. One in 15 staff at Transport for NSW was apparently doing nothing, according to the Government's spin. Everyone knows that is not true. But, rather than be honest with the people or even the Opposition, it is silence and spin. It has taken Transport 2½ years to achieve reductions in the senior service of the department, and it could not get there, but somehow it can now remove nearly 1,000 people in under six months and everything will be sweet.

Commuters, this House and the public should understand what is going on and why, and how it will impact them. Where are we heading with these cuts? It is the Mookhey mirage. There is an election in 18 months, and we know that the Treasurer is already planning the economic mirage he will take to the people. He has told the agencies, "Cut staff. Stop investment. I need to sell everything so it is all sweet at the next election." We would get more honesty at a second-hand car lot than we are getting from this Government on its plans and decisions for Transport and the budget. The call for papers will illuminate what is on the agenda, off the agenda or being ignored.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (14:48): I do not have time, in my short contribution, to fact check a number of the statements made by the Acting Leader of the Opposition. However, they contained a number of errors, a number of deliberate misstatements and a range of rhetorical exaggerations.

The Government will oppose the motion and suggest a number of amendments. The motion seeks an extensive range of documents relating to the management of transport assets, workforce and operations. It provides only 21 days for compliance. Paragraphs (a) to (e) of the order cover five separate topics, each of which would be more appropriately dealt with as a separate motion. Paragraphs (f) to (i) will also capture a large number of documents.

The preliminary estimate from Transport for NSW is that the order may be three to four times the size of the 2024 order for papers relating to government-initiated transport and road reviews. The Opposition gave a similar speech in debate on that call for papers, saying that it would not produce a large number of documents. In response to that order, Transport for NSW produced 28,619 documents in 61 boxes and incurred almost \$200,000 in external costs. The preliminary advice is that this order for papers is three or four times as big. The Government is still seeking more information from the agency about it, but that is what it has received.

As I have said before in this place, the advice of the Solicitor General and Ms Mitchelmore dated 9 April 2014, which has been tabled in the House and published, notes:

It would be reasonable in our view, to query or dispute an order that contained impractical deadline or referred to no specific subject matter in relation to the documents sought ... or referred to a subject matter that was so broad and unwieldy as to place great practical difficulties on compliance.

The Government's case is that this motion, in the broad way that it is drafted, goes beyond the test of what is "reasonably necessary". The Government would like to request more time in order to be able to assist agencies to comply with the motion in this form.

I signal that the Leader of the Government and I have been working hard to insist that agencies comply. This motion will be very difficult to comply with in the time frame, particularly in relation to Sydney Trains. I have to be very frank: I have given Sydney Trains one goal, and that is to improve reliability on our train system. For a call for papers to be directed at an operational agency in this form—an almost undirected missile—is of concern. I place those Government concerns on record. As I have said, the Government wishes to request more time in this matter to be able to gain additional agency advice. Accordingly, I move:

That this debate be now adjourned until a later hour of the sitting.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (14:51): The Opposition opposes the motion by the Hon. John Graham. There has been no conversation and no courtesy of letting the Opposition—or me, as the mover of this motion—have any idea that there was a plan to move an amendment or a request for additional time. The honourable member and I had a conversation last night; we deal with each other quite honourably. But there was no discussion of amendments or requests for additional time. Furthermore, on private members' day, I think it is very unfair to members who have items on the business list to ask that this debate be adjourned when no indication of that has been made, either to the office of the Leader of the House or to me directly.

It has been done on the fly and at the last minute to try to wear down crossbench members in the meantime. We know what this is. It is not new. This is a Standing Order 52 motion that was based, very clearly, on one moved by the Hon. Daniel Mookhey when he was in opposition. It should be no surprise, and the fact that there are many documents is a result of the Government's failure to answer questions during question time and at budget estimates. Plenty of opportunity has been given. The Opposition has been driven, frankly, to this point where it is obliged, on behalf of the people of New South Wales, to ask this question. Opposition members strongly oppose any attempt to distract the House into giving the Government more time on this item.

The Government should simply agree with this motion. The Government is well acquainted with how Standing Order 52 motions work. Some courtesy should have been afforded to me, as the mover of the motion, to discuss additional time and amendments and to give an opportunity for us to work this out, as we have many times. I have agreed to tranches in the past. I have agreed to additional time. But none of that has been done. It is discourteous to honourable members to move such a motion on the floor of the House. I suggest that we put the question and move on. I oppose the motion to adjourn the debate.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (14:54): The motion moved by the Hon. John Graham is a surprise to The Greens as well. We do not support it. What we do support when it comes to motions under Standing Order 52 are genuine attempts to narrow the scope, if parties can come to that, by looking at what has been done and accepted by the House before and the reason for it. I acknowledge the contribution by the mover of the motion regarding the lack of information that came to members on a range of questions around various transport services, assets and timelines on any of the existing transport projects. We got nothing. We got no inclination even of years, let alone anything more concrete than that.

I have looked at previous calls for papers moved in this place by Government members when they were in opposition, particularly, as members talk about, those moved by the now Treasurer. As members know, the

Hon. Daniel Mookhey moved a huge number of motions under Standing Order 52 in opposition, and they were very extensive. One motion he moved on 11 May 2022 called for:

... all documents, including correspondence, communications, contracts, memorandums of understanding, business case reports or other reports, relating to the timeline and procurement cost to replace existing transport assets, including buses, ferries, light rail vehicles, trains and Metro, over the next 20 years ...

The next point related to "transport assets for new projects, including buses and ferries, over the next 20 years"; that is slightly different. The motion went on to call for:

... all reports, analysis, modelling, or briefings relating to workforce projections, workforce planning, or current or future workforce supply ...

Admittedly, the motion before the House does contain more. But I do not think there is any difference between the scale of what the Hon. Daniel Mookhey has asked for in the past and what Opposition members are doing now—which is, indeed, what The Greens are calling for in some of our documents. I note that during debate on the prior motion that I have referred to, the then Government moved an amendment to allow 42 days for compliance. I thought that was what Minister Graham was about to do—move an amendment for an extended time frame, which The Greens would support—as opposed to trying to kill this altogether, which is frankly quite extraordinary.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (14:57): I will speak to the motion.

The Hon. Mark Latham: Abusing the standing orders! Filibuster!

The Hon. Wes Fang: What are you doing?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: If members would like to speak, they are able to seek the call. I encourage them to do so. I know that Deputy President the Hon. Taylor Martin would definitely give members the call if they stood up and asked for it, rather than waiting for me to open my mouth so they can interrupt me. I make a short contribution in relation to the motion. Let us be honest about the way we talk about Standing Order 52 motions. When those opposite were in government, they made a range of comments about what we were doing in opposition. Now the shoe is on the other foot, and we are trying to work through that. The point I make is that the motion is extremely wide.

I might have told this story to the House previously. Quiet a long time ago, when I was a shadow Minister after 2011, I recall moving a call for papers about buses and bus contracts.

All I say is this: Be careful what you ask for. I do not know if he ever watches these things, but at the time Duncan Gay said to me, "This is going to be ridiculous. You are going to get too much information. You are not going to get the information that you are actually seeking. Can we have a conversation about how reasonable or not this is?" Silly me said no. And what was returned? I cannot remember the total number of boxes, but I think in the privileged stuff there were over 400 boxes.

The Hon. Chris Rath: Point of order: The question that is currently before the House is not the substantive motion under Standing Order 52, but whether that motion should be adjourned. It is all well and good to talk about what happened under the previous Government or in opposition in the past and the general nature of Standing Order 52 motions, but the specific question at the moment is on the adjournment of the motion. I ask that the Leader of the Government and any future filibuster speakers focus on the question of adjourning the motion.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I was getting to the point around the adjournment.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Taylor Martin): I encourage the Leader of the Government to do so.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The point is that adjourning the motion would allow a proper conversation with the members seeking material under Standing Order 52 so that we can narrow it. There was actually a point to the story that I was telling, which is directly relevant to the amendment before the House, and that is all of us are busy. All of us are trying to do our job. Those in opposition are trying to scrutinise the decisions that are made by this Government. They do so through Standing Order 52. We all do that. That is actually our job and it is absolutely appropriate. But it is worth spending the time to try to work through. I understand that, at the end, sometimes you just do not agree and sometimes you are bloody-minded and decide that you are just going to put it up anyway because you can and you have the numbers. We all do that. Let us not pretend that any of us are pure of heart in relation to this. You do what you can do. But I know, in opposition, you do not have a lot of staff or a lot of time, and you spend time working with particularly willing Ministers—and particularly upper House Ministers.

We accept and understand the role of this House. We accept and understand the importance of motions under Standing Order 52. As Opposition members remind us, we used them a lot, and we used them pretty effectively. But we also learned some lessons along the way. There is concern in relation to this. I encourage members to support the amendment for further discussion. The Government is not attempting to stop it. There is an attempt to try to narrow it. It is so broad. As someone who once got 400 boxes in privileged material, let alone the rest—most of it was unintelligible because there was a whole lot of very detailed information—it was not what I was looking for. It was not what we were trying to seek and it was not what I was trying to scrutinise from opposition. I tip my hat to Duncan Gay. He was right. We are asking for a bit more time so that we can try to work it out. Otherwise, those opposite can look forward to thousands of boxes of material that is not actually going to help.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (15:02): Day by day, this Government increasingly reminds me of Ronald Biggs, who arrived in South America one day with no history. He just lobbed there. He had never done anything wrong. He had no past. He just wiped the slate clean. This is a Labor Party that now pretends it never criticised the public servant, never used privilege to make allegations, and never sought a lengthy, detailed Standing Order 52 motion—no history, no past. It just arrives here today without any concern for time.

The Hon. Natalie Ward: Clean hands.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Clean hands, cleanskins, little angels with halos over their heads. Look at them smirking about it. They know what I am talking about. The truth is, for those who were not here, in opposition, the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, who built a library upstairs—not many of us have a library named after us, but he built one—sought documents about the Transport Asset Holding Entity [TAHE] that would have filled a couple of railway carriages. That is the truth of it. He was diligent, effective, relentless—a real terrier. Of course, these are just matters of fact.

The TAHE pursuit by Mookhey was effective politics and, I think, effective public policy, and it exposed a genuine accounting rort of the former Government. We cannot have this argument that the now Opposition cannot call on too many documents. It is a bit rich for the Leader of the Government to say that, because she made a mistake with a motion under Standing Order 52 in 2011, we cannot support this one in 2025. If there are a lot of documents, it builds on the Mookhey precedent. No-one ever believed that Ronald Biggs had just dropped into South America one day, and I am afraid we are not believing John Graham either.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Taylor Martin): There being no further speakers, the question is that the motion of the Hon. John Graham be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes13
 Noes20
 Majority.....7

AYES

Buckingham	Kaine	Nanva (teller)
Buttigieg	Lawrence	Primrose
D'Adam	Moriarty	Sharpe
Graham	Murphy (teller)	Suvaal
Jackson		

NOES

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

PAIRS

Donnelly	Barrett
Houssos	Tudehope

PAIRS

Mookhey

Munro

Motion for adjournment of debate negatived.

The Hon. BOB NANVA (15:13): The order for papers, as drafted, is extremely broad. It covers five major and distinct topics: asset planning, asset replacement costs, new investments, maintenance costs and operating model plans. Each of these alone would require a significant search effort. Taken together, the scope is excessive. Each of the 56 branches in Transport for NSW is required to prepare an asset plan, meaning custodians across every branch would need to be searched. There is also a dedicated branch and a separate agency for asset management and long-term planning, which would also entirely fall within the scope. This would result in an unmanageable and unimaginable number of documents being captured.

In August 2024, Transport for NSW produced 28,619 documents in 61 boxes in response to a Standing Order 52 motion relating to transport reviews. That effort required two tranches over five weeks, 4,500 staff hours and almost \$200,000 in external costs. This order would be three to four times that size, which is a completely disproportionate demand on public resources. Many of the documents produced in 2024 would arguably fall under this new order, which creates a duplication in work.

For context, the bus procurement order for papers in May this year produced nearly 13,000 documents and cost around \$250,000. The Government's advice is that, scaling those numbers up, this current order could potentially cost close to \$1 million to service, money that would be better spent on frontline services rather than on document collation. Paragraphs (f) to (i) are narrower and more manageable if limited to actual ministerial briefings rather than "all documents relating to". I move:

That the question be amended by omitting paragraphs (a) to (e).

This would allow production of finalised documents without trawling through drafts and working material. Even then, many of those would be subject to Cabinet confidentiality. Standing Order 52 motions are an important accountability mechanism, but they have to be proportionate. As drafted, this order is unreasonably broad, duplicates past Standing Order 52 motions and imposes an extreme burden on agencies at extreme public expense. An amended order, as I have proposed, focusing only on final briefings rather than all documents, would strike a balance between transparency and practicality.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (15:16): I move:

That the question be amended by omitting "21 days" and inserting instead "42 days".

The rationale for the amendment is that the order captures an extremely large volume of documents across multiple branches and agencies. A 21-day time frame is simply unrealistic, given the scale of work required. In August 2024 Transport for NSW required five weeks to produce 28,619 documents in response to a Standing Order 52 motion relating to transport reviews. That effort involved 4,500 staff hours and almost \$200,000 in external costs. The current call for papers is assessed to be three to four times larger. Expecting it to be completed in 21 days is simply unreasonable. For public servants to meet an unworkable 21-day deadline would require extraordinary resourcing at significant taxpayer expense. The House has previously agreed to extended time frames where the scope of orders was significant. This is not unusual; it is a recognition of the scale of the work and the need to respect both transparency and operational reality. For these reasons, the House should agree to extend the time frame to 42 days.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (15:17): I speak to the amendments to place a couple of things on the record. Firstly, I am the first to confess I have moved a number of calls for papers in this House. I make the distinction between this motion and something like the inquiries into the then Transport Asset Holding Entity, a much less operational agency than Sydney Trains. As the Minister for Transport, that is my real concern. If there is something being pursued, that is fine. But a dragnet on Sydney Trains is a problem because I have given them one direction: Improve reliability. I wish to be up-front with the House about that. The second difference is that when those documents were produced, members of the then Opposition read them. One of my issues here is that many of those 61 boxes that were produced have gone untouched by human hands; they have not been read. That is a tip I give to the Opposition.

The Government position is that the motion is broader than is reasonably necessary for the House to exercise its powers. To assist the House, we requested a short extension, which was denied. We are moving amendments, particularly to extend the time, which would be extremely helpful so we can assist the House. Finally, I encourage members to consider the amendment of the Hon. Bob Nanva. It would allow the House to

call for briefings, but not all documents, particularly in relation to Sydney Trains. That would be of real assistance. With those comments, I commend the amendments to the House.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (15:20): The Greens believe that an extension of time is absolutely warranted. As I put on record before about the history of negotiation and compromise between different parties on Standing Order 52 motions, the previous Government regularly suggested changing 21 days to 42 days. That was often agreed to by the former Opposition. We support 42 days, but The Greens do not support the amendment of the Hon. Bob Nanva to substantially reduce the motion's scope by essentially removing half of what it does.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (15:21): In reply: With regard to the amendments, firstly, it is highly unusual that we would agree to cut out half the motion on the run or to confine the scope to ministerial briefings when not a lot has happened in Transport. Secondly, asset management plans do not go to Cabinet. That is just plain wrong. This motion was put to the Government with plenty of time. It had the opportunity to make amendments. It did not do so until the motion was before the House. It is seeking time to work on the crossbench to remove half the motion. We oppose the amendment of the Hon. Bob Nanva.

We know we are onto something when there is a strong reaction. When Government members are scurrying around on level 11 seeking engagement from upper House members, it is clear they want nothing less than to produce documents. Before the election, they were busy talking about transparency and accountability. Now, they are sighing under the weight of thousands of documents. It is quite gobsmacking that the Hon. John Graham did not speak to me about a single amendment, not even in relation to time. We had a conversation, but neither an amendment to time nor any substantive amendment was in any way, shape or form mentioned. All the Hon. John Graham had to do was raise it with me. He knows where my office is. He knows my phone number. I am very open to discussions; I welcome them. If he thinks he put anything to me other than "no", I invite him to correct the record now in the House and make it clear.

This Government has had all of last night and eight hours today to raise its concerns with me. It has not done so—not a single member. I am happy to share my phone number, if Government members say I am not available or for some other reason, but there is no reason. I thank those honourable filibusterers who made contributions, but there are no sensible amendments. This simple call for papers is required because of the Government's conduct in not providing answers at budget estimates hearings or in question time to sensible questions about large projects—billions of dollars of projects in New South Wales—for which we have no answers. "It might be open in a year. It might not. We do not know." Yes, they do know. Yes, the documents are there. We know they are.

It is clear that we are onto something. We will continue to ask questions. I do not mind if I have to sit around all summer to create the Ward-Sinclair Hill library. I am happy to do that, because it is important that this Government knows we are onto it. It can cut ribbons on the good projects, but it is about delivery, and delivery requires timelines, asset management plans, investment, requests for tenders, and all of those things—other than the press releases—that make infrastructure come to life. We will continue to ask these questions. I will sit around all summer long and go through the documents. I welcome conversations going forward. I place on record my thanks to Sinclair Hill for his tenaciousness in these matters.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Taylor Martin): The Hon. Natalie Ward has moved a motion, to which the Hon. Stephen Lawrence and the Hon. Bob Nanva have moved amendments. The question is that the amendment of the Hon. Stephen Lawrence be agreed to.

Amendment of the Hon. Stephen Lawrence agreed to.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that the amendment of the Hon. Bob Nanva be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes 13
 Noes 20
 Majority..... 7

AYES

Buckingham
 Buttigieg
 D'Adam
 Graham
 Houssos

Kaine
 Lawrence
 Moriarty
 Murphy (teller)

Nanva (teller)
 Primrose
 Sharpe
 Suvaal

NOES

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

PAIRS

Donnelly	Barrett
Jackson	Tudehope
Mookhey	Munro

Amendment of the Hon. Bob Nanva negatived.

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

Leave granted.

The House divided.

Ayes20
 Noes 13
 Majority..... 7

AYES

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

NOES

Buckingham	Kaine	Nanva (teller)
Buttigieg	Lawrence	Primrose
D'Adam	Moriarty	Sharpe
Graham	Murphy (teller)	Suvaal
Houssos		

PAIRS

Barrett	Jackson
Munro	Donnelly
Tudehope	Mookhey

Motion as amended agreed to.

Business of the House

SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

The Hon. BOB NANVA: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow the moving of a motion forthwith relating to the conduct of private members' business for today.

Motion agreed to.

CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

The Hon. BOB NANVA: I move:

That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the standing and sessional orders or the determination of the Business Committee, the order of private members' business for today be amended by calling on item No. 2290 relating to the establishment of a select committee into unsolved murders and missing persons in New South Wales between 1965 and 2010 after item No. 2296 relating to the evaluation of bail provisions and regional youth crime.

Motion agreed to.

Documents

CRITICAL MINERALS AND HIGH-TECH METALS

Production of Documents: Order

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (15:37): I move:

That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 28 days of the date of the passing of this resolution the following documents, excluding any documents previously returned under an order of the House, in the possession, custody or control of the Premier; the Treasurer; the Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage; the Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources; the Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast; the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces; the Premier's Department; The Cabinet Office; Treasury; the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water; the Environment Protection Authority; the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure; the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (including NSW Resources); or the Ministry of Health:

- (a) the following documents created since 1 June 2021 relating to the Critical Minerals and High-Tech Metals Activation Fund or the New Frontiers Exploration Program:
 - (i) all documents relating to the eligibility criteria or official guidelines for each round of the program, including all reports or correspondence;
 - (ii) all correspondence relating to the fund or program, including in relation to all applicants;
 - (iii) all documents relating to the application, assessment, rejection or approval of funding; and
 - (iv) all documents relating to the reporting of outcomes or acquittal of funds.
- (b) all documents created since 1 April 2023 relating to the development of the Critical Minerals and High-Tech Metals Strategy 2024-35;
- (c) all documents created since 1 June 2021 relating to complaints or investigations involving:
 - (i) RZ Resources (formerly Relentless Resources);
 - (ii) Trigg Minerals;
 - (iii) Australian Consolidated Gold Holdings Pty Ltd;
 - (iv) Tooloom Creek Pty Ltd; or
 - (v) MCi Carbon.
- (d) all documents created since 1 June 2021 relating to rehabilitation security deposits, including all expenditure against these deposits, for:
 - (i) RZ Resources (formerly Relentless Resources);
 - (ii) Trigg Minerals;
 - (iii) Australian Consolidated Gold Holdings Pty Ltd;
 - (iv) Tooloom Creek Pty Ltd; or
 - (v) MCi Carbon.
- (e) all documents created since 1 January 2024 relating to the assessment or approvals of the exploration licences granted to Mineral Carbon International's Mount George Stage IA project;
- (f) all documents created since 1 January 2020 relating to Bowdens Silver Mines silver, lead and zinc project at Lue, including:
 - (i) all minutes of meetings held with Bowdens Silver Ltd or their representatives; and
 - (ii) all documents relating to assessments of the project.
- (g) all documents created since 1 January 2020 relating to *Bingham Catchment Landcare Group Incorporated v Bowdens Silver Pty Ltd* in the Court of Appeal and the decision;
- (h) all correspondence, including all emails, text messages or instant message services, created since 1 August 2023 regarding Portfolio Committee No. 2 - Health inquiry into the current and potential impacts of gold, silver, lead and zinc mining on human health, land, air and water quality in New South Wales, sent to or received by:

- (i) the Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources;
 - (ii) the Premier;
 - (iii) the Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage; and
 - (iv) any person employed by NSW Resources, the Environment Protection Authority or the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.
- (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 motion is a call for papers in relation to the mining activities of a number of critical minerals companies. I have moved this call for papers because my office has been working with many communities across New South Wales that have questions about things such as the exploration licences for different critical minerals companies. I have been speaking with communities about their concerns regarding various complaints that have been made about the activities of representatives, sometimes on their properties.

One of the main points of feedback that I get from members of the community is the lack of transparency around a lot of this activity. As a result, I too have been trying to find information and detail around the issues the community comes to me about. It is very difficult to get information—for example, about complaints and investigations that the Resources Regulator has undertaken on behalf of the community. I have made quite a few requests on the issue under the Government Information (Public Access) Act, but there is still a lot of information that has not come before Parliament. Members may also have seen some media over the past week or so about the impact of lead mining on community health, particularly in Broken Hill. I think it is in the public interest that any documents before the Government about that issue are brought to light.

I admit that this call for papers under Standing Order 52 looks like it covers a lot of issues, but I assure members that I have worked to tighten it as much as possible, rather than include a broad, sweeping request for everything. That is why it is so specific about particular examples such as particular companies and grants. Basically, I know what I am after, so I have tried to refine the scope as much as possible. I hope that members will support the motion in the spirit of it being good for the business of the House and in the public interest. As I said, a lot of the community is frustrated at what they see as a lack of transparency around the projects. I urge members to support the motion.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (15:41): I indicate from the outset that the Government will oppose the motion, and that I completely refute everything that the Hon. Cate Faehrmann said. To say that this call for papers under Standing Order 52 is in any way targeted or specific misleads the House. The motion calls for papers from six separate ministerial offices, six separate departments and one agency. Paragraph (b) of the motion calls for "all documents created since 1 April 2023 relating to the development of the Critical Minerals and High-Tech Metals Strategy". I have spoken at length in this House about the exhaustive consultation process that the Government went through. We engaged with communities, held round tables and took submissions. That one paragraph alone would create a huge amount of work. I cannot even say how many documents would be produced.

The Hon. Mark Latham talks about the Mookhey library but, in my opinion, paragraph (b) would swamp any level of documents that would be required before we even cover paragraphs (a), (c), (d), (e), (f), (g), (h) or (i). To say that this motion is in any way a targeted or specific call for papers under the extraordinary powers of this House—powers that I deeply respect—is to mislead the House because it is not true. If the Hon. Cate Faehrmann genuinely seeks to limit the scope of her call for papers, I suggest that she go back to the drawing board to present a more considered motion to this House. If communities have concerns, they are welcome to raise them, and I look forward to responding.

Some items date back to the previous Government. Indeed, as Minister, I have looked into some of those issues more closely, and would have been happy to brief the Hon. Cate Faehrmann on those items if the member had come and specifically asked me about them. To present this call for papers under Standing Order 52 as some kind of targeted effort is disingenuous at best and misleading this House at worst. This House has serious powers that I deeply respect and have exercised in the past, but they must be exercised responsibly. This call for papers does not do that. On that basis, the Government opposes the motion.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (15:45): I indicate that the Opposition supports this call for papers. Opposition members understand the importance of transparency. We know, as the member has said, that she has attempted to obtain some of these documents through other means, including the Government Information (Public Access) Act. Opposition members are on a bit of a unity ticket with members of the crossbench for the

Government to be as transparent as possible when it comes to calls for papers. We will keep that approach in relation to this motion.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (15:45): In reply: Usually when I move a motion under Standing Order 52, I get approached by the Minister or Minister's office, regardless of who the Minister—

The Hon. Courtney Houssos: I got told about it this morning, Cate.

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

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: I acknowledge that interjection.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): I ask the member not to acknowledge interjections.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: I do want to get that interjection on record because the usual situation in this place is that every time we put a motion under Standing Order 52 on the business list the Minister speaks to us when they see it, either that night or the next day. That has been happening for 18 months. I have dealt with Ministers to constrain the scope of calls for papers. That happened with Minister Sharpe and documents in relation to PFAS and lead under another very wide-ranging call for papers. That resulted in some very significant discoveries.

We got a hell of a lot of documents back, but I still worked with the Minister to refine the scope because we spoke of certain documents that would not be useful and would take a lot of time to produce. I would have been open to doing the same here, so I put on record that the Minister did not talk to me about refining the scope of the motion. That would be useful in the future, because I am always open to that. But I reiterate that this call for papers looks into issues that the community has been very dissatisfied about in terms of government transparency. I have also tried to look into a number of the items in the motion, which confirms that the community has every right to be worried about a lack of transparency.

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

The House divided.

Ayes17
 Noes18
 Majority.....1

AYES

Boyd	Higginson	Mitchell
Carter	Hurst	Overall
Cohn	Latham	Rath (teller)
Faehrmann	MacDonald	Roberts
Fang (teller)	Maclaren-Jones	Ward
Farlow	Merton	

NOES

Banasiak	Houssos	Murphy (teller)
Borsak	Jackson	Nanva (teller)
Buckingham	Lawrence	Primrose
Buttigieg	Martin	Ruddick
D'Adam	Mihailuk	Sharpe
Graham	Mookhey	Suvaal

PAIRS

Barrett	Donnelly
Munro	Kaine
Tudehope	Moriarty

Motion negatived.

TOORALE NATIONAL PARK WATER REGULATION**Production of Documents: Order**

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (15:56): I seek leave to amend private members' business item No. 2287 for today of which I have given notice 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 January 2019 in the possession, custody or control of the Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Youth, the Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage, the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (including National Parks and Wildlife Service), or the Natural Resources Access Regulator relating to the operation of water regulating infrastructure at Toorale National Park:

- (a) all documents relating to the stop work order issued by the Natural Resources Access Regulator on 6 August 2025;
- (b) all documents relating to the pause on environmental water actions announced by the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder on 18 August 2025, including:
 - (i) any legal advice obtained in relation to environmental water activities as they pertain to the Non-Urban Water Metering Policy or the transfer of water between water sources, including all documents relating to the catalyst for seeking that legal advice or the response of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water;
 - (ii) all communication between the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder and any New South Wales Government Minister or agency pertaining to compliance concerns or the pause of environmental watering actions; and
 - (iii) all assessments or reviews pertaining to compliance concerns or the pause of environmental watering actions.
- (c) all documents relating to Toorale National Park and Natural Resources Access Regulator investigations;
- (d) all documents relating to Toorale National Park and enforcement orders, including amendments to requirements within enforcement orders or changes to requirements to meter or model water take;
- (e) all documents relating to Toorale National Park and complaints by third parties;
- (f) all communication between the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, the Natural Resources Access Regulator, any Minister or any third party relating to Toorale National Park and investigations, orders or amendments to orders, including negotiations initiated by any party in relation to enforcement orders;
- (g) all documents relating to Toorale National Park and action undertaken to fulfil requirements within enforcement orders, including amended enforcement orders;
- (h) all documents relating to Toorale National Park and reviews of the operations and maintenance plan;
- (i) all documents relating to Toorale National Park and updates to the operations and maintenance plan;
- (j) all correspondence between the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder or any Australian Government Minister and any New South Wales Government Minister, department or agency relating to Toorale National Park;
- (k) all documents relating to all assessments undertaken of existing exemptions contained in any instrument under the Water Management Act 2000 relating to metering, modelling or reporting requirements for environmental watering activities, including discretionary powers or proposals to implement new exemptions in any instrument under the Act;
- (l) all briefs regarding Toorale National Park, the stop work order issued on 6 August 2025 or the pause on environmental water actions announced on 18 August 2025 sent to, received or approved by:
 - (i) the Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Youth;
 - (ii) the Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage; and
 - (iii) the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.
- (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.

I move this motion on behalf of my colleague in the other place the shadow Minister for Water, Steph Cooke, who has been diligent in raising serious concerns about allegations of non-compliance at Toorale National Park and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder's halt on environmental watering during a critical period for our wetlands and bird species. Never has a government department been issued a stop work order by the Natural Resources Access Regulator, and if the very departments writing the rules cannot abide by them, then the people of New South Wales deserve to know why.

The word transparency has been used often since these issues arose, yet we have seen little of it from the Government. During recent budget estimates hearings, the Minister for Water and the Minister for the Environment gave conflicting accounts regarding Toorale. That is why the motion has been carefully drafted to

get to the bottom of what has happened and to understand what Government decisions have created such uncertainty for the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder. We fear, with good reason, the consequences this pause on environmental watering will have for our environment. We cannot allow a situation where government departments are breaking the law at taxpayers' expense, especially when those decisions concern our most finite resources.

This motion is about ensuring that such a situation never occurs in New South Wales again, an assurance the Government is yet to provide. In essence, we want to look at the documents and understand what has gone on. I acknowledge that the Minister's office has spoken with me about this. We moved an extension of time because we understand that it is quite a large call for papers, but we think it is important for transparency and accountability. I thank members for considering this motion, and I also, once again, thank Steph Cooke for her strong advocacy on the matter.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Youth) (15:58): The Government does not oppose this call for papers. It should be clear that we do not have anything to hide in relation to this. Obviously, a large number of documents have been requested, and we appreciate the time extension that has been granted so we can ensure we are complying fully with the orders of the House. For the benefit of members, I note that the New South Wales Government has completed a robust review into the management of water at Toorale Station, allowing critical environmental water to resume flowing to the Western Floodplain at Toorale National Park.

A comprehensive review and evaluation of the station's water licensing arrangement began late last year to ensure all flows were being properly accounted for. I have heard some of the community representations that the Hon. Sarah Mitchell referred to, and I wanted to make sure that a robust review to investigate those concerns was undertaken. As a result of the review, the Government has made changes requiring all water diverted to the Western Floodplain at Toorale via the Boera Dam and its levee and regulating structures to be debited against a corresponding water access licence. That locks in certainty for all water users in the region, bringing Toorale into line with legislative requirements and providing more clarity and transparency around water management decisions with improved mandatory public reporting.

I agree with the mover of the motion that government agencies—both the New South Wales Government and the Commonwealth Government as environmental water holders—should adhere to the same requirements for transparency in relation to their management of environmental water as other water users. Thanks to the update that we have made based on the findings of that robust review, the stop work order issued by the independent Natural Resources Access Regulator [NRAR] on 6 August 2025 is no longer in effect. The ongoing Toorale NRAR investigation is separate to the recently announced pause on some environmental water in New South Wales by the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, which the New South Wales Government is working to address as quickly as possible.

The New South Wales Government has worked quickly to resolve the stop work order at Toorale, to get on with the job of delivering vital flows to the Western Floodplain, which is home to hundreds of native plants and animals. We have delivered a comprehensive review to ensure all environmental water being diverted at Toorale is properly accounted for, ensuring management decisions can be made with certainty. It goes without saying that water management is a complex task, but we take it very seriously and we want to continue to try to be as open and transparent as possible about the decisions we make, which is why we are happy to support this call for papers and provide the requested documents to the House.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (16:01): I move:

That the question be amended as follows:

- (1) In the opening paragraph:
 - (a) insert "WaterNSW" before "or the National Resources Access Regulator"; and
 - (b) omit "relating to the operation of water regulating infrastructure at Toorale National Park".
- (2) In paragraph (a) insert at the end "for the infrastructure at Toorale National Park".
- (3) In paragraph (b) (i) insert "the definition of take, Pre-Requisite Policy measures" after "or the transfer of water between water sources;".
- (4) In paragraph (b) (iii) omit "all assessments or reviews" and insert instead "all assessments, reviews or communications".
- (5) Insert after paragraph (b) (iii):
 - (iv) any documents in relation to environmental water activities as they pertain to the Non-Urban Water Metering Policy, the transfer of water between water sources, definition of take, or Pre-Requisite Policy Measures.

- (6) Insert after paragraph (l) (iii):
- (iv) Inspector-General of Water Compliance; and
 - (v) Murray-Darling Basin Authority.

The Greens support the motion moved by the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, but we wish to expand the order for the production of documents to include other environmental watering events. There has been a lot of focus on that in recent weeks as a result of the pause on environmental watering in New South Wales. The Natural Resources Access Regulator has also issued stop work orders on Toorale National Park. There was a lot of discussion about that in the budget estimates hearings. I look forward to seeing the legal advice and other documents that will be produced if the order is agreed to. However, The Greens would like to expand the motion. I have discussed the matter with the Opposition, which has indicated that it will support this amendment. I thank Opposition members for the discussions we have had about that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (16:05): In reply: I thank members of the House for supporting this call for papers. I note that the Opposition is happy to support the amendment moved by Ms Cate Faehrmann. She has discussed that with us. I also thank the Minister for Water for working with the Opposition on this motion.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The Hon. Sarah Mitchell has moved a motion, to which Ms Cate Faehrmann has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The question now is that the motion as amended be agreed to.

Motion as amended agreed to.

GREYHOUND RACING INDUSTRY

Production of Documents: Further Order

The Hon. EMMA HURST (16:06): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
- (a) on Wednesday 7 May 2025, this House ordered the production of documents relating to abuse in the greyhound racing industry, including in the possession, custody or control of Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission [GWIC];
 - (b) in response to the order of the House, on Wednesday 4 June 2025 a return was received from Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission, stating that it:

"has understood the terms of this order for papers as relating to any documents that refer to incidents occurring within the greyhound racing industry between greyhound racing industry participants and other participants, or between greyhound racing industry participants and GWIC staff that contain the terms "physical abuse", "sexual abuse" "assault" or "harassment";"
 - (c) on Monday 23 June 2025, Ms Hurst raised concerns with Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission regarding compliance with the order, stating that:
 - (i) Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission took "an unreasonably narrow interpretation of the call for papers" and as a result "failed to produce any documents concerning physical or sexual abuse, assault or harassment that may have occurred between GWIC employees, or between GRNSW and GWIC staff, and other relevant categories of individuals";
 - (ii) by "simply searching for the terms 'physical abuse', 'sexual abuse', 'assault' or 'harassment' ... would lead to GWIC failing to produce key documents falling within the scope of the call for papers"; and
 - (iii) attachments to emails have not been produced by Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission "even where those emails fall within the scope of the call for papers".
 - (d) on Thursday 24 July 2025, a response was received from Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission to the correspondence from Ms Hurst which stated GWIC is "committed to full and proper compliance", and further stated:
 - (i) "its approach was logical, pragmatic and justifiable" and "a direct reflection of the explicit terms of the Resolution";
 - (ii) "the methodology employed" was based on "the broad scope of the Resolution and practical constraints confronting GWIC in relation to both time and resources";
 - (iii) that a "keyword-based approach" was utilised "to identify a more accurate set of documents that were directly responsive to the Resolution"; and
 - (iv) that email attachments were not produced "when the attachment was an image, such as email banners", and submitting that "all substantive attachments to emails have been produced".

- (2) That this House expects adequate searches are undertaken to ensure full compliance with orders made under Standing Order 52, and that failure to do so could be considered as non-compliance with an order of the House.
- (3) 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, excluding any documents previously returned under an order of the House, created since 1 January 2018 in the possession, custody or control of the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission relating to abuse in the greyhound racing industry:
 - (a) all documents relating to all complaints, allegations, claims, incidents or discussions of any form of physical abuse involving or between participants or employed persons in the greyhound racing industry, including staff of Greyhound Racing New South Wales or Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission, stewards, veterinarians, inspectors, or investigators;
 - (b) all documents relating to all complaints, allegations, claims, incidents or discussions of any form of sexual abuse involving or between participants or employed persons in the greyhound racing industry, including staff of Greyhound Racing New South Wales or Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission, stewards, veterinarians, inspectors, or investigators;
 - (c) all documents relating to all complaints, allegations, claims, incidents or discussions of any form of assault involving or between participants or employed persons in the greyhound racing industry, including staff of Greyhound Racing New South Wales or Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission, stewards, veterinarians, inspectors, or investigators;
 - (d) all documents relating to all complaints, allegations, claims, incidents or discussions of any form of harassment involving or between participants or employed persons in the greyhound racing industry, including staff of Greyhound Racing New South Wales or Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission, stewards, veterinarians, inspectors, or investigators; and
 - (e) 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.

On 7 May 2025 this House agreed to an order for papers which required the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission [GWIC] to produce "all complaints, allegations, claims, incidents or discussion of physical or sexual abuse, assault or harassment regarding participants or employed persons in the greyhound racing industry, including staff of Greyhound Racing NSW or the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission, stewards, veterinarians, inspectors, or investigators". GWIC responded to that order for papers on 4 June and produced a number of relevant documents. However, the correspondence GWIC provided with its return raised serious red flags for me about the way GWIC had chosen to comply with the order for papers.

Firstly, GWIC chose not to produce any documents concerning abuse, assault or harassment that may have occurred between GWIC employees, or between Greyhound Racing NSW [GRNSW] and GWIC staff, and other relevant categories of individuals. Members have no doubt seen recent media reports concerning allegations of sexual assault involving the former CEO of GWIC, now the CEO of Greyhound Racing NSW. Documents containing those allegations were conveniently not produced by GWIC because of the very limited interpretation it chose to take. That raises concerns about the regulator of an industry now seeking to provide cover for senior executives within the industry it is supposed to be regulating, and going so far as to fail to comply with an order of this House to do so. I do not make those accusations lightly but, given the lack of evidence or explanation provided for why certain documents are missing from the return, it certainly appears to have been the case.

Secondly, in failing to comply with the Standing Order 52 motion, GWIC chose to take the shockingly literal approach of using keyword searches for the terms "physical abuse", "sexual abuse", "assault" and "harassment". It is obvious that such an approach would lead to GWIC failing to produce key documents falling within the scope of the call for papers. For example, an email recording that a GWIC employee or greyhound racing industry participant had been "kicked" or "raped" or "groped" would clearly fall within the scope of the order for papers. However, unless the email contained the specific words "physical abuse" or "sexual abuse", it would not have come up in GWIC's keyword searches and therefore has not been produced to the Parliament.

This is not acceptable or appropriate.

It is the responsibility of any party subject to a Standing Order 52 motion to produce all documents that fall within the scope of the order, not take shortcuts that will plainly lead to documents being missed. I have written to GWIC to raise these concerns. It has refused to properly comply with the call for papers. On advice from the Clerk's office, I am bringing this matter back to the House to seek a further order, which elucidates precisely what the House expects GWIC to produce. This is a matter that should concern all members. It is a serious matter that goes to the heart of the powers of this House.

A statutory integrity agency established by this Parliament is refusing to comply with its lawful obligations to respond to orders for papers from this House. I am concerned that a pattern is emerging under the Minns Labor Government where Ministers' offices, departments, agencies and organisations are picking and choosing when they will comply and to what extent they will comply with Standing Order 52. That is simply not acceptable. We

must stand firm behind the powers of this House and make it clear that a call for papers is a serious matter that must be fully complied with. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (16:10): I support the Standing Order 52 motion on the basis that this House should not tolerate agencies that refuse to produce documents. The whole principle of Standing Order 52 was confirmed by our court system. This Parliament created these racing industry bodies. We need information to make further improvements and amendments to legislation about bodies that we have legislated to create. It really comes down to a battle between the powers and will of this House and these rogue racing bodies that will not produce the documents.

How hard is it to have a policy of some ministerial oversight of the three racing authorities in New South Wales with a light but effective touch? That should be the approach of the Minns Government. The Minister would not be intervening in day-to-day administrative matters. The Minister would have oversight, specifically of the legislation, that would then allow for Standing Order 52 compliance, Auditor-General audits of these three bodies, ICAC oversight and also appearances at budget estimates hearings. That would be the sensible approach. For a government that believed in accountability, there would be recognition that Racing NSW, in particular, has become completely rogue. It is right off the reservation in terms of its accountability and performance.

Greyhound Racing has somewhat of a chequered record with this. Harness Racing NSW, of course, is the best of the three. It should be a matter of the Minns Government saying there should be ministerial oversight for all three racing codes to allow for those accountability measures, while at the same time ruling out ministerial interference in day-to-day administrative matters. Members should support the Hon. Emma Hurst. The House should exert its powers. We should urge the Government to enact sensible reform. Unfortunately, it is not allowable under the Brad Hazzard review of racing to have some light-touch ministerial oversight solely for the purpose of accountability. That would certainly make a huge difference in two of the three codes.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (16:12): I first place on record some advice I have received from the Minister for Gaming and Racing. He acknowledges the concerns raised by the Hon. Emma Hurst as well as her record on these issues. On behalf of the Minister, I indicate that the Government will not oppose this motion. The Government expects the greyhound racing industry, and public sector agencies such as the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission, to be run with the highest standards. That includes how they respond to allegations of physical and sexual abuse or harassment and to animal welfare and integrity concerns. That expectation extends to conducting adequate searches to ensure compliance with orders for papers.

This House should expect motions that are clearly articulated with precision when documents are sought. The motion moved by the Hon. Emma Hurst certainly does that. It is a matter for members of this House to raise concerns about compliance with the orders of this House. I place those views from the Minister on record. I thank the Hon. Emma Hurst for this motion. She sought advice from the Clerk and was specific about her concerns. It is for those reasons that the Government does not oppose the motion. I also indicate that we are open to engagement on this issue if she has further specific concerns as this matter unfolds.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (16:14): I indicate that the Opposition supports this request under Standing Order 52, as we do with all orders for papers, in the interest of accountability and transparency. To the point put forward by the Hon. Emma Hurst, the Opposition has also noticed that agencies are not producing documents for many of the Standing Order 52 motions that we move, or they are producing them late. In fact, they are producing them much closer to the time when Parliament is due to sit. We are getting documents the day before Parliament comes back or on the day Parliament comes back instead of the week before. I do not think that is good enough. It is something that we are certainly interested in pursuing as well. The Opposition supports this motion.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (16:15): I speak on behalf of The Greens to indicate that we also support the Standing Order 52 motion. We share the concerns that the Hon. Emma Hurst has raised. These are really serious issues. The original motion made it very clear what the member was after. I am glad to see that the Government is supporting this motion, but it should not have to get to this stage. The Executive must take ultimate responsibility for ensuring that these orders are complied with. The Hon. Emma Hurst should not have had to move this motion on a private members' day. It should have gone through during formal business at the very least. In any event, we are where we are. I hope that we actually get full compliance with the order this time. If we do not, then The Greens fully support escalating this issue to get those documents.

The Hon. EMMA HURST (16:16): In reply: I thank all of members who contributed to the debate, including the Hon. Mark Latham, the Hon. John Graham, the Hon. Chris Rath and Ms Abigail Boyd. I am glad to hear that we are at a point where the Government is making some movement towards recognising that the original order was not complied with. At budget estimates hearings the Minister was advised that the Greyhound Welfare

and Integrity Commission [GWIC] had complied with the order. I wrote to both the Government and GWIC about this issue because it was very clear that GWIC had not complied with the order.

We should not need whistleblowers to speak out in public. I thank the whistleblowers who spoke out. I know how difficult that is, and I acknowledge their concerns that they will be exposed because they had to speak out. We knew that certain documents were missing and that orders for papers had not been fully complied with when those whistleblowers spoke out. GWIC should have complied with the original order. There was no reason for GWIC to apply its own liberal interpretation to a call for papers. It is not a new agency, and has had to comply with Standing Order 52 in the past. GWIC wasted everyone's time by changing the way it interprets an order for papers and by coming up with some sort of legal argument for why it should not have to fully comply with an order of this House.

As Ms Abigail Boyd pointed out, this motion to further clarify the Standing Order 52 motion was put down as an item of formal business. The Government could have dealt with it then rather than wasting more time, but this does give us the opportunity to actually articulate these problems. GWIC is also being very difficult with animal welfare organisations, which are trying to seek basic information about its processes.

GWIC is refusing to comply with requests under the Government Information (Public Access) Act and then, of course, it is also failing to comply with orders of this House. I understand the very serious nature of the documents that we are seeking, but this House has processes for those documents to be produced under privilege. I hope that we do not hear further arguments from GWIC attempting to not comply with this further order, and that within 21 days we get the full return of documents.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The question is that the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Bills

TOBACCO LEGISLATION (CLOSURE ORDERS) AMENDMENT BILL 2025

First Reading

Bill received from the Legislative Assembly, read a first time and ordered to be published on motion by the Hon. John Graham, on behalf of the Hon. Courtney Houssos.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: According to standing order, I table a statement of public interest.

Statement of public interest tabled.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I move:

That standing orders be suspended to allow the passing of the bill through all its remaining stages during the present or any one sitting of the House.

Motion agreed to.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I move:

That the second reading of the bill stand as an order of the day for the next sitting day.

Motion agreed to.

Motions

BUSINESS CONNECT PROGRAM

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (16:21): I move:

- (1) That this House condemns the Minns Labor Government's decision to scrap the Business Connect program, the only free support service for small businesses, leaving thousands without support and vital advice.
- (2) That this House recognises the current difficult economic environment for small business, with 4,235 insolvencies in the first nine months of 2024-25.
- (3) That this House calls on the Government to immediately reinstate and enhance the Business Connect program to bolster small businesses, restore confidence and drive economic growth for families and communities across New South Wales.

The Minns Labor Government's decision to terminate the Business Connect program on 30 September was nothing short of an assault on the heart of the New South Wales economy. Small businesses comprise 97 per cent of all enterprises in our State and employ 1.8 million hardworking Australians. They are the lifeblood of our communities. They are the family-owned businesses, the shops in the suburbs, the innovative startups in the cities, the resilient operators in regional heartlands. I come from a proud family of small business owners. My great

grandparents were dairy farmers in Toongabbie. My grandfather was a baker in Merrylands, both baking and delivering the bread. My father ran his own legal business in Parramatta for 25 years. My late grandmother was his senior legal secretary, and my grandfather caught the train every day to the land titles office in the city to exchange contracts. My grandparents retired in their early eighties. Their actions and achievements demonstrate the typical traits, challenges and entrepreneurial spirit of a suburban small business.

Historically, small businesses do not ask for much from government. They say, "Just reduce our costs, cut the red tape and let us get on with the job." One tangible step, however, in providing some much-needed and overdue attention to the sector was the announcement of the Business Connect program by the former Coalition Government. Yet, in a time of unprecedented economic strain, Labor has chosen to sever that vital support, leaving thousands of small businesses to navigate soaring costs in uncertain times. Since its inception in 2017 under the previous Coalition Government, Business Connect has been a beacon for over 60,000 small businesses and startups, delivering up to eight hours of free, personalised, expert advice annually on everything from financial planning to digital transformation, human resources and succession strategies through a trusted network of independent providers via Service NSW. It has empowered entrepreneurs to not just survive but thrive.

The NSW Treasury's independent review of Business Connect confirmed its extraordinary value. For every \$10 million invested annually, the program generates up to three times that amount in economic returns and the creation of more than 40,000 jobs. That is not expenditure; it is an investment in stability, innovation and family prosperity—core conservative principles that uphold the rule of law and the dignity of enterprise. Let us be clear about the timing of the cut. New South Wales is reeling from record-high business insolvencies: 4,634 in 2023-24 alone, representing 42 per cent of Australia's total, despite our State having just 31 per cent of the population. Sole traders and family businesses are battling energy bills and payroll tax in a cost-of-living crisis. Business failures have surged to record highs across the country. *The Australian* reports that New South Wales has recorded the highest number of insolvencies in the country, with 4,235 businesses entering external administration in the first nine months of 2024-25.

Premier Minns has conceded the program's effectiveness but dismissed it as "not absolutely essential"—a phrase that rings hollow when small businesses are folding at rates not seen since the 2008-09 global financial crisis. Business NSW CEO Daniel Hunter has rightly described the termination of Business Connect as leaving business out in the cold, emphasising that there is no equivalent program to replace it after 1 October. The vague pivot to the Service NSW Business Bureau, with its generalised concierge service and online resources, cannot substitute for face-to-face localised expertise. For example, multicultural entrepreneurs in the suburbs rely upon tailored advice to overcome language barriers and navigate regulatory burdens.

As a Liberal, I believe in enabling aspiration through minimal but effective government intervention, not abandoning it to bureaucratic scripts and websites. The Government's short-sighted decision to axe the program will fall heaviest on the regions, where access to private consultants is limited. I call on the Premier and the Treasurer to halt the termination of Business Connect immediately, to engage with business owners and to commit to a sustainable model that delivers real outcomes. For the sake of 1.8 million jobs, and for family enterprises, we must preserve the program. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (16:26): I support the motion and thank the Hon. Rachel Merton for bringing it to the House and for her very impassioned contribution. Members will recall that I spoke about the Business Connect program in my private member's statement today. I also spoke about it two weeks ago on the Michael McLaren show. While we were live on air, the switchboard lit up with people calling in to tell Michael how much Business Connect had assisted them in their times of need, helping them to navigate the numerous pieces of red tape and green tape that are put in front of small business operators. I speak with lived experience—that buzzword in this Chamber. I have run a number of small businesses: Highlands Stockfeed, Lynrod Horse Transporting and Tuross Property Services Pty Ltd. Fortunately, I did not need Business Connect. I was in a very fortunate position, but not everybody is as lucky as me.

Business Connect is a service that offers just eight hours per year of paid assistance to small businesses to help them navigate, to help them stay open, to help them grow, to help them employ people and to help the economy. It costs the Minns Government \$10 million a year at most. I know we need fiscal responsibility, and I am not into giving money to businesses. But businesses do not get any money under the Business Connect program; they get assistance paid for by the Government. But in terms of giving money away, this Government gave \$3 million to music festivals, a lot of them run by overseas entities, and \$16 million to the Ultimate Fighting Championship [UFC]. Like the Hon. Mark Latham, I am a big supporter of the UFC. I do not have anything against sport or music. But if the Government can find \$16 million for the UFC, which is owned by an overseas entity, it can find \$10 million to support local businesses to keep the doors open, keep people employed and keep the economy ticking over.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (16:29): I lead for the Government and indicate at the outset that we will not support the motion. There are a number of inaccuracies in the motion. Business Connect is not the Government's only free offering to small businesses in the State. The Service NSW Business Bureau provides free, personalised, ongoing support to New South Wales businesses, with a team of friendly business concierges right across the State. Highly trained Service NSW staff are ready and willing to assist customers to navigate through the life cycle of their business. I note paragraph (2) of the motion and recognise the difficult economic environment in which small businesses are currently operating. The latest Momentum Survey of New South Wales small businesses by the Small Business Commissioner indicated that, while confidence has increased slightly, the biggest concern for small businesses was the cost of business inputs, with 82 per cent citing that as their number one concern. The survey report states:

It's nearly impossible to get ahead. Rent, electricity, wages, insurance, freight and the cost of goods are all increasing faster than the prices we can charge. So, while our business is growing and revenue is increasing, our profit is struggling to keep up.

Government members acknowledge those concerns and are trying to assist small businesses across our State with many of those costs, including through our reforms to workers compensation. When members opposite bring motions recognising the difficult current economic environment for small businesses, I encourage them to think about what more they could do to support small businesses. We on this side of the House are committed to supporting small businesses through the Business Bureau program, but also through the Charter for Small Business. As I have spoken about before in this House, we have also increased the procurement threshold from \$150,000 to \$250,000, which has seen record amounts of government dollars go to small businesses. I again urge members opposite, when thinking about support for small business, to support the Government's workers compensation reforms.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (16:32): The Hon. Emily Suvaal, with the Government's talking points, says that, amazingly, the Government is doing better things for small business by getting rid of Business Connect, the most effective program that exists for small business. It is a \$10 million program. The Treasury Accenture report showed it had a benefit to cost ratio of 1.5 over one year. It goes up to three if extrapolated over three years. Yesterday the Treasurer said that it was a great program and that it worked. But vote for workers comp or otherwise Business Connect gets it—that was effectively what the Treasurer told us yesterday. The Government talks about how workers compensation premiums are a concern for small business. No doubt they are a concern for businesses across New South Wales, but we are talking about 500,000 sole-trader businesses that are not paying workers compensation. Yet the Government seems to think that is the big bogeyman that they are dealing with. It is absolute rubbish.

The Government talks about the Business Bureau. The Minister said, "I can google these things." That is the Government's advice to small business: Get out there and google it. We are not talking about small businesses that are going gangbusters; we are talking about small businesses that are doing it tough. They are the ones that are starting out and looking for the best approach they can possibly find to be able to deliver, get off the mat and get started. They need that help from Business Connect. They do not need Dr Google; they do not need ChatGPT. But that is what the Government is giving them. The Government talks about specialised Business Bureau workers. With all credit to the people who work within the Business Bureau of Service NSW, they are not small business people. They do not have small business backgrounds. To be a Business Connect adviser, a person needs 100 points across a range of qualifications. That includes things like having a diploma or training in small business, or operating a small business. They are able to work with businesses and direct them to the best strategy for them.

The Hon. Emily Suvaal talked about procurement and the Charter for Small Business. The progress report actually highlights an example of how Business Connect was able to work with a business on the North Coast to help them to gear their business towards government procurement. That is not something that the Business Bureau can do. It can only say, "Here's a template. Here's the website. Go have a look." As the Minister said, "Just google it." Small businesses across New South Wales need more than just googling. This government can find \$7.9 million for a conservation hunting authority that has not even passed this Parliament, but it cannot find \$10 million for small business. The Government does not have the right priorities.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (16:35): I speak in opposition to the motion. I listened intently to the contribution of the Hon. Scott Farlow. I was in the estimates hearings, listening to the small business Minister, but it sounds like we must have been in two different estimates hearings from the way it was described. By all accounts, Business Connect was a very effective, worthwhile and useful program. The problem is that government is about deciding what the priorities are. In a perfect world, I am sure we would love to keep programs like this. But when we inherit record State debt from members opposite, who spent on everything, there is not the money to pay for luxuries like business welfare and Business Connect. That is effectively what it is: business welfare.

Better than that, as the Minister described in estimates, government alternatives provide much of the service that that program was providing. Some of the elements are available from Service NSW. The business

concierge program is available across the State and in all local government areas. In total, there are 75 business concierges across New South Wales and, importantly, 42 of those are located in the regions. People can obtain exactly the same sorts of services that they got in their eight hours with Business Connect from other people. The things they cannot get are things they should not be asking them for because they can google them themselves and get that information.

In estimates the Minister made it perfectly plain that, by all accounts, it was a well-liked program. People thought it was very useful and, in an ideal world, we would continue it. But a government has to make serious decisions about its priorities, and we are putting money towards making sure that we have nurses, teachers, police officers and other frontline workers providing services. Because of the debt that we were left with from the now Opposition, difficult decisions have to be made. Unfortunately, there is just not enough money to continue to offer a program like Business Connect, particularly in circumstances where there are alternatives available to support businesses that are in trouble. Many of those alternatives are better than the Business Connect program. They are more widely available, they provide equivalent support and they do it in a way that will best serve those businesses. I oppose the motion for those reasons.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (16:38): On behalf of The Greens, I support the motion. The Labor Government says it is making cuts to workers compensation entitlements—a plan that it hatched with big business—to ease the cost burden on small business. It argues that premium savings are necessary so small businesses can survive. But at the same time, the same Government is scrapping Business Connect, which was the only tailored, statewide advice service small businesses could access free of charge. Business Connect was not about entitlements or costs; it was about skills, planning, growth and resilience. On the one hand, the Labor Government is cutting back support for injured workers and dressing it up as small business relief; on the other, it is pulling away actual practical support for small businesses.

If Labor's concern for small business was genuine, it would not take away the very program that gave owners the tools to manage their business better. Workers compensation cuts might reduce premiums by a fraction, but they shift the burden onto injured employees and their families.

Meanwhile, the closure of Business Connect strips small businesses of help with navigating cashflow, digital tools, tendering and compliance, which are the areas that really drive sustainability. Those programs were delivered through trusted independent advisers embedded in communities across New South Wales. Business Connect supported multicultural businesses, creative industries and regional startups with specialist advice. Small businesses in regional New South Wales—where access to accountants, consultants and networks is limited—will be particularly impacted as they are left stranded. Culturally and linguistically diverse business owners who relied on in-language support will lose it overnight. Small businesses are being asked to accept a trade-off: less protection for workers in exchange for token savings, while losing access to trusted business advice.

I met with the Council of Small Business Organisations Australia [COSBOA] less than a week ago, where we discussed the cruel irony of this decision and the acute mental health pressures that are being faced by small business owners directly. Data from COSBOA shows that small business owners experience significantly higher levels of stress, depression and anxiety compared with the general population. COSBOA CEO Luke Achterstraat has been quoted as saying:

Small businesses employ almost half the private sector workforce, yet they operate in a unique and often challenging context, facing financial pressures, isolation, and long working hours. These factors, combined with limited access to resources and mental health support, create a perfect storm for mental ill-health. Many Small Business Owners find mental health support difficult to find and afford and are generally unaware of the programs and services available, so more work is needed to ensure these programs are visible, accessible, and useful to small business – including through their trusted and familiar channels. We need to meet them where they are.

That was what Business Connect was doing. A government that truly backed small business would not cut programs that helped them succeed and build networks of support, and programs that helped small business owners nurture their passions into viable businesses and careers. The Government cannot claim to be helping small business while simultaneously weakening protections for their staff and dismantling the only advisory program that offered them free, hands-on support.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (16:41): I strongly support the motion moved by my colleague the Hon. Rachel Merton condemning the Minns Labor Government's decision to scrap the Business Connect program. Business Connect has been the only free, independent advisory service for small businesses in this State. For nearly a decade it has been there to help, whether it was helping a cafe in a regional town struggling to reopen after the bushfires or a family-owned shop in Western Sydney that suddenly had to move online during COVID. Those business owners are real people, not statistics, and this Government has turned its back on them.

Take, for example, a small operator in the Hunter Valley. After losing everything in the fires, she used Business Connect to get tailored advice on rebuilding her bookkeeping and digital marketing business. That

support helped her reopen the doors, re-employ locals and restore hope in her community. There are thousands of stories like hers. Without that safety net, many of those businesses simply would not exist today. The Government's decision comes at the worst possible time. Instead of helping, Labor has cut the very program that has been proven to keep businesses afloat. And let us be clear: The Treasurer's justification does not stack up. He has claimed that small businesses wanted cuts to workers compensation costs, but the facts show otherwise.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, New South Wales has approximately 850,000 small businesses, yet 509,000 of those are sole traders. They do not pay workers compensation premiums. To say they demanded these cuts is misleading. What they have demanded, time and again, is cost-of-living relief and a government that gets out of the way. Business Connect offered practical, hands-on advice. Instead of that, the Government is offering the Business Bureau, which relies on concierges handing out website links and scripted information. In budget estimates, Mr Greg Wells stated that the Business Bureau was meant to complement Business Connect. But it is no replacement for experienced, independent advisers who understand the pressures of running a business and can provide one-on-one support.

Scrapping Business Connect just weeks before Small Business Month in October adds insult to injury. Labor will celebrate small businesses with slogans and photo opportunities while dismantling the only program designed to walk side by side with those businesses when times are tough. I join the Hon. Rachel Merton in calling on the Government to immediately reinstate Business Connect. Our small businesses are not statistics on a spreadsheet; they are the cafe owners, tradies and shopkeepers who make up the backbone of every community in New South Wales. They deserve better than abandonment.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (16:44): I oppose the motion. I am reminded of a quote from Niccolò Machiavelli, who said:

It ought to be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things. Because the innovator has for enemies all those who have done well under the old conditions, and lukewarm defenders in those who may do well under the new. This coolness arises partly from fear of the opponents, who have the laws on their side, and partly from the incredulity of men, who do not readily believe in new things until they have had a long experience of them.

The Hon. Wes Fang: Did you write this?

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Niccolò Machiavelli wrote it, you nincompoop. This proposition should be rejected because the reality is that we had an election. A new government was elected, and that government has the right to choose which programs it will continue with and which programs it will dispense with. It is about priorities. The Government is setting new priorities.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Members will cease interjecting.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Government members believe that the old order should be dispensed with and a new order should be put into place. In that new order, we believe that there is adequate provision made for the needs of small business. The Government has other free offerings to small business in the State. The Service NSW Business Bureau provides free, personalised, ongoing support to New South Wales businesses, with a team of friendly business concierges right across the State. Like other Service NSW staff, business concierges are highly trained in customer service, and they can help customers through the life cycle of their business.

Business concierges help customers with everything from setting up a business to checking things like licensing and compliance, bookkeeping support, market research and marketing, digital readiness and network connections. It is quite clear that the Government is not leaving small business in the lurch. The State Government provides adequate services to meet the needs of small business. Business Connect is not the only way we can achieve those ends. There are adequate measures in place. The Government should be allowed to choose its priorities, and those who doubt should wait for the test of time and see that those new arrangements are actually better.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (16:47): I support the very credible motion of the Hon. Rachel Merton. Obviously it has quite a bit of support, because we are hearing from members of the crossbench both right and left, and from the Coalition as well, that many small businesses rely on the Business Connect program and that the program has value. Therefore, I intend to move an amendment.

The PRESIDENT: I again remind members that if they wish to move an amendment, it is important that they provide it to the Clerk first so that it can be typed up and distributed. There is a challenge now because no-one has a copy of the amendment. I ask the Hon. Tania Mihailuk to provide her amendment to the Clerk. It can then be distributed to members. The Clerk will stop the clock. Does the member have a copy of the amendment?

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: I have it in my handwriting. I can read it out slowly.

The PRESIDENT: I ask that in future all members ensure that they have provided a copy of their amendment to the Clerks before moving it. I ask the member to read her amendment.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: I move:

That the question be amended by inserting after paragraph (3):

- (4) That this House calls on the NSW Small Business Commissioner to prepare a special report under section 26 of the Small Business Commissioner Act 2013 No 22 investigating the impact of the State's decision to dismantle the Business Connect program and the impact on small businesses in New South Wales.

I am asking for this particular report, firstly, to give the Small Business Commissioner some work to do. Let me be very clear: It is important to point out that this was a free program that was viable, providing all sorts of services for about seven years. From 2017 to 2024 it was a significant provider of services. It helped businesses navigate the challenges of dealing with a lot of bureaucratic red tape and governance issues—all sorts of issues that are often very difficult for small businesses to decipher when dealing with government agencies and so forth. This Government has not provided an alternative. If we are going to shut down a program for budgetary reasons, which is what many members have argued for during this debate, then we need to actually demonstrate or provide some sort of report to ensure that we are not impacting small businesses across New South Wales. That is why I am moving the amendment. It is a fitting amendment. I understand that the mover of the motion is supportive of it.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (16:51): We have learned a lot about Labor's priorities in this debate. In the great Labor new order, inspired by Machiavelli, we want money for Ultimate Fighting Championship fights, we want money for a conservation hunting authority, but there will be no more money for the community justice centres—\$2½ million that actually helped people, with a free mediation service—and there will be no more money for Business Connect, a \$10 million investment in growth. The priority, we were told, is to pay State employees. There is no priority at all to invest in wealth generation, to invest in businesses, which actually create tax—*[Time expired.]*

The PRESIDENT: Before we continue, I believe that a motion for an extension of debate under Standing Order 94 is foreshadowed, which provides:

On a debate being interrupted to allow the mover to speak in reply, the mover, or any member who has not already spoken in debate, may move a motion, without notice, to extend the time for the debate and to set time limits for each subsequent speaker.

[Business interrupted.]

Business of the House

CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: According to Standing Order 94, I move:

- (a) that the time for debate on this motion be extended by 15 minutes; and
(b) that each subsequent speaker may speak for not more than three minutes.

Motion agreed to.

Motions

BUSINESS CONNECT PROGRAM

[Business resumed.]

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (16:53): As well as hearing about Labor's priorities under their great new world order—and I must admit that, on this side of the House, we are more Giorgia Meloni than we are Niccolò Machiavelli—we also heard about the great idea of what will be replacing Business Connect: a tremendous concierge service. Concierge services are great. They introduce, they ascertain, they work out to whom a person needs to be connected. To whom are business concierges going to be connecting these businesses? It is effectively like having a triage nurse at a hospital to identify the problems patients are presenting with but sacking all the doctors so that there is no-one to actually provide that care. It is tremendous that Service NSW personnel will be providing advice. But have those personnel ever run a small business? Are they providing the sort of hands-on advice that small business needs?

I remind the House that this is not some sort of business welfare. This is an investment in wealth generation—it is an investment in tax generation—to pay a just wage to all those State employees. Small businesses contribute \$535 billion a year to the New South Wales economy—\$10 billion of investment for \$535 billion of wealth generated by small business. This is so short-sighted. If we look at the success rate of Business Connect, 12 per cent of businesses approached it, thinking they were closing. After getting advice,

1 per cent proceeded to close. It is a tremendous service, which has helped generate jobs and wealth for our economy. It is short-sighted to be defunding Business Connect.

The PRESIDENT: Before I call the next speakers, I make this clear: An amendment has been moved. Those who spoke in the debate earlier can speak again, if it is solely on the amendment.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (16:56): I indicate that the Government opposes the amendment moved by the Hon. Tania Mihailuk. In doing so, I acknowledge the work of our NSW Small Business Commissioner. As members may know, it is an independent authority that provides a central point of contact for small businesses, deals with complaints and deals with mediations, whether tenancies or other disputes. I acknowledge the work that the NSW Small Business Commissioner does, but it is important to note that it is an independent authority. We do not believe it is our role to be directing the Small Business Commissioner in the work that it undertakes. However, if it chooses to do that, it absolutely can.

The NSW Small Business Commissioner also produces, as I referenced in my earlier remarks, the Small Business Momentum Survey. The survey provides important insights and a comprehensive snapshot of the small business landscape and community, of the issues and challenges that small businesses are facing, rating their areas of concern. The survey is just one element of the suite of supports that we provide small businesses in this State. The Small Business Commissioner also encourages and facilitates collaboration across agencies to work more effectively with small businesses in this State. It is a great advocate for small business and, under its administering Act, it has powers to conduct inquiries of its own.

The Small Business Commissioner works with government. It helps us inform decisions around reducing red tape and assists small businesses to face their day-to-day concerns by providing advice, whether it is through the survey or other special reports. The Government does not support the amendment or the motion as it stands. The Small Business Commissioner is an independent statutory office. It is not the role of government to dictate the work it should be undertaking. It has powers under the Act to conduct inquiries to advocate for the small business sector. It is not for the Government to do that.

The Hon. WES FANG (16:59): I make a contribution to support my good friend and colleague the Hon. Rachel Merton in relation to the motion. I note that members opposite who have made contributions to the motion have done so with talking points. They have probably done that because I do not see any small business owners on the Government side of the Chamber. I have certainly seen a number of union hacks.

The Hon. Emily Suvaal: Point of order: The standing order does not come to mind, but it is disorderly to refer to other members using talking points or reading from scripts.

The PRESIDENT: It is difficult for me to hear because of the conversation to my right. The Hon. Mark Latham will remain silent.

The Hon. Emily Suvaal: If the member wanted to take a point of order about members reading notes, there is a standing order for that. He should have done that at the time.

The PRESIDENT: The Clerk will stop the clock.

The Hon. Emily Suvaal: It is disorderly to refer to members in this place making a contribution by reading from talking points when that was not the case.

The Hon. WES FANG: To the point of order—

The PRESIDENT: I will not uphold the point of order. This is part of the rough and tumble of debate. If the Hon. Wes Fang spoke about a specific member in a particularly offensive way, I would consider that. But the member was being perfectly reasonable. The member has the call.

The Hon. WES FANG: I accept that you believe I have been totally reasonable. I will remind you of that at another point today no doubt. The Hon. Mick Veitch used to say, "Be careful of the talking points you are given and what you read out in this House." Members that do not have experience in small business are standing up and using talking points. I know we have had two barristers make contributions and we have had a number of union hacks make contributions. But nobody on that side of the Chamber has small business experience. That is the very problem with this; none of them knows what it is like to have a small business. None of them knows what it is like to have to pay wages, rent and insurance. None of them knows. They are all union hacks. At least the Hon. Emily Suvaal was a nurse. But the rest of them are all union hacks. That is the first problem with this change.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Members will cease interjecting.

The Hon. WES FANG: In relation to the amendment about the Small Business Commissioner, the Hon. Emily Suvaal is quite correct: I have experience in statutory offices and using their powers. But in this

instance the House suggesting that the Small Business Commissioner might want to look at this is certainly not coopting the Small Business Commissioner or directing them. But we are certainly encouraging the commissioner to use their powers. It is appropriate that those powers might be used in this case because Business Connect has been quite successful. It has been demonstrated to provide a positive cost-benefit analysis. Ultimately small businesses will lose out under Labor.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (17:02): I make a contribution to the debate and correct a few things that the Hon. Wes Fang said, including that nobody on this side of the House has run a small business. While I cannot speak for my colleagues, I can speak for myself and the Hon. Cameron Murphy. We have both been small business people as barristers. It is part of legal profession regulations that you must be a small business or trader. We have that experience of paying for insurance and finding clients and work. The Hon. Wes Fang is completely wrong and has provided a good example of why members should not make assumptions about people.

I correct a few other things. The Business Connect program is not the Government's only free offering to small businesses in the State. The Service NSW Business Bureau provides free, personalised and ongoing support to New South Wales businesses with a team of friendly business concierges right across the State. Like other Service NSW staff, business concierges are highly trained in customer service. They can help customers throughout the lifecycle of their business.

The Hon. Natalie Ward: They are a triage service.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: They are not just a triage service. They help customers with everything from setting up a business to checking things like licensing and compliance, bookkeeping support, market research, marketing, digital readiness and network connections.

The Hon. Susan Carter: Point of order—

The PRESIDENT: Order! A point of order has been taken. The Clerk will stop the clock.

The Hon. Susan Carter: I understood that your instruction was that members were to speak to the amendment. It sounds like the member is speaking generally about Business Connect.

The Hon. Emily Suvaal: To the point of order: I believe the ruling was that members who had already spoken in the debate were to speak only to the amendment. This is the Hon. Stephen Lawrence's first wonderful contribution to this debate, and I look forward to hearing what else he has to say.

The Hon. Wes Fang: To the point of order: To correct the Hon. Emily Suvaal, it was pointed out that the only person who could move an extension to the debate was somebody who had not already spoken in the debate. The Hon. Stephen Lawrence moved—

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: That is not speaking to the debate though.

The Hon. WES FANG: No, you moved the motion to extend the debate—you have spoken in this debate already. You can only speak to the amendment.

The PRESIDENT: Order! That is an interesting point, but it is utterly irrelevant. The Hon. Emily Suvaal is quite right: The Hon. Stephen Lawrence has not made a substantive contribution to the debate, which is why he can introduce new information.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: In addition to direct on-the-ground support for small businesses—which I just spoke to—the Minns Labor Government is also looking at broader reforms to help businesses thrive. This is something that members opposite should listen to because they have not supported this reform. Consecutive surveys show that the cost of insurance has consistently been the number one priority of small businesses. Members opposite should pay attention to the results of those surveys.

Therefore, a priority for the Minns Labor Government is reforming workers compensation to help bring down premiums for small business. The average cost of psychological injury claims has jumped \$100,000 in five years to almost \$300,000, and businesses are facing a 36 per cent increase to workers compensation premiums. With the Government's proposed changes, these claim numbers are expected to stabilise. But our reforms were blocked by the Opposition and The Greens. Members opposite who bring this motion to engage in a pretence of caring about these matters and supporting small business have been blocking these reforms—

The Hon. Natalie Ward: Point of order: Relevance.

The PRESIDENT: There is eight seconds left. The member has the call.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Without addressing these pressures, like the failing workers compensation system— *[Time expired.]*

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (17:07): I speak to the amendment, which I oppose. I oppose it because the proposition, if accepted and applied broadly, is a flawed way to approach government. Should members believe that in making the decision to discontinue the program that the Minister did not get some advice on this? Perhaps the Minister considered a range of options and weighed the advice, and that is the appropriate role of the public sector. We rely on the public sector to provide advice, and we rely on that advice to make decisions. That is what governments should do. If every decision that the Government makes has to go out to an independent public process for assessment, then we would never get anything done. To accept the logic of the amendment is to accept that logic, and I utterly reject that as a sensible way for government to operate. For that reason, the amendment should be opposed.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (17:08): I am reluctant to speak because I know that members opposite do not want to debate the firefighters bill so they are all jumping to their feet. However, I feel compelled to respond to the Hon. Anthony D'Adam's point and support the Hon. Tania Mihailuk's amendment. It is ironic that a member of the Government who loves a review and cannot wait for an independent person to be paid a million bucks to do a review says that we should not have independent reviewers looking at these things.

Of course we should. The Government should welcome it. It should support the motion, because it has form with many reviews. Allan Fels is available.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (17:09): In reply: I thank all members for their contributions. I recognise the passion, spirit, priority, importance and experience they brought to the debate. The Government's response to the axing of Business Connect rings entirely hollow. While it touts Service NSW Business Bureau, the concierge service being the panacea, it offers no substitute for the specialised one-on-one mentoring that has saved countless enterprises from collapse—and that is Business Connect. With insolvencies climbing to 4,634 in New South Wales last year—the highest rate nationally—small operators need expert lifelines, not digital directories and not government online platforms. They need the one-on-one mentoring of Business Connect.

Daniel Hunter from Business NSW warns this leaves vulnerable firms out in the cold, and he is spot-on. Regional families, migrant entrepreneurs, women in business and new startups will suffer most without this tailored support. We demand that Labor rethinks this betrayal before it is too late. We have heard the priorities tonight—where small business sits with the Labor Government, and it is at the bottom of the list. We call for the Government to reinstate funding now for the jobs, for the families and for New South Wales's future. We support the amendment put forward by the Hon. Tania Mihailuk. I commend this to the House.

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Rachel Merton has moved a motion, to which the Hon. Tania Mihailuk has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes 19
 Noes 14
 Majority..... 5

AYES

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

NOES

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

PAIRS

Barrett	Mookhey
Munro	Kaine

PAIRS

Tudehope Donnelly

Amendment agreed to.

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

Leave granted.

The House divided.

Ayes 19
 Noes 14
 Majority.....5

AYES

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

NOES

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

PAIRS

Barrett	Kaine
Munro	Donnelly
Tudehope	Mookhey

Motion as amended agreed to.

Documents

JAMIE CLEMENTS

Production of Documents: Further Order

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (17:23): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) on Wednesday 6 August 2025, this House ordered the production of documents relating to an incident at New South Wales Parliament House;
 - (b) in response to the order of the House, on Wednesday 27 August 2025 a return was received from The Cabinet Office which included:
 - (i) certifications from the Premier, the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter, the Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, Minister for Sport, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism and the Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Youth stating, "To the best of their knowledge, no documents covered by the terms of the resolution and lawfully required to be provided are held"; and
 - (ii) a certification from the NSW Police Force stating that documents relating to paragraph (a) of the resolution had been "identified and reviewed", but as the documents concern "the administration of justice" they "must be sought by way of a resolution under Standing Order 55".

- (c) the return from the NSW Police Force further stated that the documents held "directly relate to a police investigation which resulted in an application for an apprehended domestic violence order [ADVO] being made to the Local Court of New South Wales by police. A brief of evidence in respect of an alleged criminal offence was also prepared and legal advice was obtained" which "were in connection with prospective, and actual, court proceedings".
- (2) That this House reiterates the view expressed in the resolution of the House of Wednesday 11 May 2022 relating to the operation of Standing Order 55, previously Standing Order 53, and documents concerning the administration of justice, and:
- (a) as ruled by President Ajaka on 24 March 2020, the distinction between the standing orders is that Standing Order 55 applies to matters that fall within the purview of the Crown and the courts whereas Standing Order 52 applies to matters that fall within the purview of the Executive Government, and that, as held in *The Queen v Rogerson* [1992] 174 CLR 268, police investigations are not part of the course of justice as the police do not administer justice;
- (b) notes that previous rulings on the scope of Standing Order 52 have tended to take a broader view of the standing order and power of this House;
- (c) notes that the ADVO referred to in the NSW Police Force return is, at law, an apprehended personal protection matter, not involving arrest, criminal charges or prosecution within the courts; and
- (d) asserts that the documents ordered to be produced on Wednesday 6 August 2025 are not sufficiently concerned with the administration of justice to fall within the scope of Standing Order 55 and were therefore validly ordered under Standing Order 52.
- (3) That this House further notes that the NSW Police Force has previously returned documents in response to orders for papers relating to investigations undertaken by the NSW Police Force, that led to court proceedings, for example, in August 2020 in response to an order for papers regarding an alleged breach of a Public Health Order by the Hon. Don Harwin, MLC, in which case the penalty infringement notice issued was the subject of court proceedings, Mr Harwin was alleged to be in breach of a Public Health Order (Covid), he was fined by the police for this criminal offence, the matter was appealed to the Gosford Local Court and the Director of Public Prosecutions took over the case and the appeal was successful, and in response to the order for papers of the House, all the relevant documents were returned, 69 of them.
- (4) That this House notes its disappointment at the oversight of the NSW Police Force legal advice, which did not address this precedent in its assessment of the definition of "administration of justice", even though it was raised in debate in the House on 6 August 2025.
- (5) 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 in the possession, custody or control of the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism or the NSW Police Force relating to an incident at New South Wales Parliament House:
- (a) all statements, records of interviews or notebook entries relating to Chris Minns and the incident in the office of the member for Campbelltown at New South Wales Parliament House on 25 June 2015;
- (b) all statements, records of interviews or notebook entries relating to Brent Thomas and the incident in the office of the member for Campbelltown at New South Wales Parliament House on 25 June 2015; 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.

I point out to the House that the motion seeks to do three things. Firstly, it seeks to reassert the powers of our House regarding Standing Order 52 requests in a legitimate matter of concern. Secondly, it seeks to express disappointment that, in the rejection of the initial order, the police legal advice did not address the Harwin precedent. This was a critically important precedent. I am the author of both of those Standing Order 52 requests, coincidentally enough, and, to me, it is surprising and it beggars belief that the police legal adviser did not address the very clear Harwin precedent regarding Standing Order 52 as opposed to administration of justice under Standing Order 55.

The Harwin precedent was such that the then Liberal Minister was fined by the police for a criminal offence—a breach of a public health order during the COVID period. He lost office and he appealed it to the Gosford Local Court, where the matter was taken off the police and given to the Director of Public Prosecutions [DPP]. One would think that, at that point, if there was to be a precedent about administration of justice, that would be it. The DPP did not contest the appeal and Don Harwin was cleared and then reinstated to the ministry. Out of that, in the return to the Standing Order 52 request at that time by the NSW Police Force, they gave us all 69 documents. Having done that, and having set a very clear precedent, one would have thought that at least the Harwin precedent would have been addressed in the legal opinion. It is very disappointing, to the point of disrespect to our House, that the legal opinion did not go that far. I urge the police to try to establish consistency in their legal judgement of these matters. The Harwin precedent is there. They produced the 69 documents.

Thirdly, while not agreeing to the legal opinion the police have forwarded to our House, I have here tried to take a practical approach to narrow down the form of return and the terms of the call for papers so that there is no doubt regarding any crossover into the administration of justice, to apply the order essentially to two documents: the material concerning Chris Minns and the material concerning Brent Thomas. It could not be any narrower than this for the purpose of not agreeing with the police opinion but, in a practical way, trying to be

cooperative about this matter and also garner useful information about the nature of this incident in New South Wales Parliament House.

I have done everything I can reasonably to make these points and to respond to the police opinion that was forwarded regarding the administration of justice. In this format, it is the best compromise going forward and the best assertion of the powers of our House. We need to stand by those powers in a matter like this. There is clearly, in the nature of the apprehended domestic violence order the police are talking about, no relevance to the Minns and Thomas material that I am seeking. The police should be able to say that this is a legitimate Standing Order 52 request. It does not cross over into administration of justice, and the documents should be returned.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (17:26): I oppose the motion on behalf of the Government and in my capacity representing the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. In response to the previous order, I am advised that the NSW Police Force advised that the documents should properly be sought by a resolution passed under Standing Order 55 because they concern the administration of justice. The NSW Police Force wrote in its letter of 19 August 2025, in response to the previous motion, "The documents directly relate to a police investigation which resulted in an application for an apprehended domestic violence order [ADVO] being made to the Local Court of New South Wales by police. A brief of evidence in respect of an alleged criminal offence was also prepared and legal advice was obtained. The brief and legal advice were in connection with prospective and actual court proceedings."

The Hon. Mark Latham said in debate on the original motion that the Clerk's advice to him was "If police investigate a matter but it does not lead to arrest and prosecution, it is still part of an executive action, not the administration of justice." That is not, with respect, entirely consistent with the advice of the Crown Solicitor. I refer members to the Crown Solicitor's advice regarding this issue, which was tabled on 10 May 2022, in response to an order for papers naming the NSW Police Force. In that advice, the Crown Solicitor advised, "Documents will concern the administration of justice if they contain material touching on or concerning court proceedings. There must be some connection with actual court proceedings, including prospective proceedings."

The Hon. Mark Latham mentioned in debate on the original motion that the previous Government had returned documents concerning an alleged breach of a public health order by the Hon. Don Harwin. The motion now before the House also refers to the fact that documents were returned by the previous Government under that order. However, as noted in the debate, the charges against the Hon. Don Harwin had been withdrawn and the matter was finalised. The House should consider the advice of the NSW Police Force that the documents concern the administration of justice. The Government takes every measure to ensure that all documents required to be produced following a resolution of this House under Standing Order 52 are produced. However, documents concerning the administration of justice are not required to be produced in response to such orders.

It is beyond the power of this House to order the production of such documents under Standing Order 52. The Government will continue to appropriately advise the House when documents requested under Standing Order 52 should be requested under Standing Order 55. We oppose the motion.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (17:29): The Opposition supports the motion, as we do with motions under Standing Order 52. The role of this place is to ensure transparency and accountability. I welcome the Hon. Mark Latham bringing the motion to the House. He has clearly outlined and addressed the responses from the Government. The Crown Solicitor's Office, as much as I respect it, does not always get the advice right—different opinions can state different things. The fact is that there is a separation of powers for that very reason. This House is entitled to, and should, inquire into these matters. The Hon. Mark Latham has provided a precedent where that has occurred previously. We support the motion.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (17:29): The Greens also support the motion. I understand that the member has done a lot to narrow its scope. Again, on that very principle, the power of the House under Standing Order 52 is quite clear. It is there for the specific purpose of being able to obtain documents. We understand that the protection of the administration of justice is very important, but on this one there has been a splitting of hairs in the wrong direction. In all circumstances such distinctions should side in favour of production and disclosure, and this occasion is no different. We acknowledge that the member has done all he can to narrow the scope of the motion. Again, it is important to remember that the motion relates to a particular individual who has consented to trying to pursue justice for Ms Jones. Therefore, we support the motion.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (17:31): I add briefly to my colleague's comments. The New South Wales police keep raising the issue about matters being more appropriately dealt with under Standing Order 55. They raised the same issue when I sought documents under Standing Order 52 relating to early childhood education and care. The police said that basically any documents relating to investigations that result in a court case cannot be sought by way of a call for papers under Standing Order 52. We went painstakingly through the case law and everything

else to make it clear that that provision applies only if a matter is before the court at the time the call for papers is made or there are investigations or documents that are about to go before the court. It does not include past court cases or investigations that did not go further. The case law makes it clear that that is important. The investigation function of the police is an administrative function granted to it by government through Parliament and it is the Parliament's job to review the exercise of that administrative function. It is an absolutely core principle on which we rely in order to be able to hold this Government to account. The police keep getting it wrong, either deliberately or opportunistically. They need to take a very good look at the case law and stop doing it.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (17:32): In reply: I thank each speaker who contributed to the debate, particularly Ms Abigail Boyd and Ms Sue Higginson, who gave the correct legal interpretation. In particular, Ms Higginson made the point that, as the matter turns, the House should rely on the production of documents and stress the point that the Harwin precedent having been set, it is unacceptable to walk back from it, in legal and practical terms. Based on that precedent, this House has every right to insist on the production of documents under Standing Order 52 on every issue similar to this one. I thank the Minister at the table for addressing the Harwin precedent, because it is the key issue in this debate. The Minister made the point that Harwin's criminal charges were withdrawn by the DPP in the Local Court. She seemed to say that then allowed the police to produce the documents to the House. The lower level personal protection apprehended violence order [AVO] that applied to Jamie Clements was also withdrawn in the court and was replaced by a private undertaking from Mr Clements that he would stay away from Ms Jones.

On any legal interpretation, given this concerns a lower level matter that was withdrawn in the court compared to Harwin's criminal matter that was withdrawn by the DPP, we are on the right side of the argument in stressing the need for a return of the documents. The police have got themselves into a bit of a tangle in that, having set the precedent under Harwin, they cannot expect this House to retreat and never enforce that precedent. The truth is that the House must always be on the side of the production of documents. The AVO relating to Clements was withdrawn and replaced by a private undertaking to Ms Jones. Comparing that to the circumstances in the Harwin matter, we are on the right side of the argument. In any case, the documents I am seeking do not concern the AVO in question, so members would understand that this very reasonable call for papers, with a narrowed scope, should be supported. Most importantly, the documents should be produced by the Government.

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

The House divided.

Ayes 18
 Noes 13
 Majority..... 5

AYES

Boyd	Higginson	Mitchell
Carter	Hurst	Overall
Cohn	Latham	Rath (teller)
Faehrmann	MacDonald	Roberts
Fang (teller)	Maclaren-Jones	Ruddick
Farlow	Merton	Ward

NOES

Buckingham	Lawrence	Nanva (teller)
Buttigieg	Mookhey	Primrose
Graham	Moriarty	Sharpe
Houssos	Murphy (teller)	Suvaal
Jackson		

PAIRS

Barrett	Donnelly
Munro	Kaine
Tudehope	D'Adam

Motion agreed to.

*Bills***SUICIDE PREVENTION BILL 2025****Returned**

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst): I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Assembly returning the bill without amendment.

*Motions***GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK**

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (17:42): I move:

That this House:

- (a) welcomes the announcement of the Great Koala National Park, which, once complete, will protect almost 500,000 hectares of threatened species habitat;
- (b) notes the Great Koala National Park will protect 12,000 koalas, 36,000 greater gliders and over 100 threatened species; and
- (c) further welcomes the opportunity for New South Wales to have a new international tourist destination that will boost the economy and create jobs.

I am really proud to move this motion today because the delivery of the Great Koala National Park has been a longstanding commitment of the Labor Party. It originated while Luke Foley was leader and came out of the great work of the Labor Environment Action Network, LEAN. It is a commitment of a further 60 million hectares to establish the park on top of the 80 million already committed. It has been described by the Nature Conservation Council and others as the biggest step in a generation to protect the iconic species, the koala. The truth is that, if we do not take the step of creating the Great Koala National Park, we may have no koalas left in the wild by as early as 2050. You would have to go to a zoo or a wildlife sanctuary to see koalas because there would just be no more in the wild.

I do not know about other members, but I certainly want my children and their children to be able to see and enjoy koalas in their natural habitat in the wild. The Great Koala National Park will safeguard 176,000 hectares of State forest, linking that with existing reserves to create a 476,000-hectare network of protected habitat. Almost half a million hectares of protected habitat will be created as a result of the Great Koala National Park. I congratulate Minister Sharpe for this incredibly progressive and enormously positive effort by the Labor Government to meet its longstanding commitment to the security of koalas and other species into the future. It will be one the biggest national parks in all of New South Wales. The Great Koala National Park will protect 12,000 koalas, some 36,000 greater gliders and critical habitat for over 100 other threatened species.

We recognise that the park will have an impact on the timber industry. That is why, in this announcement, there was a commitment to deliver an additional \$6 million in local support to workers and communities. The park will have a significant impact. Mills will close. Excess timber from some mills will be distributed to others to keep them open. There will be a viable timber industry, but it will become smaller as a result. Although the park will have a significant impact on workers, they will be assisted. If we do not create this park, there is a real risk that koalas will cease to exist in the wild by 2050. The scheme as announced will also provide top-ups to redundancy pay, relocation assistance, assistance in finding other employment and the redeployment of some workers into National Parks jobs created as a result of the announcement of the park.

The park should enjoy broad support across the House. I think it is a welcome development, and it is good that the size of the park is appropriate to protect koala habitat. I worry, though, that we will not get broad support across the House. I certainly hope we do, but I think some members do not support protecting koalas. Let us see how that goes. It is a fairly simple proposition: If members want to ensure there are wild koalas in their habitats in the future, they have to support this park. It is as simple as that. As I said, it will have an adverse impact on jobs. But I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK (17:47): The motion reads like a glossy brochure: "almost half a million hectares", "12,000 koalas", "over 100 threatened species" and a brand-new tourism magnet that somehow creates jobs while shutting others down. It sounds tidy, but it is not. The Government chose Father's Day to announce the Great Koala National Park, a decision that hits an industry built by multi-generational family businesses, overwhelmingly made up of men with families who have kept regional towns going for decades. On a day that celebrates dads and the families they raise, the Government effectively told thousands of them that their life's work is disposable. That was not just tone-deaf; it was obnoxious and insensitive. The Government is moving a motion when it should be showing some bloody humility in terms of the impact on workers. The headline number, "almost 500,000 hectares", makes it sound like we have just discovered a new continent. In reality, a big chunk of that area was already in reserves.

The Government is actually adding 176,000 hectares of working State forest on top. The quotes of 12,000 koalas and 36,000 greater gliders are modelled estimates, not hard headcounts by ecologists walking every hectare. Good conservation policy should be built on current, transparent data, not unverifiable sightings entered into BioNet by citizen scientists and considered as truth. The moratorium is not theoretical. It is six mills, hundreds of direct jobs, and thousands indirectly impacted, taking into account a long list of contractors, truckies and suppliers who pay mortgages, sponsor kids' sport and give to the local SES.

The Government keeps saying there will be transition support, but transition to what exactly? A short stipend and a pamphlet on tourism opportunities does not cover a mill's power bill or a million dollars worth of plant equipment bought in good faith. People cannot feed their families on a maybe or a someday. We are already hearing that the transition payments are going to be underdone and far less than those in Victoria. I like a good bushwalk as much as anyone and, most of the time, mine are armed. But let us be real: The promises on ecotourism float from \$100-odd million to billion-dollar windfalls over ten years. That is wishful thinking stacked upon assumptions. Meanwhile, the costs to timber towns are immediate and measurable.

Here is the kicker: The demand for timber does not vanish. If we squeeze local supply produced under tough Australian standards, we will import more from places with lower environmental standards. That is not environmental stewardship; it is outsourcing our conscience. Do not come to this House with a motion that inflates the benefits and buries the costs, and time an announcement for Father's Day like it is some kind of gift. It will come as no surprise to anyone that I oppose this motion, and not just on anti-conservation grounds. I do not support a motion that comes with— [*Time expired.*]

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (17:51): We cried genuine tears of relief and joy on Sunday when the announcement was made. I acknowledge and thank the tireless work of the community groups and individuals who first thought of and put together the plan for the Great Koala National Park: the North Coast Environment Council, Clarence Environment Centre, Bellingen Environment Centre, Nambucca Valley Conservation Association, Forest Alliance NSW, Friends of Kalang Headwaters, Friends of Orara East State Forest, Friends of Coffs Coast Koalas, Friends of Dorrigo Koalas, Kalang River Forest Alliance, Coffs Coast Climate Action Group, National Parks Association Coffs branch, NSW Wildlife Council, Dorrigo Environment Watch and Blicks River Guardians. Let us remember the godfather of the Great Koala National Park, Ashley Love. I also acknowledge the incredible, tireless work of all of The Greens who have backed this park in from the outset, including my colleague Ms Cate Faehrmann.

It is really important right now to recognise the serious work of the Dunghutti, Yaegl and Gumbaynggirr Elders and people, whose custodianship has been instrumental. I will not forget the day when Uncle Micklo Jarrett was dragged away from the front line of the forest by the police after this Labor Government had been elected. We all stood in genuine disappointment that the logging continued and intensified and that the Great Koala National Park was delayed. That is the truth of what we have been through over the past two years. We recognise the moratorium over the 176,000 hectares, and we are absolutely relieved that that action has now been announced.

But right now there is no legislation to establish the park. We know that takes time, but there is a serious and significant question of concern. The use of Australian carbon credit units to justify delaying the park is deeply concerning. That is a flawed and low-integrity market process that should not determine the future of critical habitat protection. The protection of koalas and greater gliders cannot be held hostage to a carbon counting system. It is important that the Government comes clean, and I seek to amend the motion. I move:

That the question be amended by inserting after paragraph (c):

- (d) confirms that the Government will commit to the introduction of legislation to establish the Great Koala National Park whatever the outcome of the Australian Government's process that may or may not generate Australian carbon credit units from the public forests of New South Wales.

There is a fundamental component when it comes to a carbon credit scheme, and that is additionality. The Government cannot curate and invent additionality.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (17:54): As leader of the National Party in this place, I indicate that we oppose the motion. I think it is interesting that Government members come into this place, pat themselves on the back and write self-congratulatory messages about all the wonderful things that they are doing, yet completely neglect the impact the Great Koala National Park is having on real people along the North Coast right now. We have talked about it in this Chamber the past two days. We have asked the Minister questions. We have made take-note debate contributions. I reiterate what I said before: This decision will obliterate the North Coast timber industry, directly impacting thousands of workers and creating severe shortages across New South Wales.

We know how devastating it was for people to receive the news on Father's Day, and we know that the Minister has said that the comprehensive transition package for timber workers runs out in 10 weeks. We look at this motion from Labor, which is supposed to be the great party of supporting workers, and there is no mention at

all of the timber industry or the workers who are impacted by this decision. It says, "Pat us on the back; aren't we doing a wonderful job," and completely ignores the devastation that Government members have left in their wake after flying to the North Coast to announce this on the weekend before boarding a plane and flying back to Sydney. They are not living with the real consequences of the decision.

Worse than that, even though there were commitments to protect koalas and continue the timber industry, the Government has put an immediate moratorium in place for the timber industry. Its actions do not match its words. No wonder those communities are furious with the Government. They are lost, and they feel helpless. There is no direction. With the literal stroke of a pen, families who have been in the timber industry for generations, over more than a century, are without an income or hope for the future, trying on Father's Day to tell their children and grandchildren what this will mean for them. I do not think it gets any lower than that.

The worst part is that scientific studies show that koalas are just as abundant in State forests as they are in national parks. It is possible to have it all. It is possible to have a timber industry and protect koalas. Timber is our most sustainable resource, and because of this decision, we will be replacing our timber with timber from overseas that does not have the same environmental standards. It is madness. We do not support the motion, and I will move an amendment. I move:

That the question be amended by inserting at the end:

- (2) That this House notes that the Minister for Environment and Heritage was unable or unwilling to directly answer questions asked during question time on Tuesday 10 September 2025 about details of the proposed new national park including:
 - (a) whether the Great Koala National Park will be gazetted as a protected area and a national park prior to the 2027 election regardless of the outcome of the Federal Government's decision on carbon credits for the improved native forest management methodology;
 - (b) how much funding has been allocated for industry restructure and exit plans; and
 - (c) how long financial assistance for impacted workers will continue.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Point of order: We have question time, and answers are given. The idea that an amendment then asserts commentary in relation to the way in which Ministers have answered questions is out of order. I know this is unusual, and the Deputy President may have to reserve her ruling, but I raise the issue of commentary around the way questions are answered. At the time that these questions were being dealt with, they were in order. We are often reminded that members cannot direct Ministers to answer questions in the way we would wish them to. The point of order is in relation to whether canvassing the way an answer has been given in the House, when no issue was raised at the time, is able to be put on record through an amendment in the way that is now being suggested.

The Hon. Natalie Ward: To the point of order: I appreciate the Leader of the Government's comments, but the question was asked and, in a sense, was not necessarily substantively answered. Yesterday we gave that opportunity, and further information could have been provided today. The Leader of the Government has the opportunity to place on record any response she wishes. Our amendment arises from uncertainty. Having asked those questions, we have not received any answers. We move the amendment on that basis.

Ms Sue Higginson: To the point of order: I do not think that what happens in question time has to stay in question time. The fact is that the amendment goes to a new issue. Just because it refers to question time does not rule it out of order.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: To the point of order: This is a substantive motion, within which members can be critical of the Government and Ministers, the decisions they have made and the responses they have given. Opposition members also raised concerns about the Minister's answer in our take-note debate contributions. It is up to the House to determine whether it accepts this amendment. However, it is not out of order for me to move it.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd): Because time is limited, I propose to reserve my ruling. I am not immediately convinced of the merits of the point of order. Instead of pausing proceedings, I call the Hon. Emma Hurst while I consult with the Clerk.

The Hon. EMMA HURST (17:59): On behalf of the Animal Justice Party, I speak in support of the Great Koala National Park and express my relief that the New South Wales Government has finally taken steps to protect the critical habitat of koalas, greater gliders and the many other animals that call these forests home. I welcome the Government's decision to protect 176,000 hectares of State forest through an immediate logging moratorium. These newly protected areas will connect with existing national parks to create the Great Koala National Park. It is a groundbreaking project that is anticipated to create new jobs, attract tourism to the Mid North Coast, save koalas from the threat of extinction and deliver a legacy for future generations to celebrate.

The park has been a long time coming. Activists have been calling for some form of the Great Koala National Park for a decade. In that time, the forests within the bounds of the park have continued to be logged and precious habitats have been seriously degraded. It is alarming that so far in 2025, more koala habitat in Australia was approved for land clearing than in any other year since the marsupial was first listed as a threatened species. It is an enormous relief to finally have a moratorium on logging—at least within the boundaries of the Great Koala National Park. It is an opportunity for those critical habitats and koala populations to recover and hopefully, eventually, thrive.

The Great Koala National Park is a crucial step forward, but we cannot stop here. This must be part of a much larger journey towards truly prioritising and protecting animals and the environment in New South Wales. We need to move away from native forest logging throughout our State, which is causing biodiversity loss, habitat destruction and the fragmentation of old growth forests. We need to ensure that our laws are strong enough to protect critical animal habitat around the State from all threats, including climate change, development and land clearing.

I conclude by acknowledging all the amazing activists and advocates who have fought for this reform for so long, including First Nations leaders, animal and environmentalist groups, scientists and community groups, each of whom have never stopped speaking up for the koalas, the greater gliders, the New South Wales forests and the greater remarkable ecosystem that is the Australian bush. This has been a long, hard-fought battle and the victory belongs to them. I also give credit where credit is due. I imagine this was a very hard fight internally within Labor, so I congratulate the Minister for the Environment and Minister Saffin, who have fought hard to protect koalas from extinction. This is a truly good change. They should be proud of that work and this outcome. I look forward to seeing the legislation to formally gazette the Great Koala National Park very soon—in fact, it cannot come soon enough.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd): In relation to the point of order taken by the Hon. Penny Sharpe, I am advised that it is correct that members should not criticise a Minister for taking a question on notice during question time. However, stating that a Minister has not answered a question, as presented in the amendment, is not against any standing order. It is possible to make that commentary in a take-note debate. Therefore, it should be possible to do so in the form of an amendment. There is no point of order.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (18:03): I contribute to debate on the motion brought forward by the Hon. Cameron Murphy. I do so on behalf of James Griffin, the shadow Environment Minister in the other place, and thank him for his work on this important matter. We all support koalas. We all love fluffy koalas. They are fantastic. Everyone wants koalas; there is no question about that. If the honourable member is questioning the commitment of members, I can put him at ease. It is pleasing to see the member contribute in this House. There have been many items on which it seemed the Hon. Cameron Murphy disagreed with his Government. That is fair enough. To his credit, he has finally found something he agrees with.

However, the Liberal Party has a few fundamental issues with the motion. The first issue is substance: There is none. The reality is that, as of today, there is limited detail about how the park will come about. Any politician can put out a media release on a Sunday morning, post on social media and put out claims that they will deliver something. It is what is actually delivered that matters. In the Liberal Party's view, the announcement on Sunday lacked substance. There is no detail on legislation. There is no clear explanation of funding. In reality, there is no certainty.

It has taken 2½ years to get to this announcement. I do not doubt the complexity of the matter, but I do question why it will then take another six to 12 months for legislation. Comparing it to my shadow portfolio, I note previous examples of this Government rushing announcements with no detail. The Government announced Rosehill to much fanfare, plus another metro station for the Metro West. The Premier's team was able to post about delivering a new Lego set for the two new stations of the Metro West. What has happened? Nothing. Rosehill was a thought bubble and the second station was quietly shelved. That is this Government's record. The Premier opens his mouth and everyone acts like it is fact and a done deal. Some days in New South Wales it feels like an aspiring cult leader would do well to ask the Premier how everyone just accepts what he says as gospel and moves on.

I do not have expertise in environmental law, but I am advised that the final creation of the proposed park is dependent on the successful registration of a carbon project under the Improved Native Forest Management Method, which is currently under review by the Federal Government. In other words, "We are doing the Great Koala National Park. Terms and conditions apply." The reality is that for many of this Government's policies, terms and conditions apply. Separating the policy from the Government's actual actions, the media release should read, "Great Koala National Park: Minister Sharpe to write to the Federal Government." The former Coalition Government had a proud and strong record on koala conservation, which included establishing the updated

NSW Koala Strategy, which delivered \$190 million over five years to support the overarching goal of doubling New South Wales koala numbers by 2025.

I seek an extension of time.

Leave granted.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: As part of that, the former New South Wales Coalition committed \$107.1 million to fund the protection, restoration and improved management of 47,000 hectares of koala habitat to meet the key conservation targets of 22,000 hectares of koala habitat protected and 25,000 hectares of koala habitat restored by 2026. It included \$19.6 million to fund partnerships across New South Wales, \$23.2 million to remove threats, improve health and rehabilitation and establish a translocation program, and \$43.4 million to fill knowledge gaps and better understand New South Wales koala populations. This motion, like the one in the other place, represents stunt politics by the Government.

The Government is asking us how we will vote on a bill that does not even exist. In the other place, the Government is asking the Opposition to vote on a bill that does not yet exist. That is our concern. Yes, we love koalas. Yes, we want this to happen. However, we need more detail. Despite asking questions, we have not received that detail. The drones on the Labor backbench just nod their heads. Comrade Minns speaks, and they just lap it up. But seriously, if there is something in the bill that they disagree with, what will they do? In the Liberal Party, we do not just nod our heads. We have independent thought. We will take a strong and principled decision, but we will abstain from the vote on this motion because we require more detail. [*Time expired.*]

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (18:07): I state at the outset that it is fantastic that we finally got an announcement about the Great Koala National Park. I express sincere gratitude. I thank the Minister, the Hon. Penny Sharpe, for finally getting there. I also thank my wonderful colleague Ms Sue Higginson for the amazing work that she has done over the past few years—in fact, for much longer—to put the plight of our koalas and forests front and centre in this place. She has done that almost every day since she came to Parliament. I echo my colleague's congratulations and thanks to the incredible communities that have fought for the protection of koalas and forests for so long.

However, Government statements since the announcement imply that this is the measure that will save koalas from extinction in New South Wales. I chaired the inquiry into koala populations and habitat in New South Wales. The finding was very clear that unless governments acted to address all threats, and particularly to protect all of their habitat, koalas would become extinct in New South Wales before 2050. There are current threats to koala habitat across the State. One example is the expansion of Moolarben Coal. That modification will clear 113 hectares of koala habitat.

The report found that the impact on the local koala population will be significant. Another example is the clearing that takes place, with very little regulation, for blueberry farms in Mid North Coast koala habitat hotspots.

Another example are the delays for the south-west Sydney koala population. A number of deaths are occurring along Appin Road. Koalas are being impacted everywhere. Another example is Bowdens Silver mine. A growing scientific opinion is emerging that says the area around Lue, in the Mudgee region, is a koala hotspot. The clearing of koala habitats was given the tick of approval by Labor this year. The Great Koala National Park is fantastic. It is significant that 20 per cent of the State's koalas are being protected by this park. It is an excellent start, but there is so much more to do if we are to ensure that koalas do not become extinct in New South Wales before 2050. I say to the Premier: Stop saying that this will prevent koalas becoming extinct, because much more is needed.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (18:10): I make a short contribution to this debate. It is important to clear up some of the issues that have been put on record. The first thing I say about the creation of the Great Koala National Park is that a lot of misinformation is going around about support for workers. There are moratorium payments and an adjustment for workers who will exit the industry. We have been up-front about that. It is a significant amount of money. There is also a significant amount of money to support harvesting and haulage as well as staff at the Forestry Corporation. It is a comprehensive plan. I know that some members are frustrated because they do not know all the details, but we are working through it.

The second point I make is that Minister Saffin, the Hon. Tara Moriarty and I continue our work to support mayors and local members and to provide them with information. We continue to provide certainty and support for workers. We will continue to take this very seriously. There are times when we have to make decisions about conservation. We have to decide whether we are serious about looking after animals in the wild, like koalas, into the future. I agree with Ms Cate Faehrmann that this will not save all koalas and that we still have issues. This is literally a once-in-a-generation decision. It has been 25 years since we have had such a big conservation decision

to make. Members on this side of the Chamber absolutely support this decision because it will help koalas and greater gliders in the wild. It will also support 100 threatened species.

For members who have not been paying attention, we are in a biodiversity crisis. More animals are being threatened with extinction than ever before. Over 50 per cent of threatened mammals already live within the boundaries of the Great Koala National Park. We had to make hard decisions and work through these matters. I thank those who have been campaigning for this for a long time. I thank the members of Parliament who we will need to work with in order to legislate for this. I call on all members to reflect on it. In particular, I call on members of the Liberal Party to think about their legacy. That legacy includes people like Tom Lewis, who created the National Parks and Wildlife Service; Tim Moore, who was a very good Minister for the Environment; and all of the others who continue to do this work.

[*Business interrupted.*]

Business of the House

CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: According to Standing Order 94, I move:

- (a) that the time for debate on this motion be extended for 10 minutes; and
- (b) that each subsequent speaker may speak for not more than three minutes.

Motion agreed to.

Motions

GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

[*Business resumed.*]

The Hon. WES FANG (18:14): During her contribution, Ms Sue Higginson spoke about tears of joy. There were many tears on Sunday, but not all of them were tears of joy. There were tears from workers who discovered that they had lost their jobs. The way in which this motion has been put forward is interesting. It completely ignores the communities that have been impacted by these decisions. The members who live around the North Shore, eastern suburbs and all of the other wealthy areas of Sydney that have lost koalas now seek to dictate to rural and regional communities—which have been able to care for their koalas and cohabitate in sync with forestry and ecology for more than two centuries—how to live their lives.

Multigenerational families are impacted by this decision. Mills have been handed down from generation to generation. I do not know what they are now facing, and that is part of the problem. They do not know either. We have asked questions in this House about what they will receive, what payments are available, how long payments will go for and what is on offer. None of that detail has been adequately answered. That is a great concern. Let us be honest: This is a self-congratulatory motion that has been brought forward for political reasons.

The motion congratulates the Government and the Labor Party on delivering the Great Koala National Park but completely ignores workers. The motion is trying to wedge this side of the Chamber for a decision made by the other side of the Chamber. Workers on the ground see through what the Government is doing. They just want clarity. They managed to keep forestry and ecology together for decades, but they are now being told by this Sydney-based Government that they cannot do that anymore. They do not know what is coming.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (18:17): I speak in support of the excellent motion moved by the Hon. Cameron Murphy. I celebrate this moment in time and congratulate the Government and the Minister for the Environment on this historic announcement. Conservation outcomes are hard-won and not easy. I have lived in the Bellingen valley and own a property there. I have been a sawmiller. I have friends who are sawmillers. My son was a sawmiller in the Thora valley. The community needs to come along with us for difficult reforms like this. The community is on board with this. The majority of the community knew which way the Government was going. This was a key election promise. The community knew the writing was on the wall for forestry in some parts.

The Government took time to consult with industry, conservationists and the community. It prepared the groundwork for a massive reform that is for the betterment of the entire State and country. It is absolutely fantastic that we have a Labor Government that is following in the footsteps of McKell, Carr, Wran and others to deliver this outcome. It creates a biodiversity legacy that will enrich and better this State for generations to come. It will be fantastic for tourism and water quality. It will be absolutely fantastic for biodiversity. It is also welcomed by Aboriginal communities across the region.

And before we start saying, "Hurry up," and "Not good enough," and "What about this?" and "What about that?" we should take the time to congratulate the Government on this historic reform. It is one of the biggest environmental announcements in the history of this State. We should celebrate that we and future generations will be able to enjoy it and that the futures of the koala, the greater glider and the wompoo fruit dove—one of the most beautiful birds in the world—are all in much better nick now. Some industries will have to make a transition, but the Government is guiding them through that. The community is on board; they recognise the value of their ecology, the value of clean air and the value of that carbon bank. I congratulate the Government and especially the Hon. Penny Sharpe on the work that she has done to deliver this reform.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst): I acknowledge year 12 students from the Drummoyne electorate in the gallery who have joined us today as guests of the member for Drummoyne.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (18:20): I will make a couple of points. It has been a good debate. I want to recognise that this is delivering a significant election commitment, made over a couple of elections, for this Government. The commitment was made. I say that not to congratulate the Government, but to make this point. The communities in these areas have been concerned about these issues. There are divided views on this park. Many, many people welcome this announcement and the creation of this park, but it will fall heavily on some employers and workers in those areas. It is a longstanding commitment. I am really glad to see us get to this point. It means certainty for those communities, and it means a big step forward in the conservation record of New South Wales.

In particular, I recognise my ministerial colleagues who are working carefully through the detail and communicating with those communities. The Leader of the Government and Minister Moriarty have worked as a team to deliver this park. I also recognise, in particular, Minister Saffin, who has worked with those communities for a long period of time. I have seen her in the mills, talking to workers over time about their fears. I am grateful to the Government team for working on it. This is a significant step forward. It really matters to New South Wales and to the way people use the parks and reserves in our State. I recognise some of the comments that have been made, in particular those made by the Hon. Wes Fang. I take his position as absolutely genuine on this issue. He has been very clear about where he stands, publicly, in the Chamber, over time.

I note that the Liberal Party has been less clear on where it stands on this issue. I hope they will not repeat what they did yesterday, which was to duck the vote altogether. There is another vote on the weekend and voters deserve to understand where the Liberal Party stands on this issue. Legislation about the Great Koala National Park will come before the Parliament to be voted on, and voters deserve to know where the Liberal Party stands on it. I hope those opposite do not duck tonight's vote. The Liberal Party needs to tell the public where it stands on this issue and tonight, right now, is a chance to do that.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK (18:23): The Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party will oppose Ms Sue Higginson's amendment, not based on anything she said but because of something that the mover of the original motion, the Hon. Cameron Murphy, said. He spoke about a simplified idea that we are just going to redistribute the timber from some mills to others. What he said really concerns me. It demonstrates to me that he has no understanding of how wood supply agreements work—in particular, the preferential clauses in those wood supply agreements. I do because I have been working in the industry for six years. I know that the Treasurer, the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Agriculture understand them, because probably 12 months ago now I put those concerns about how they must deal with those preferential clauses under their noses. You cannot just simply redistribute timber across the mills. I do not think we should be rushing in and expediting this if, clearly, the mover of the motion does not understand those complexities.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (18:24): In reply: I thank all members who contributed to what I think has been a very genuine and honest debate: Ms Sue Higginson, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, the Hon. Emma Hurst, the Hon. Natalie Ward, Ms Cate Faehrmann, Minister Sharpe, the Hon. Wes Fang, the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham, Minister Graham and the Hon. Mark Banasiak. I do not agree with the comments that the Hon. Mark Banasiak made in relation to Ms Sue Higginson's amendment, but I thank him for this contribution nevertheless. It has been a very good debate. People do have genuine fears about the uncertainties that will be created, over the impacts on timber workers and forest workers. Notwithstanding that, this is an incredibly positive announcement. This is about protecting koalas in the wild so that we have them now and for generations into the future.

This is the single biggest national park announcement that we have seen in decades. It is going to be an enormous park of wonderful value to people in the future. We already have a situation where tens of thousands of international visitors come to Australia just to see the Great Barrier Reef. I think in the future the Great Koala National Park will also become a wonderful attraction that people will want to come from overseas and from around Australia to see. That is going to provide a positive future for people in the region, and it is going to provide jobs as investment comes in.

As the Treasurer said in answer to a question put to him in question time today, one of the significant things about the creation of this park is that it will result in the ability to provide long-term, secure carbon credits. That is certainly the aim, and if it does that then the money will be there to invest in this park as an attraction that people internationally, and from all around Australia, will want to come to see. That will provide the ability to put in the visitor centres and other infrastructure that is going to make this park a great success. For those reasons, I commend the motion to the House. The Government does not support either of the amendments.

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Cameron Murphy has moved a motion, to which Ms Sue Higginson and the Hon. Sarah Mitchell have moved amendments. The question is that the amendment of the Hon. Sarah Mitchell be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes 18
 Noes 13
 Majority..... 5

AYES

Banasiak	Farlow	Merton
Boyd	Higginson	Mihailuk
Carter	Hurst	Mitchell
Cohn	MacDonald	Rath (teller)
Faehrmann	Maclaren-Jones	Roberts
Fang (teller)	Martin	Ward

NOES

Buckingham	Jackson	Nanva (teller)
Buttigieg	Lawrence	Primrose
D'Adam	Mookhey	Sharpe
Graham	Murphy (teller)	Suvaal
Houssos		

PAIRS

Barrett	Kaine
Munro	Moriarty
Tudehope	Donnelly

Amendment of the Hon. Sarah Mitchell agreed to.

The PRESIDENT: The question now is that the amendment of Ms Sue Higginson be agreed to. Is leave granted to ring the bells for one minute?

Leave granted.

The House divided.

Ayes 5
 Noes 19
 Majority..... 14

AYES

Boyd	Faehrmann (teller)	Hurst
Cohn	Higginson (teller)	

NOES

Banasiak	Jackson	Murphy
Buckingham	Lawrence	Nanva (teller)
Buttigieg	Martin	Primrose
D'Adam	Mihailuk	Roberts
Fang (teller)	Mitchell	Sharpe
Graham	Mookhey	Suvaal

NOES

Houssos

Amendment of Ms Sue Higginson negatived.

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

Leave granted.

The House divided.

Ayes 18
 Noes 6
 Majority..... 12

AYES

Boyd
 Buckingham
 Buttigieg
 Cohn
 D'Adam
 Faehrmann

Graham
 Higginson
 Houssos
 Hurst
 Jackson
 Lawrence

Mookhey
 Murphy (teller)
 Nanva (teller)
 Primrose
 Sharpe
 Suvaal

NOES

Banasiak
 Fang (teller)

Martin
 Mihailuk

Mitchell (teller)
 Roberts

Motion as amended agreed to.

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

*Bills***WORKERS COMPENSATION AMENDMENT (FIREFIGHTERS' DISEASES) BILL 2025****Second Reading Debate**

Debate resumed from 6 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) (20:01): On behalf the Government, I speak in opposition to the Workers Compensation Amendment (Firefighters' Diseases) Bill 2025 moved by the Hon. Damien Tudehope. I acknowledge the honourable member for introducing this bill. He has spoken to it passionately in this House on previous occasions. Expanding the list of firefighter cancers that have the benefit of a presumption to workers compensation is an important issue, and one that the Government has publicly committed to explore.

The Government appreciates that a cancer diagnosis can be devastating for a worker, their family, their colleagues and their employer. The workers compensation legislation recognises the importance of being able to easily and quickly access compensation entitlements through the presumptive cancer provisions. I make it clear at the outset that Government members express their unwavering support for firefighters in New South Wales. They perform work every day that is often dangerous and they deserve our admiration and thanks for keeping our communities safe. I know I speak on behalf of all members when I say that, and it is certainly not the first time that that sentiment has been reflected in this House.

In the 2024-25 financial year, our State's fire services responded to more than 28,000 fires and explosions. The people of New South Wales are protected by three of the world's great fire services. This Government will always stand with emergency service workers, which is why I can confirm that the Government is preparing its own bill to expand presumptive cancer coverage. We will talk to the workforce about it as we do so. I can also confirm that I have spoken to the secretary of the Fire Brigade Employees Union this evening on the matter. I thank the union for the professionalism with which it conducts its affairs. The Government will introduce its bill in the near future.

However, this Government has also made commitments to fix the dire position of the workers compensation scheme that it inherited when it came to office. The Treasurer—I am about to steal some of his best material here, although he is more than capable of expanding on the topic—has previously informed the House that the 2024 budget recorded a \$2.4 billion writedown for the Treasury Managed Fund alone. The scheme deficit is at nearly \$6 billion. The 2024 budget result was impacted by a \$3.4 billion increase in insurance expenses over five years, of which \$2.6 billion relates to the deteriorating performance of the scheme.

Psychological injury claims are the major component of claims volumes and the main driver of increased payments. In 2024 the average psychological injury claim cost is expected to be about \$255,000, compared to the average physical injury claim at \$46,000. The scheme as it currently stands is at risk of failing. The need for reform is urgent to ensure that support is there for workers and their families when they are injured or they contract a disease related to their work. Reform is also needed to provide a sustainable scheme now and into the future for employers of New South Wales, both private and public. The bill brought forward by the honourable member would add \$211 million in liabilities over the next four years.

The New South Wales Government is committed to modernising the workers compensation system to ensure it is sustainable for future generations to rely on. The current scheme has not kept pace with the needs of workers or employers. The legislation is dated and was not designed for the changing nature of work or workplace injuries. It was originally designed to compensate workers for physical injuries rather than psychological injuries. That has led to increased pressures on private sector employers' workers compensation premiums and government workers compensation liabilities.

It is important to acknowledge the risks faced by firefighters in the course of their service to the community. Firefighters deserve assurance that they will be supported to do their jobs and supported if they get sick or injured because of their work. They deserve assurance that a workers compensation scheme will exist if they are diagnosed with a cancer connected with their employment. They deserve a government that has supported presumptive cancer coverage for firefighters and a sustainable workers compensation scheme.

That is why, in opposition, Labor introduced a bill in 2018 listing a number of firefighter cancers that have the benefit of a presumption to workers compensation. The then Government opposed that bill and hurriedly introduced its own bill, which we also supported. Indeed, the member leading for the Government in opposing the Opposition's bill at the time said:

The Government will address this matter properly and carefully so there are no mistakes or problems, because that is what the people of New South Wales deserve and it is certainly what the firefighters deserve.

That member was Alister Henskens. I make the point that the Opposition could have provided the expanded coverage it now proposes at that time or any time while the Coalition was in government.

This Government is trying, step by step, to fix the system for all workers, including firefighters. That is why we have recently announced that we will ensure that lump-sum compensation payments for permanent impairment for eligible New South Wales Rural Fire Service volunteers are paid at the same level as those paid to non-emergency service workers. That change recognises the risk that Rural Fire Service volunteer firefighters take to protect their communities from bushfires and ensures that they are eligible for appropriate compensation if they are seriously injured. The maximum lump sum a volunteer firefighter can receive for permanent impairment under the current legislation is \$270,000. Under the measures we are putting in place that lump sum will be topped up to align with the scheme for non-emergency service workers.

We are also working on prevention. The New South Wales Government and Fire and Rescue NSW are committed to improving protection for firefighters against exposure to carcinogens. Carcinogen management remains a strategic priority for Fire and Rescue NSW. It is focused on enhancing measures in place to prevent exposure risk by starting with firefighter decontamination procedures on the incident ground. The program aims to minimise cross-contamination and remove carcinogenic compounds to create safer working and living spaces for people across Fire and Rescue NSW environments, buildings and appliances.

The program is part of a broader piece of work that continues to evolve, and Fire and Rescue NSW is committed to meeting the ongoing health and safety needs of its employees.

Firstly, Fire and Rescue NSW has delivered a \$30 million rollout of new structural protective clothing and has introduced a laundering service and app to improve cleaning processes for firefighting uniforms. Secondly, ongoing station upgrades are providing clean work separation areas. Thirdly, Fire and Rescue NSW has also raised the level of awareness about exposure risks, educating firefighters on how to decontaminate after incidents. Fourthly, Fire and Rescue NSW undertakes regular inspections and has a range of systems and processes in place to monitor the condition of stations. That involves annual workplace inspections and the engagement of health and safety representatives to assist and provide feedback. Finally, it issues personal protective clothing.

When responding to incidents, firefighters are required to wear personal protective clothing, including a structural firefighting coat and trousers that comply with Australian standards. In addition, protective equipment such as breathing apparatus, helmets, gloves, boots and hoods are used when attending fires. More than 15,800 sets of personal protective clothing have been rolled out to operational firefighters, and Fire and Rescue NSW purchases approximately 1,000 additional sets per annum to ensure supply. Those new uniforms are first grade. They are heavy-duty, provide heat protection, are relatively light and allow for enhanced manoeuvrability and coverage. They were supplied in a wide range of male and female sizes, including customisation for firefighters outside of standard sizes, so that all firefighters have optimum fitting and high-quality personal protective clothing.

They also feature a specialised moisture barrier, which helps prevent steam burns and keeps firefighters dry while on the job. As with any equipment, personal protective clothing must be replaced at the end of its useful life. Fire and Rescue NSW continually assesses the personal protective clothing used by its firefighters. Fire and Rescue NSW undertook an open performance-based procurement process to identify preferred suppliers for personal protective clothing, duty wear and laundry services. The process included live field testing of personal protective clothing by current firefighters, independent testing, garment specialist consultation, independent probity advice and consultation with Standards Australia and the Fire Brigade Employees Union.

The laundry decontaminates, cleans and inspects personal protective clothing to ensure appropriate condition before it is returned to service. With the introduction of this new personal protective clothing management system, Fire and Rescue NSW is able to maintain the garments better, repair them earlier and rotate them to share the load across the fleet of uniforms. Early indications are that Fire and Rescue NSW will be able to extend the life of the garments by at least two years. As a result, there has been a considerable increase in the number of garments being laundered at the facility. In 2025 the facility decontaminated and washed garments on over 100,000 occasions. That is more than double the frequency of garment decontamination and laundering that occurred in 2020, for example.

Since 2019-20 the Rural Fire Service has also rolled out a range of new personal protective equipment, including enhanced respiratory protection, new helmets for both structural and bushfire fighting, and a second set of personal protective equipment for each member. Comprehensive training in decontamination practices is provided to minimise health risks from hazardous materials and particulate contamination during and after firefighting operations. The Rural Fire Service is routinely installing laundry facilities in new station builds and is continuing to explore a range of sustainable and practical cleaning options.

One of the more perturbing aspects of the debate generated by the Hon. Damien Tudehope is that it reveals that his colleagues do not seem to understand what a presumption creates. It is important to emphasise that a presumption does not create a new entitlement to workers compensation. Firefighters are currently able to make a claim for workers compensation if they contract cancer. Liability is assessed under the usual processes. The workers compensation scheme currently responds to those claims. That will continue without this bill. A legislative presumption removes the usual evidentiary requirement imposed on a worker. The cancer is presumed to be work related for eligible firefighters.

If an employer wishes to dispute liability, the employer has to prove the cancer is not work related. Notwithstanding that fact, the shadow Minister for Emergency Services told Triple M Central Coast that the bill "adds a bunch of cancers to the legislation that firefighters can claim". It is concerning that a shadow Minister is suggesting to firefighters that they cannot currently claim compensation if diagnosed with cancer in connection with their employment. That statement is incorrect. It is true that other States and Territories have made changes to their presumptive cancer legislation in recent years. Each jurisdiction has amended its presumptive cancer legislation consistent with its own particular circumstances. In New South Wales, we have to consider the sustainability of the workers compensation scheme. It is important that we make arrangements that are appropriate to the New South Wales context and the pressures facing our scheme. Further expenses cannot be added to a scheme without a plan to make that scheme sustainable.

The Government has presented to the Parliament its ideas for the reform of that scheme. The Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 is currently before the Public Accountability and Works Committee for inquiry and report. The critical reforms will put the workers compensation scheme on a more sustainable footing for this State's workers and employers, now and into the future. The Government has also introduced the Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment (Reform and Modernisation) Bill 2025 because of the need to urgently progress reforms to support the financial sustainability of workers compensation in New South Wales and to remove the ongoing uncertainty for workers and businesses on the future of workers compensation arrangements.

The new bill incorporates amendments made to the first bill that were passed by the Legislative Assembly, including new transitional arrangements to allow workers with existing claims to obtain lump-sum compensation

under current whole person impairment thresholds on a time-limited basis to 30 June 2026; legislating a review of the performance and outcomes of the reforms, to take place as soon as practicable after two years from the bill's assent; prescribing the composition of the expert panel to conduct the review; legislating a requirement to consult with Unions NSW and Business NSW on the terms of reference of the review; removing the first bill's provision that lump-sum compensation is not payable for permanent impairment from HIV/AIDS if the impairment resulted from voluntary sexual activity or illicit drug activity; and providing that psychological injuries caused by repeated and serious contraventions of work health and safety laws is a factor in determining whether a claim is compensable.

In addition, the new bill provides that the existing "reasonably necessary" test continues to apply to access medical and related healthcare services under the Dust Diseases Scheme and amends the underinsurance offence provided in the first bill so that it applies to all employers, not just large employers. The bill also incorporates suggestions made by the Bar Association in its submission to the Public Accountability and Works Committee inquiry. If Opposition members want to be credible on reforming the workers compensation system, they could help bring the Government's bill to a vote and vote in favour of the bill. Without that, what is their current plan to make the workers compensation scheme sustainable? Analysis by icare shows workers compensation amendments co-authored by the Liberal Party and the Hon. Mark Latham would cut off almost all victims of—

The Hon. Chris Rath: Point of order: Although rather wide latitude is given to contributions to second reading debates, the Hon. John Graham seems to be debating the Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 instead of the bill currently before the House. I ask you to draw him back to the Workers Compensation Amendment (Firefighters' Diseases) Bill 2025.

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: To the point of order—

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): The Clerk will stop the clock.

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: The Minister's contribution is well within the long title of the bill because it is a bill to amend the Workers Compensation Act 1987 and its related purposes. Clearly, the financial sustainability of the scheme and suggestions that may or may not improve it are well and truly within the remit of the second reading debate.

Ms Abigail Boyd: To the point of order: I have listened for a long time and allowed the Minister to continue without taking a point of order. There is broad latitude given but, in relation to the Treasurer's contribution to the point of order, that is applicable when we are debating amendments during the Committee stage. Members cannot say that a bill is amending something and, therefore, they are allowed to talk about a completely different bill amending something, repeat all of their lies and continue to punch down on workers in this State. The member needs to be brought back to the actual leave of the bill.

The Hon. Chris Rath: Further to the point of order: The bill that the Minister is referring to has been referred to the Public Accountability and Works Committee, and this House should not canvass a decision that is currently before that committee. The Minister should come back to the leave of the bill and the amendments that we are actually debating, rather than traversing ground about a completely separate bill.

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: Further to the point of order: In response to the contribution of the Opposition Whip, he knows full well that just because a committee is canvassing a matter does not preclude the House from being able to canvass similar subject matter in this debate, particularly given it is a bill that seeks to amend the same Act. That is the first point. The second point is, as Ms Abigail Boyd knows, given that this is a second reading debate, the rule around the long title applies to the second reading debate as much as it does to the Committee stage. I know that because I listen to Ms Abigail Boyd's contributions on most matters. I make the simple observation that applying that rule to second reading debates will be an interesting development going forward when it comes to restricting the subject matter of debates in this House. So I make the same point: This is a second reading debate. Given that this is a bill to amend the State's insurance schemes, it is well within the rights of a member to canvass matters to do with the State's insurance schemes, including other proposals to reform them.

The Hon. Wes Fang: Point of order—

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): I will deal with the point of order taken by the Hon. Chris Rath before hearing from the Hon. Wes Fang. The Clerk will read the long title of the bill.

The CLERK: The long title of the bill reads:

An Act to amend the Workers Compensation Act 1987 to specify further kinds of cancer as diseases to which presumptive rights to compensation for firefighters apply and to specify the corresponding qualifying service periods; to reduce the qualifying service period for primary site oesophageal cancer; and for related purposes.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): Members will bear in mind that wide but not universal latitude is given regarding the long title of the bill in second reading debates. I will now hear the point of order of the Hon. Wes Fang.

The Hon. Wes Fang: In the Minister's contribution, he raised the matter of the Opposition and the Hon. Mark Latham voting in support of the other piece of legislation that was referred to. That bill was referred to a committee by this House, so the Minister is therefore cavilling with a decision of this House. I ask you to draw the Minister to the fact that he is now cavilling with a decision of the House.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: To the point of order: For the information of the House and to assist your ruling, Mr Assistant President, I have not commented on voting together. I used the term "co-authored" in relation to the amendments.

The Hon. Mark Latham: To the point of order: I welcome attacks on me because it is the best advertising I get and my good friend the Hon. John Graham is not too bad at it. On a serious point, we are governed by the standing orders, not by someone thinking that something is not a nice thing to say or some other thing that someone has reflected on. We should live by the standing orders, which are a collective decision of this Chamber. Everything else is just a matter of interpretation. I know that you, Mr Assistant President, as a very experienced parliamentarian and Presiding Officer in particular, will administer the standing orders as they are written, and that is all we need to do. Otherwise, this should be a Chamber of free speech and expression. That is why we are here—not to be worried about what people say. Let us get stuck in.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): Bearing in mind my earlier ruling, the Minister will continue.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Mr Assistant President, I thank you for your ruling and I am open to further guidance on this. I have a couple of points to make, but I then hope to bring my remarks to a close. The 19-page report was prepared at the request of the shadow Treasurer, the Hon. Damien Tudehope. NSW Treasury provided it to him on 20 June 2025. The analysis of the amendments was prepared by icare's chief actuary and underwent a technical review and internal peer review. It shows—again, I am stealing some of the Treasurer's best lines; he has made some of these concerns public—that sexual harassment, racial harassment and bullying would be effectively extinguished from the schemes. The plan puts the burden on victims to prove that their perpetrator intended to harm them. The report states:

The need to prove intent of the perpetrator to harm would effectively remove all types of bullying and harassment from the schemes.

Second, businesses will pay higher premiums. By opposing the proposed threshold for access to lifetime income support, the amendments will leave the private sector's workers compensation scheme \$800 million worse off by 2029 compared to the Government's plan, forcing 340,000 New South Wales businesses to pay the highest premiums in Australia. Third, nurses, childcare protection workers and other workers repeatedly exposed to trauma may lose protection. Workers who are repeatedly exposed to the trauma of others will no longer be eligible for compensation. Icare found:

Social workers and Welfare support workers identified as key high risk industries. These industries represented 6 per cent of the total psychological claims.

Fourth, workers regularly exposed to excessive work demands will be barred from making a claim. Workers who have been subjected to demands beyond the requirements expected of their roles which are repeated or persistent, and not reasonable in all circumstances, will be cut off from the system entirely. Whilst those opposite are continuing to block reform, the workers compensation system remains under intense pressure.

I seek an extension of time.

Leave not granted.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (20:27): On behalf of The Greens, I indicate our support for the Workers Compensation Amendment (Firefighters' Diseases) Bill 2025, a piece of legislation that could have and should have been introduced by the Government long before now. We are pleased that the Opposition has demonstrated just how simple it is to introduce this long-awaited and long-promised bill—all three pages of it. It illustrates how the Government's tardiness on this can only be explained by an unwillingness to look after a critical set of injured workers and not by any legislative complexity.

From the Government's response just now, it appears that its complete disregard for injured workers, its willingness to punch down on the most vulnerable people in our State, its complete lack of intelligence and creativity in coming up with any other way that does not cruelly cut off support for the most severely injured workers to ensure the scheme is sustainable whilst still fulfilling the scheme's core purpose of providing injured

workers the compensation they deserve—all of that attitude—extend beyond its disgraceful workers compensation reform bills and apply equally, apparently, to the reform before us.

A firefighter's risk of cancer is three to five times greater than the general population. It is for that reason that presumptive cancer legislation was passed in New South Wales in 2018 to provide eligible firefighters with access to workers compensation for 12 specified primary and work-related cancers, meaning that when a qualified firefighter develops one of 12 specified primary cancers and meets service criteria, the cancer is automatically presumed to be job-related, eliminating the need to demonstrate causation. Without such laws recognising a presumption in favour of claimants that the disease injury is work-related, individual claimants must gather complex and precise medical and exposure evidence.

In 2022 the International Agency for Research on Cancer published a report classifying firefighting as a cancer-causing profession, and it identified firefighting cancer exposure beyond the 12 specified primary cancers currently covered in New South Wales legislation and the other equivalent interstate legislation. That research has supported recent amendments to workers compensation legislation in the Northern Territory, Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania and the Commonwealth to increase the numbers of work-related cancers covered to include primary site lung cancer, primary site skin cancer, primary site cervical cancer, primary site ovarian cancer, primary site penile cancer, primary site pancreatic cancer, primary site thyroid cancer and malignant mesothelioma.

Sadly, firefighters in New South Wales are not yet covered by the same protections. Adding those additional cancers to our legislation will deliver the protection to firefighters that they deserve, in line with the rest of the country. Despite broad support across the New South Wales community and in this Parliament, such that these laws could pass with the Government's support, the Minns Labor Government has instead dragged its feet in providing New South Wales firefighters with additional coverage for work-related cancers to ensure that they have the same protection as other firefighters across the country who are working in equally dangerous conditions.

This bill seeks to expand the range of cancers that are covered under presumptive protections. They would include these missing cancer types, for which there is already compelling scientific evidence and moral weight in favour of their inclusion. If these cancer types are included in the law, firefighters will not have to fight to simply prove that firefighting is the cause of their cancer. It will mean that firefighters can focus on recovery rather than legal battles, and it will make it easier to access compensation and care so that they do not have to bear the financial burden when illnesses stem directly from their service. That is especially important because treatment costs can be astronomical. Some claims average over \$170,000, and many exceed \$400,000.

The presumption is so important because of the unconscionable conduct of insurers like Employers Mutual Ltd [EML], acting on behalf of government agencies like Fire and Rescue NSW, which make offensive and cruel arguments in an attempt to avoid making payments to support workers injured in the line of duty. I will talk through just one example from earlier this year of the truly perverse arguments that are routinely litigated against workers. It is the case of a firefighter who had contracted prostate cancer after seven years of service as a firefighter. Despite prostate cancer already being on the presumptive list, their claim was vigorously challenged by the insurer because they had not met the requisite 15 years of service. Following arbitration, it was determined that the firefighter's employment was a substantial contributing factor to the development of his injury.

Despite that finding, the insurer proceeded to appeal. EML, on behalf of Fire and Rescue NSW, argued that the firefighter's evidence regarding their exposure should not have been accepted as evidence. In its argument, EML summarised five aspects of the firefighter's statement to which it objected, and gave brief submissions in response. It reads:

- i. '... I have been exposed to many toxic substances.' -- The [respondent] provided no details as to what these toxic substances were or the length of the exposure.
- ii. 'Bushfire smoke' ... 'Most toxins and chemicals released during a bushfire penetrate the P2 masks.' The Respondent Worker provided no details as to his own exposure to bushfire smoke or how long he was using the P2 masks.
- iii. The vague statement that he was 'exposed to start up diesel particulate' – again without providing details as to when and for what length he was exposed.
- iv. The exposure to carcinogenic in the contaminated turnout clothing – no details as to what stations and when he was exposed to the decontamination.
- v. The statement regarding the chemicals which he was exposed to during salvaging – and the words 'routinely.' The Respondent Worker's statement provided no times or dates or periods of exposure to any of the chemicals, nor the types of chemicals the Respondent Worker was exposed to.

EML argued that there was "no basis" for the conclusion of the judicial member overseeing the initial stages of the case and that the respondent's assertions were "supported by other evidence". It submitted that there was "no other evidence of exposure to carcinogens" and reiterated its argument that, therefore, the firefighter's statement was "imprecise and unsatisfactory". EML continued:

The Member failed to consider the extent, (both in terms of quantification and type) of the Respondent Worker's actual exposure to potential toxins, of which the Respondent Worker provided no actual evidence of any ... degree of exposure. The Member relied simply upon the opinion of Dr Korbelt who noted that the employment of 7 years of service was a substantial contributing factor and accepted that conclusion without evidence as to what exposure had occurred over the 7 years.

EML described the firefighter's evidence as a "summary of his employment", "nothing more than a basic outline" and a "vague statement". The judicial member determining the appeal rejected most of the grounds of the appeal, finding:

The appellant's grounds of appeal are repetitious and confusing. Several are unmeritorious.

With respect to the complaint that the respondent's evidence was too vague and should not have been accepted, the Deputy President said:

It is true that there is a lack of precision as to the frequency of the respondent's exposure to the chemicals alleged to be present at bushfires, in vehicles, and when conducting salvage and overhaul operations after building fires. However, the fact that the evidence is deficient does not render it illogical or of no probative value. The respondent may have had genuine difficulties in recalling precisely when he was exposed to the various substances enumerated in his statement. As the Member found, there were also the firefighter attendance statistics counts which recorded the respondent's attendance at fires and other emergencies in his role as a firefighter.

The deficiencies in the respondent's evidence did not prevent the appellant calling evidence to rebut it. The nature of the work of a firefighter and his exposure to the relevant carcinogens at the various stations at which it employed the respondent was surely a matter the appellant was able to address through documentary, statement, or expert opinion evidence.

As for the arguments that the firefighter could not give evidence as to the nature of toxins to which he had been exposed, the Deputy President said:

The second limb of the appellant's objection to the evidence at the arbitration hearing is that the respondent did not possess the expertise to identify the chemicals to which he was exposed both at the stations and at fires. Generally, the chemical components of smoke, fumes, and material at bushfires, during and after building fires, and in the operation of fire vehicles would be a matter for an expert. However, the respondent is a senior firefighter and might be expected to have a rudimentary knowledge of the matters on which he gave evidence.

There cannot be any suggestion of unfairness in the admission of this evidence. The appellant had ample opportunity to adduce documentary, lay, or expert evidence addressing the issues raised in the respondent's statement.

I have gone on at some length about this case because it perfectly encapsulates the need for presumptive legislation and shows how, even with a presumptive framework in place, workers are still put through the wringer when seeking compensation for the injuries they have incurred through work. The appeal in this case relied heavily on criticism of the firefighter's evidence, claiming it to be unreliable, insufficiently expert and imprecise as to determining the exact, specific trigger of the cancer. This threshold of precision that gets applied by insurers and government agencies would be impossible for just about any career or volunteer firefighter to demonstrate—requiring them to identify specific instances over their service, identify what carcinogens they were exposed to, and for how long, on any given day.

The quality of evidence that could reasonably be expected for a disease of this type that emerges, by its very nature, over a long period of time is going to be imprecise at times and in more of a narrative form, but that does not mean it is not true. But insurers and government agencies that do not want to foot the bill will poke every hole they are able to. That is why presumptive laws like this are so necessary. Without them, firefighters would be—and are, for cancers not currently on the list—forced to give exhaustive levels of detail and be cross-examined about those details. Presumptive laws remove the need for proof of causation in cases where there will inherently be multiple causal factors—including ethnicity, genetics, diet and occupational exposure—where it is impossible to identify a single cause.

The Greens strongly and enthusiastically support this bill. I thank the Opposition for bringing it to the House, but it should not have had to. Frankly, it is an embarrassment that it has got to this stage. Through the Government's floundering, it has failed to deliver a very simple piece of legislation that has been enacted across nearly the entirety of the country. The parliamentary inquiry into Labor's other grotesque failures on workers compensation entitlements elicited evidence from the Government as to how much these laws would cost. It is probably one of the many reasons the Government is so desperate to avoid the scrutiny that comes with our inquiry. We received the following evidence:

There are a number of qualifying factors that impact these costings. The Treasury Managed Fund covers the paid firefighters as volunteers are largely covered under a separate scheme.

Prospectively for the paid firefighters, this is estimated to have a cost of \$12.2m p.a. and estimated total cost in the 5 years to FY28/29 of \$55.3m.

If retrospectivity to 2018 and volunteer firefighters are also to be included, the estimated total costs in the 5 years to FY28/29 is \$211 million.

That is over a five-year period. We are talking about \$43 million to provide comfort, security and certainty to firefighters who have put their lives on the line for this State. That is the amount of money that we are talking about to avoid the cost that would be involved in taking them to court and putting them through more harm and stress. Our inquiry into the workers compensation bill is trying to isolate other factors and costs that the Government can cut. We must ensure that we have a sustainable system that puts the burden where it is needed and that, ultimately, protects workers who need to be protected.

I know what this Government is like. I am certain that these figures are modelled on the very worst-case scenario that will likely never happen. I ask members to look at how shockingly low these figures are. The most the Government could come up with in a worst-case scenario is \$20 million dollars a year, at a stretch, to recognise the fact that firefighters face an increased risk of cancer as a result of their work. We have a moral duty to support them if they do. The policy of expanding presumptive cancer laws was a commitment the Government made prior to the election. It has been promising to do it for years, but there has been no progress. I can only assume it was because that paltry sum made them baulk. It is not good enough. I wish this was a Government bill. I wish that Labor was a better party for New South Wales while in government. I really do.

Members must force the Government's hand when we are faced with a government that is so unwilling to put its hand into its pocket and do the right thing for the working people of this State. I thank the Opposition for doing that. If the Opposition had not done it, then I reckon I was not far off from doing it myself. The Government has the opportunity to be gracious and to recognise this issue should be above politics. It is simply the right thing to do. The Government can vote it through and be proud of eventually doing the right thing—the thing it said it would do before it got the keys to government. I finish this speech by honestly and sincerely thanking the Fire Brigade Employees Union for its powerful and ongoing advocacy on behalf of its members. Because of the FBEU's relentless pressure, New South Wales is one step closer to being a fairer jurisdiction for the brave people who risk their lives and wellbeing in defence of us all. The Greens support the bill.

Dr AMANDA COHN (20:43): As The Greens spokesperson for emergency services, I add my support for the Workers Compensation Amendment (Firefighters' Diseases) Bill 2025 to the excellent contribution of my colleague Ms Abigail Boyd. This change is overdue. Firefighters have been calling for improved access to workers compensation for a long time. Paid career firefighters and volunteers give their time and service to supporting and protecting our communities. They work in the service of the communities we represent and face risks to their health as a result. The very least we can do is care for them.

Presumptive cancer laws have been fought for by the Fire Brigade Employees Union, the Rural Fire Service Association, the Volunteer Fire Fighters Association, the Council of Australian Volunteer Fire Associations and others. The laws are critical to ensuring that firefighters receive appropriate compensation for the broad range of cancers that firefighting increases their risk of. The Volunteer Firefighters Association, in particular, has pointed out the need to support volunteers like Bruce Barnes in Albury, where I live, who is a 40-year service volunteer and long-time captain at the Lavington brigade. He has a cancer diagnosis and is facing lower compensation as a volunteer than what he would receive as a paid firefighter.

Volunteers have already given their unpaid service to communities. It is critical that we support both career firefighters and volunteer firefighters. Presumptive cancer legislation is not only the right thing to do ideologically to support injured workers, but it is also important in the context of significant issues around actually recruiting and retaining firefighters at Fire and Rescue NSW, including retained firefighters, and also in the face of declining volunteerism, when we are trying to encourage people to be volunteers.

The Hon. Wes Fang: Point of order: Dr Amanda Cohn is making a serious and substantial contribution to debate on this bill. The noise in the Chamber is quite dismissive of that contribution from Dr Amanda Cohn. I ask that members either pay attention to what she is saying, which is quite important, or leave the Chamber and have their conversations outside.

Ms Abigail Boyd: To the point of order: With apologies, I feel I need to explain. There has been some hubbub on this side of the Chamber. There is a strong smell of cigarette smoke, perversely. That is the reason for the disruption.

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: To the point of order: If you do not mind, Mr Assistant President, perhaps you could suspend the clock, because I do not want to disturb the member's speaking time. It might be wise to check the smell, given that this is an old building and it is coming through strongly. I do not know whether we could have that done and just be assured that we are fine to continue.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): I ask one of the attendants to please check the smell. I can also smell it. As to the point of order, members will allow Dr Amanda Cohn to be heard in silence. If they are having loud conversations, they can go outside—possibly with the cigarette smoke. The member will proceed.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Thank you. I appreciate your patience in stopping the clock and also in investigating that smell. On a personal note, after my own service as a volunteer in the 2019-20 bushfires, the smell of any smoke smells like bushfires to me. So that smell is actually concerning. I was talking about the decline in volunteerism occurring across New South Wales and Australia, and that is part of the challenge in recruiting the workforce we need, both for paid firefighters, including retained firefighters, and volunteers. Giving them the security and the confidence to know that, if they come to harm in the line of duty, they will actually be cared for by the State they serve is the least we can do to support those people, and it will also help us to bring in people to fill those really critical roles, to support communities in the future.

My excellent colleague Ms Abigail Boyd outlined through an example exactly how challenging it is, under the current framework, to prove causation and exactly why we need presumptive laws, not just a workers compensation scheme that requires someone to prove causation. Having supported injured workers through making compensation claims in my own work as a GP, I know how hard it is to prove causation in an individual case, particularly for a chronic condition, where that exposure is happening every day, where there are carcinogens in the materials that might be alight, and where firefighters might be exposed to serious known carcinogens like asbestos. There are toxins also in the firefighting equipment, such as foams. That exposure is absolutely chronic.

It is impossible to point to one single day or one single fire or one single exposure that might have caused cancer that occurs over decades.

It is totally inappropriate to put that burden on people who are already dealing with cancer, who need time to actually recover, to attend their medical treatments and to spend time with their families. They should not have to deal with being dragged through an overly complicated legal system, facing insurers and government agencies to fight for what they are owed.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. The member is making an important contribution and I would like to hear it.

Dr AMANDA COHN: I want to respond to some of the comments made by the Minister on behalf of the Government about the work that it is doing to prevent firefighters from being exposed to carcinogens. That work is really important and I strongly support it. But that preventive work does not let the Government off the hook from supporting people who have already come to harm at work. Prevention will make the difference for the next generation of firefighters, and it is critical, but some people have already come to harm at work. Firefighters have already been diagnosed with cancer as a result of toxics exposure in the workplace, and they deserve support.

I am delighted that the Leader of the Opposition has taken to reading the *International Journal of Epidemiology*, even if he cannot pronounce it. He quoted the excellent study by the American Cancer Society of an extremely large cohort of 470,000 firefighters, that demonstrated an increased mortality risk for most cancers. That is compelling epidemiological evidence, adding to the existing body of evidence, that has resulted in excellent presumptive cancer laws in other jurisdictions. There is a very real and urgent need for this legislation and I reiterate The Greens' enthusiastic support for the bill.

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: Assistant President, in light of a concern with the facility, I suggest that you do now leave the chair until the ringing of a long bell.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): I will leave the chair until the ringing of a long bell.

[*The Assistant President (The Hon. Peter Primrose) left the chair at 20:54. The House resumed at 20:58.*]

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (20:58): I make a contribution to debate on the Workers Compensation Amendment (Firefighters' Diseases) Bill 2025. At the outset, I acknowledge the professionalism and grace of Dr Amanda Cohn in handling the disruption to her contribution. In my 10 years of service here, that was an unusual event—caused by a vent, it seems. I also take this opportunity to thank the parliamentary facilities staff for their rapid response. The object of the bill is to amend the Workers Compensation Act to specify further kinds of cancer as diseases to which presumptive rights to compensation for firefighters apply and to specify the corresponding qualifying service periods. The bill also seeks to reduce the qualifying service period for primary site oesophageal cancer from 25 years to 15 years.

The Government greatly values the work that the State's firefighters do each day. As the Minister said, the Government looks forward to bringing its own proposals to Parliament at the appropriate time but cannot support

the bill at this time. I agree with the Minister and all members who have said that firefighters do incredible work. They are highly professional, skilled and courageous. When danger strikes, our firefighters run towards the emergency and not away from it, putting themselves in harm's way to protect our community. I unambiguously recognise our firefighters for the work they do, especially those firefighters who become injured or unwell in the course of their duties.

Listening to the contributions of the Hon. Damien Tudehope—the shadow Treasurer—and other members who are critical of the Government's position in relation to it, they put forward a suggestion, albeit implicit, that the Government does not value firefighters. I observe that the Government is led by a former firefighter. I know that members are making adverse mention of the Minns Government's approach in general, but that is an important point. The Minns Government is one of the first, if not the first, government to be led by a former firefighter, and that is an important point. I have not necessarily investigated the history of every other Premier and their services. I am sure that there were some who volunteered as well.

That point is not just rhetoric; it is expressed in the actions of the Government so far. Despite members saying that it somehow undervalues firefighters, this Government abolished the wage cap to allow firefighters to bring forward their case for award modernisation. I make that point specifically to the shadow Treasurer even though he is not here. I recall vividly that, before the Government was sworn in, the very first person I had the opportunity to have a conversation with was the secretary of the Fire Brigade Employees Union [FBEU], a person well known to us all. He called me to say that, as soon as we were sworn in, there was the outstanding award matter that required urgent intervention. In fact, when I had the opportunity to serve—albeit very briefly—as the Minister for Industrial Relations prior to the appointment of the Hon. Sophie Cotsis, we needed to attend to that matter very quickly.

Equally, in the course of the Government's two years we have engaged in constructive mutual gains bargaining that has settled many matters. We had to do the award once and then we had to do it again. The FBEU waited for more than 18 months for its last award to be agreed to. A 12-month period was put in place followed by an additional award, followed by an arbitration that is still being worked through. That is an important point in the context of this bill because, to the extent to which the shadow Treasurer is advancing a case that the Government is ignoring firefighters, it is just not true.

It is telling that the shadow Treasurer enlisted himself in the cause of the State's firefighters after he ceased to be the Minister for Industrial Relations and, incidentally, the Minister with responsibility for workers compensation legislation. The shadow Treasurer served for many years in those roles and he was capable of acting in both respects, because anyone who has genuinely been listening to the State's firefighters knows full well that they have been seeking: firstly, investment; secondly, award modernisation; and, thirdly, improvements to workers compensation systems. We are working through the agenda and we are really proud to be doing so.

I understand—dare I say it, better than most—how controversial all questions of workers compensation are, and how much the scheme's coverage, sustainability and use of principles like presumption turn on the design of the legislation, as well as the broader state and financial viability of the schemes.

If anyone is serious about engaging with our firefighters, they have the burden of being truthful in those respects. It is just wrong for other members, such as the one I listened to earlier tonight, to say that it is simply a matter of passing the bill. Specifically, with the additional complexity of firefighting and the manner in which our emergency services are provided, a layer sits below the first three that I mentioned.

The way in which we fund our emergency services in this State is different. It should not be overlooked that we are still the only State that funds our emergency services by taxing insurance. To the extent that legislation like this purports to expand coverage of an insurance scheme, the logical inference that follows is that that will have an effect on the premiums paid by the agency. I listened very closely to the contribution made to this debate by one of the previous speakers, who seemingly passed off a view that the question is simply limited to what impact the bill would have on the State's Treasury Managed Fund. That is not true at all. The other dimension is the operating cost, which is the premium cost—which, incidentally, is passed on to households, particularly those that hold a mortgage. That is not unique to this particular proposition but common to all propositions to do with the emergency services.

I am sorry, but I will not accept the view that scrutiny, due diligence and care regarding a bill like this do not matter. Ironically, the members who suggest that other reforms to workers compensation go through that process also somehow imply it is illegitimate for the Government to adopt that position in respect of this bill. That is even more fascinating. I think everyone accepts that the broader workers compensation scheme is broken, with the consequence that even if workers get into it, they do not get treated particularly well, and that it is not affordable. Had the Parliament acted to pass those other bills and resolve that, we would be in a much better position to consider reforms like this. To fix the biggest problem that is confronting the workers compensation

schemes would mean the latitude and capacity for reform of those schemes would be much greater. It is fascinating to see the alliance between the Liberal Party and others, which is determined to delay and defer the fundamental choice we need to make around the sustainability of the State's insurance scheme, advocate for this bill at the same time.

From our perspective, it is a good thing that we have said that we are working on the concept of presumptive cancers when it comes to firefighters. The Government has accompanied that not with a three-page bill but with a comprehensive reform plan. Is it hard? Yes, it is. Does it involve really tough choices? Of course it does. But we were elected to this place, incidentally, to make those choices. The same point we have been making in respect of the wider scheme applies to this particular bill: A scheme that has no money is a scheme that helps no-one, no matter how good the entitlements appear on paper. It is disappointing that the House is considering this bill having failed to allow that other bill to even reach the second reading stage. The House would have been in a much better position had that taken place.

Nevertheless, I point out that FBEU secretary Leighton Drury and his members have been leading a campaign for the expansion of presumptive cancers for many years. They are standing up for their members and against the risks to their firefighters, and we respect them for that. After all, the things that firefighters were exposed to in the course of their firefighting work put them at greater risk of contracting certain cancers—for example, the exposure to smoke containing synthetic chemicals from burning plastics in house fires. I ask members to consider that the Opposition introduced the bill—with zero notice—before it even bothered to call the FBEU to discuss legislation.

The first time we heard about a bill like this coming to the Parliament was incidental to a point of order taken by the Government Whip in the Committee stage on another bill. The first time we got notice that a bill like this was to be introduced was when the Government Whip was probing as to why questions were being asked about another bill.

The Hon. Chris Rath: Surprise!

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I hear the interjection from the Opposition Whip. We were surprised, and I can tell him who else was surprised: the people affected by the bill.

The Hon. Emily Suvaal: And the workers.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: And the workers affected by the bill. Nevertheless, I am glad that the Government took the point of order, because at least we found out this was coming. And more important than us finding out it was happening was the affected workforce finding out it was happening. What is interesting is the history of how presumptive cancers were first established in law in New South Wales. I was in this Chamber the last time we had the opportunity to debate whether or not we should apply the concept of presumption to workers compensation for firefighters.

In September 2018, seven years ago, the then Labor Opposition introduced the Workers Compensation (Firefighters' Presumptive Rights to Compensation) Bill 2018 into the Legislative Assembly. That bill proposed to introduce a statutory presumption for firefighters when making a workers compensation claim for 12 cancers. Following the introduction of that bill in October 2018, the then Government shortly thereafter introduced its own bill that copied the Opposition bill. The then Government's bill received unanimous support from the Opposition, and it subsequently passed the Parliament in November 2018. As a result, for almost seven years eligible firefighters have been entitled to the benefit of workers compensation for the existing 12 cancers.

The existing 12 cancers also require an eligible firefighter to demonstrate that they satisfy a required qualifying service period. This ranges from five years for brain cancer to 25 years for oesophageal cancer. The 2018 reforms fought for together by Labor and firefighters were an important win. But it is important to recall that, at that point, the then Government declined to include those cancers in that bill and to set any concept of what would be a qualifying period of service. I also point out that that is not covered in this bill.

The year 2018, members will recall, was a major inflection point for the sustainability of the State's workers compensation system. The then Government was not prepared to include the cancers that the shadow Treasurer is today seeking to include, but they undertook other reforms to the workers compensation scheme which, ironically, plunged the scheme into crisis and robbed it of its finances. That meant that, rather than the scheme being in a position to support these additional cancers for that cohort of workers for the past seven years, all the funds surplus at the time was dissipated for nothing as important as this. That is the point that I hope the shadow Treasurer engages with in his reply.

Using premiums to pay a labour hire company \$700,000 to hire a United States Republican operative to work as a department liaison officer in the then Liberal Treasurer's office had an opportunity cost. Equally, the

\$18 million contract that was awarded to a Liberal Party printer and a major donor had an opportunity cost. It was paid for by premiums that otherwise could have been applied to provide this form of coverage. I am not making these points glibly, because I spent a lot of time bringing these facts to light. I am making these points because both the mismanagement that took place at the time and then the introduction of a failed claims management model back then meant that not only have we been unable to consider a reform like this for the past seven years but the scheme's finances have deteriorated to the point where we have to take seriously how exactly it is that we can stabilise and modernise a workers compensation system and make sure that it remains responsive to the concerns of those who are looking for coverage for these types of cancers. I am sorry, but that fact must be engaged with by the Opposition as it continues to move these reforms.

Other members of the House who are not from my party have spoken about the importance of presumption, the principle of presumption and why presumption is required often when it comes to issues like cancers, be it those that are that incurred in the course of putting out fires or those that are incurred through exposure to dust. There is a crossover in that respect. The bill is also proposing to include presumption when it comes to malignant mesothelioma.

That is currently covered under the dust diseases scheme for firefighters. It is important that we get the interaction between the two schemes right on something as important as a dust disease.

I well and truly understand the important role that presumption plays, and that it is a highly sought-after principle, depending on your perspective. In general, though, we should also acknowledge that we have had to very carefully deliberate as a Parliament as to when to apply it for the very simple reason that if we remove the causal element on an insurance scheme, we have to take into account the size of the potentially affected class, the eligibility criteria for the presumption and, equally, the fact that the scheme is paid for by employers. It is not a general government scheme; it is not akin to the others. That is the reason for the causal element. The other point not necessarily picked up by members who have spoken in debate on this bill is that presumption also leads to the extinguishment of common law rights. That is why we have to be very careful in how we use it.

A statutory insurance scheme is designed to provide protection but it also extinguishes the right to sue in court in large part and to, for want of a better term, risk-pool that out. I do not agree with people who are willing to dismiss that as a reason that should be overlooked. We have to be very careful. Ironically, the Labor Party has done the most to make sure that presumption as a doctrine has developed, and it has been very hard. From our perspective, it is a very important development. But we need to make sure that as we continue to develop it, the interactions between presumption, the other schemes and the different nature of firefighting, particularly the distinctions between professional firefighters and non-professional firefighters, are accounted for in the bill, which is part of the reason why the Ministers are engaging in policy development in that respect.

In large part, the nature of firefighting is changing, and that has been led by firefighters. Firefighters have been right to point out which chemicals are more likely to be carcinogenic, and they are likely to push government agencies of all types to be using non-carcinogenic methods of extinguishing fires. That is an important development, and I commend the Fire Brigade Employees Union for pushing that. They have spoken to me ad nauseam about a lot of those issues, but I know lots of members have had to deal with the historical use of PFAS in fire extinguishment and what effect that has had on not just firefighters but the broader community as well.

To return to where I started, the Government is eager to ensure that our firefighters are respected and have access to good wages, modern award conditions, good equipment and, yes, protection in a workers compensation scheme that acknowledges the risks that they incur on behalf of the community. We have said that we are going to bring in a Government bill. The Government bill is the principal vehicle by which we think the Parliament can agree to provide and extend protections. This bill, which has appeared without any consultation, has not canvassed all the matters that are required for us to be able to say to the State's firefighters that the protection is valid, real and sustainable. For that reason, I look forward to seeing the Government bill brought forward and resuming the debate at that time.

The Hon. BOB NANVA (21:18): The Government supports our firefighters and will bring its own proposals to Parliament at the appropriate time, but it cannot support the rushed Workers Compensation Amendment (Firefighters' Diseases) Bill 2025 at this time. I recognise the Coalition's recent interest in the welfare of firefighters and its attempts to address the very serious issues regarding presumptive cancers.

Nevertheless, I am speaking against the bill, and the Government is opposed to the bill, because we want to make sure that we put the best and most effective solution in place. As the Treasurer said, the bill before us is a rush job and, frankly, our firefighters deserve better.

For the avoidance of any doubt, I make it clear from the outset that the Government strongly values the State's hardworking firefighters, and it understands why the issue of expanding presumptive cancers is so

important to them and to their representatives. Our firefighters do incredible work and the Government will consider anything to make their working lives easier. They routinely put themselves in harm's way to protect communities, families and properties, often under extreme conditions that would test even the strongest individuals. The Government will always back them in.

Let us be clear: Our firefighters deserve much better than this. The bill was created with little or no consultation with stakeholders or Government and leaves far too many questions unanswered. In contrast, the Government has been talking to firefighters and their representatives about expanding the list of presumptive cancers in the workers compensation legislation. That is what government looks like—actually consulting with stakeholders to come up with a policy solution that is fit for purpose. If Opposition members were listening in to budget estimates, they would know that Minister Dib and Minister Cotsis indicated that work on this issue was well underway, stakeholders were being consulted and a thorough response was being developed.

As a former union leader, I was heavily involved in efforts to protect rail and public transport workers from the risk of cancer. I know the heartbreak of talking to workers and their families after they have been diagnosed with a deadly disease due to exposure to toxic dust or other substances in those workplaces. Our union fought to ensure that workers were not exposed to potential risks and that those workers who had become ill or injured at work were fully supported, with access to treatment and appropriate financial support. Indeed, one of the most significant issues I faced as national secretary of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union was the discovery of white asbestos in new locomotives bought from Chinese suppliers. The situation not only exposed train workers to potentially deadly asbestos dust but also exposed the dangerous loopholes in the global effort to stop the use of asbestos.

Sadly, when it comes to carcinogenic substances in workplaces, asbestos is only the tip of the iceberg. We are now learning about other substances, including PFAS chemicals, which bring a whole range of other risks to workers. Governments cannot and must not ignore those risks, but we also must ensure that our responses to those challenges are effective and do not bring unintended consequences for the people we are trying to support. The introduction of a national ban on the use, supply and manufacture of engineered stone benchtops, panels and slabs is one example of how governments can take effective and sensible action to protect workers from the risk of cancer. That ban came about due to the determined advocacy of trade unions—including the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union, the Australian Workers' Union and the CFMEU—but it also came about due to committed and comprehensive action by governments around Australia working together to develop a coordinated national approach.

The Opposition has—accurately—previously explained the problems facing firefighters, including the exposure to carcinogenic material that they will inevitably face in the course of their work. No-one on this side of the House disagrees with that, but we do not agree with the issue being kicked around like a political football or a vehicle of political convenience. As a former union official, I have to say that there were very few things more nauseating than the political class taking an issue significant to a union's membership and using it to score a point, drive a wedge or create an electoral opportunity.

I have known the secretary of the FBEU, Mr Drury, for years. I know he has little appetite for politics and is interested only in getting outcomes for his members. That means he will advance vigorously, often and widely to get the outcome he needs for his members. Just this afternoon I spoke to Mr Drury about the substance of the reforms that his members dearly need, and this bill does not cover the zone. I suspect he, like many other union officials, would rather see parliamentarians of good faith working constructively, methodically and quietly on solutions that would withstand the colour and movement of political debate, and the uncertainty of inevitable changes of government. That opportunity presents itself with this issue, but it is not an opportunity the Opposition has availed itself of through this rushed bill.

Indeed there is some real amnesia—or genuinely some real front—in bringing the bill forward in this manner, given the Opposition's culpability in failing to make this issue a priority in any one of its 12 years in government. In not one of its 12 years in government was this issue prioritised; in not one of its 12 years in government was this issue pressed. Yet there was time in those 12 years to use the premiums of small businesses to pay a former Republican operative \$700,000 to work in the then Treasurer's office. There was time in those 12 years in government to allow icare to award an \$18 million contract to a Liberal Party printer and major donor. There was time in those 12 years to oversee the awarding of a \$140 million IT contract in a seven-day tender. There was also time in those 12 years to chronically underfund SafeWork and absolutely bury it in the Better Regulation Division of the Department of Customer Service, which ultimately meant fewer inspectors on the ground to prevent injuries from occurring in the first place.

None of that helped firefighters—or any other injured worker, for that matter—not to mention the former Government's mismanagement of the financial crisis that is engulfing the New South Wales workers compensation system. That costly failure is not only devastating for workers; it is also a restraint on the financial capacity of governments to prioritise the structural, long-term and worker-centred reforms that we would much rather see.

That is a point that bears real relevance to this bill and the substantive issues being advanced in this debate. To be very clear, from 2014 to 2021 the previous Government kept icare premiums for the Nominal Insurer unchanged at an all-time low of 1.4 per cent of wages, notwithstanding the fact that the break-even premium or the premiums actually needed to fund the Nominal Insurer was 1.91 per cent.

By keeping the break-even premium rate far below the actual premium rate, the Liberals deliberately underfunded the scheme. What else was happening in the workers compensation scheme at the same time? There was a record increase in psychological claims in both the Treasury Managed Fund, which is the public sector workers compensation scheme, as well as the Nominal Insurer, which is the private sector workers compensation scheme. But rather than lift premiums to reasonable levels to fund the scheme or, more importantly, do anything about prevention, the easy option of "do nothing" was taken, despite being warned, through briefing after briefing, that something had to be done. That inaction has led to the current situation our Government is now facing in the workers compensation scheme and in its financial capacity to pursue and deliver its priorities for firefighters.

The Government has been forced to act by introducing bills to reform our workers compensation and work health and safety systems, because we know if we do not fix it now, it will just get worse.

Without reform, we know that 340,000 businesses will have to pay a 36 per cent increase in premiums over the next three years, even if they have no claims against them. It is not just businesses that are impacted. Non-government organisations such as disability support organisations or homelessness support services are telling us their premiums have skyrocketed to unsustainable levels. They are telling us that they will have to scale back services to manage their workers compensation premiums.

We know that the State's most recent budget projected an increase in the NSW Self Insurance Corporation insurance expenses of \$1.9 billion from 2025-26 to 2028-29, for a total increase in expenses of \$2.7 billion over five years to 2028-29. That deterioration is driven in large part by the decline in the performance of the State workers compensation scheme. All of that matters because priorities like the one members are debating tonight are infinitely harder to deliver if our finances are not in check. The workers compensation reforms are crucial to both workers and businesses in the State. What is the point of a workers compensation scheme if it is not actually sufficiently funded to meet its liabilities? And what point is a workers compensation scheme that inhibits governments from pursuing real, lasting reforms for workers? Injured workers rely on our scheme to protect them when they get hurt at work, and businesses need the scheme's premiums to be affordable so they can fund it for injured workers.

Exposure to smoke and other toxins is an inevitable part of the gig for firefighters. They are constantly running into danger while the rest of us run away from it. Prevention is always the key when it comes to workplace safety and we must do everything in our power to stop firefighters from getting workplace-related cancers in the first place. The Government will do whatever it can to minimise exposure and mitigate risks for courageous firefighters, including providing them with the best possible protective equipment. But until we can be satisfied that firefighters are no longer being exposed to those risks, we must also ensure that they get access to the financial support they need. We believe that includes updating the list of presumptive cancers for firefighters to include other diseases that they are more likely to contract due to the particular nature of their occupation.

Expanding the list of presumptive cancers shifts the burden of proof in workers compensation claims away from sick and injured workers. It means that workers with those specific diseases are assumed to have contracted them through work. It is an important reform. I commend the Fire Brigade Employees Union for their long campaign to achieve that and get the job done, but changes like this must be done properly, thoughtfully and thoroughly. We need to work through all the detailed questions around coverage and eligibility criteria, and we must deliver a system that is fair to firefighters while retaining the integrity and sustainability of our workers compensation system.

Frankly, it is hypocritical for the Opposition to be demanding that this bill be rushed through tonight while simultaneously holding up legislation that will underpin the viability of workers compensation for firefighters into the future. It is understandable that workers are keen to have this resolved as soon as possible. That is a statement of the obvious, and I thank them for their patience to date. I have no doubt that the Government will deliver on this issue, as it has done on a range of other workers' issues, including breathing new life into the Industrial Relations Commission and abolishing the unfair and restrictive wages cap. That has allowed the State's firefighters to arbitrate their wage increases before an impartial and effective Industrial Relations Commission.

In August this year, the Industrial Relations Commission handed down its decision and awarded firefighters a 14 per cent pay increase over three years, backdated to 2024. That outcome would not have been possible under the Opposition, it would not have been possible under the defunct Industrial Relations Commission, and it would not have been possible under its unfair wages cap. For these reasons, the Government opposes this bill. The Government will continue to work with firefighters, unions, medical experts and industry stakeholders

to deliver reforms that are fair, sustainable and robust. We remain committed to expanding the list of presumptive cancers within a sustainable, well-funded workers compensation system that protects both workers and businesses across New South Wales.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (21:35): The Government supports our firefighters and, as my colleagues have said, we will bring our own proposals to Parliament at the appropriate time after the appropriate consultations have taken place with the appropriate unions. I confirm that I also spoke to the State Secretary of the Fire Brigade Employees Union, Leighton Drury, this evening. I thank him for his ongoing work and advocacy on behalf of his members. On this side of the House, we cannot support this rushed bill at this time. This is a responsible position for two primary reasons. First, let us call it out for what it is—this is a stunt. The Opposition is not serious about this bill, and it never has been. It did not bother to genuinely consult with stakeholders or with the Government before introducing the bill.

Secondly, the Opposition when in government trashed our workers compensation scheme so much that it now struggles to fund its existing liabilities. Unless the Opposition passes the Government's reform bill, the workers compensation scheme is not yet on the pathway to financial sustainability. I make clear from the outset that the Government strongly values the State's hardworking firefighters and understands deeply why this issue of expanding the list of presumptive cancers is so important to them and their representatives. Our firefighters in New South Wales do incredible work, and the Government will consider anything it can to make their working lives easier.

Firefighters routinely put themselves in harm's way to protect communities, families and properties, and often work under extreme conditions that would test even the strongest of individuals. Our Government will always back them in. But let us be clear: The bill before us today is not a genuine attempt by the Opposition. It introduced this bill with little to no consultation with key stakeholders like the workers or the Government. This is a political stunt to use injured firefighters for the Opposition's political tactics. This move by the Opposition is motivated by politics rather than principle. This leads me to the second point. If everyone agrees that we need to look into presumptive cancers for firefighters—Minister Dib and Minister Cotsis have said that this work is underway—why would the Opposition rush in its bill now?

Let us consider the current state of the workers compensation scheme that the Government inherited from the Opposition.

During their 12 long years in power, the Liberals neglected the State's workers compensation scheme. Between 2014 to 2021, the Liberal Government kept icare premiums for the Nominal Insurer unchanged at an all-time low of 1.4 per cent of wages, even though the break-even premium—the amount premiums need to be to fund the Nominal Insurer—was 1.91 per cent. The break-even premium rate is the rate required to cover the cost of claims, operating costs and maintain the sustainability of this important scheme. By deliberately keeping the break-even premium rate far below the actual premium rate, the Liberals deliberately underfunded the scheme.

What else was happening in the workers compensation schemes at the same time? There was a record increase in psychological claims in both the Treasury Managed Fund, which is the public sector workers compensation scheme, and the Nominal Insurer, which is the private sector workers compensation scheme. On average, workers with a psychological injury claim have far more time off work, with only half returning to work within 12 months of making a claim. This is in contrast to physical claims, which have a much better return to work rate. That is reflected in the average cost of a claim, which is eight times higher for psychological injuries at approximately \$300,000. But rather than lift premiums to fund the scheme or do anything about prevention, the Liberals sat on their hands and did nothing.

They were warned. Briefing after briefing told members of the former Government that they had to do something. In fairness, they did do something. They used the premiums from small businesses to pay a former Republican operative \$700,000 to work in the then Treasurer's office to oversee icare, awarding an \$18 million contract to a Liberal Party printer and major donor. They also oversaw the award of a \$140 million IT contract after just a seven-day tender and deliberately underfunded SafeWork, burying it in the bottom drawer at the Better Regulation Division of the Department of Customer Service. This meant fewer inspectors on the ground to prevent injuries from occurring in the first place. The current Opposition was busy in government, but it was busy trashing the joint.

Twelve years of neglect and inaction by the former Government has led to the current situation this Government is now facing with the workers compensation scheme. The Government has been forced to act by introducing bills to reform the State's workers compensation and work health and safety systems. If we do not fix them now, they will get much worse. Absent reform, 340,000 New South Wales businesses will have to pay a 36 per cent increase in premiums over the next three years, even if they have no claims against them. The private sector scheme is going backwards by \$6 million per day. It is soon expected to hold only 80¢ in assets for every

dollar it will have to pay in claims. It is not just businesses that are impacted. Non-government organisations, such as disability and homelessness support services, have seen their premiums skyrocket.

They are telling us that, without reforms, they will have to scale back their important services just to manage their workers compensation premium expenses.

The State's most recent budget projected an increase in the NSW Self Insurance Corporation insurance expenses of \$1.9 billion over the years from 2025-26 to 2028-29, for a total increase in expenses of \$2.7 billion over five years to 2028-29. A large part of that deterioration is driven by the decline in the performance of the State's workers compensation scheme. We have also concerningly heard from disability providers who face premium hikes that will force them to close their doors. I have a lot more to say about the bill but, unfortunately, I have to conclude my remarks as the time for debate has now expired.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine): According to the determination of the Business Committee of Tuesday 9 September 2025, debate on the bill is now interrupted.

Documents

NSW KOALA STRATEGY

Production of Documents: Order

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (21:45): 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, excluding any documents previously returned under an order of the House, created since 9 April 2022, in electronic format if possible, in the possession, custody or control of the Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage or the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (including NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service) relating to NSW Koala Strategy translocation projects:

- (a) all documents regarding translocations of koalas planned and undertaken under the NSW Koala Strategy;
- (b) all documents regarding autopsies of koalas planned and undertaken under the NSW Koala Strategy;
- (c) all documents regarding necropsies of koalas planned and undertaken under the NSW Koala Strategy; and
- (d) 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 reason for this call for papers relating to koala translocation is because of the tragic failure in an experiment that resulted in the deaths of a number of koalas.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (21:46): The Government does not oppose this call for papers. There have been some questions and discussion in relation to translocations. We need to be honest about what is going on here. Translocation is an important piece to the puzzle, though it does not always go well. This is, unfortunately, a very sad case where seven koalas died as a result of the translocation. We are still doing ongoing work, but we have no problem with releasing that information. We want to know what happened. We will get to the bottom of it through the release of the papers.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (21:46): In reply: I thank the Government and note that transparency will deliver better outcomes in the long term for these kinds of projects, which are very experimental. We are talking about trying to avoid extinction. Everybody operates in this space in good faith and transparency helps those processes.

The TEMPORARY CHAIR (The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine): The question is that the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Adjournment Debate

ADJOURNMENT

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

DARK TRIAD LEADERS

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (21:47): Tonight I speak about an issue that is psychological in nature but deeply political in consequence, the qualities of leaders and the dangers of what researchers and psychologists call the dark triad of leadership. The dark triad describes three interlinked tendencies—narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy—that when present in leaders can pose grave risks to democratic institutions

and social cohesion. While these terms may sound academic, their effects are anything but abstract. They shape the way leaders behave, the policies they pursue and the very fabric of public trust.

Let me briefly outline each. Narcissism is characterised by grandiosity, a thirst for admiration and a lack of empathy. Narcissistic leaders often present themselves as visionaries or saviours. They command attention, dominate headlines and nurture cults of personality. Yet beneath the charisma lies fragility, where criticism is met not with reflection but with retaliation. Machiavellianism is defined by manipulation and strategic deceit. Leaders with these traits are master tacticians.

They do not simply play the political game; they rewrite the rules to suit themselves. They exploit crises, weaponise information and sow division to consolidate their power. Their loyalty lies not with the people but with their own ambitions. Because they are calculating rather than impulsive, their influence is often harder to detect, until it is too late.

Psychopathy introduces emotional coldness, impulsivity and a disregard for morality. Leaders with psychopathic tendencies may appear fearless and decisive, particularly in times of conflict, but their lack of empathy and remorse can lead to reckless decisions, authoritarianism and even violence. History offers no shortage of examples of how psychopathy in leadership positions can bring catastrophic consequences. The natural question is why do such individuals rise to power? The answer is sobering. Dark triad personalities are often drawn to power, and they are adept at seizing it. Their confidence, charm and ruthlessness can appear attractive to people seeking clarity in uncertain times, but once in positions of power, their leadership style corrodes institutions, erodes norms and leaves societies more polarised and fragile.

What can we do in the face of that challenge? First, we can become more psychologically literate as citizens. We must learn to look beyond charisma and sound bites and examine the deeper patterns of behaviour that reveal character. Second, we can strengthen the guardrails of democracy. Institutions must be resilient enough to withstand not just policy disputes but the corrosive effects of those who are willing to bend rules and norms for personal gain. Third, and most importantly, we can model and reward better forms of leadership. It is not enough to criticise destructive traits; we must also champion the alternative—leadership that is compassionate rather than self-serving.

Dark triad personalities crave power and find powerful positions easy to attain because of their ruthlessness and manipulation skills. Since they lack empathy and conscience, they have no qualms against deceiving and exploiting other people in their rise to the top. Since they are charismatic and charming, they often gain the support of ordinary people who are impressed by their apparent confidence and decisiveness. Do not be fooled by the facade: Despite their desire to appear as tough, dark triad leaders are usually highly insecure people who cannot endure criticism and dissent. Any expressions of disapproval or wrongdoing conflict with their grandiose self-image. As a result, they cannot endure people with different views, and they surround themselves with sycophantic loyalists.

There is a terrible destructiveness at the heart of dark triad leaders. Perhaps because they live in a state of complete disconnection and have a sense that they are deeply lacking, they feel a deep malevolence towards the world and other human beings. It is almost as if they are on a mission to cause as much chaos and devastation as possible. The dark triad may be appealing—it thrives on spectacle and thrives in an age of polarisation—but, ultimately, it is corrosive. It hollows out trust, undermines institutions and leaves citizens disillusioned. If we want our democracies to not just survive but flourish, we must cultivate the habits of discernment, reward leaders of integrity and call out those who pursue power only for themselves. The choice before us is between being someone who corrodes or someone who uplifts, someone who manipulates or someone who unites. That is the challenge, and the opportunity, before all of us.

HOUSING SUPPLY

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (21:52): It is no secret that Australia is experiencing a housing crisis. Every second news headline for the past few years has spoken to that sad fact, as have the plethora of promises made by both major parties at recent State and Federal elections, vowing to deliver more and more houses in record time. In August 2023 the Federal Government announced a target of 1.2 million homes to be built over five years, from mid-2024 to 2029, under the National Housing Accord. For New South Wales, the target rests at 377,000 new homes. Premier Minns is acutely aware that 40 per cent of that housing growth is required to be in Western Sydney. However, as reported by *The Daily Telegraph* in August, for Western Sydney to meet the housing targets for New South Wales under Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's National Housing Accord, Western Sydney councils will have to construct 89 homes every day to meet the five-year housing goal, which was agreed to by the New South Wales Labor Government.

To be more specific, Western Sydney councils must construct 150,000 homes by 2029 to meet the housing accord target.

Urban Taskforce's first-year analysis of housing approvals until June 2025 shows that Western Sydney councils approved only 13 percent of the required 150,000 new dwellings. That is a dire situation for Western Sydney to be in, not just for the families who are waiting for those dwellings but also for the businesses and employees who rely on construction to earn a living. Expecting 89 homes per day to be built in Western Sydney is nothing short of fanciful. On 15 August a construction company manager of Pioneer Property Group said to *The Daily Telegraph* that the new targets were "unrealistic". In the same article, Urban Taskforce CEO Tom Forrest said that councils would have no chance without Federal Government help. He also said:

The key problem is you can't build homes without infrastructure like water and roads, but infrastructure is expensive and the NSW coffers are empty, that's why we need help ...

It is no wonder construction company managers are pessimistic about the prospect of building homes in Western Sydney when we consider the hoops that must be jumped through before the slab of a new home can even be laid. In addition to taxes and council contributions, planning laws and red tape in New South Wales are notoriously difficult to wade through. Federal tax implications and, in particular, the constant threat of amending capital gains tax concessions and removing negative gearing will deteriorate the confidence of investors, who are crucial for effective property development.

On 11 August 2025 during the inquiry into the Design and Building Practitioners Act 2020 and the residential apartment building Act of 2020, Tom Forrest stated that he was concerned about the complexity of bureaucracy and red tape that inhibits efficient investment into housing, as High Court cases determined rulings that were, as he stated, "contrary to the intention of the legislation," which is a key issue that caused financiers to shift funding away from residential apartment buildings in New South Wales.

During the same inquiry, Property Council NSW executive director Katie Stevenson expressed stakeholder concern for the complexity and cost burden of the regulatory framework, which is creating uncertainty and driving up the cost of delivery. Ms Stevenson further raised the issue of insurance requirements under the legislation, stating that

Builders and professionals are struggling to secure appropriate cover, and the lack of guidance from the Government is leading to underinsurance or withdrawal from the residential sector altogether.

Despite Premier Minns indicating seven months ago that he would be open to major planning law reform, no legislation has been tabled. When quizzed at the recent budget estimates, the Premier quietly admitted that he really did believe that planning laws were a hindrance to effective housing reform in New South Wales. It is not enough to believe it; something must be done. A Productivity Commission report released on 13 February 2024 found that between 2016 and 2021 Sydney lost twice as many people aged 30 to 40 as it gained. That is, 35,000 of those young people came to Sydney and 70,000 left, which was largely a result of the deteriorating housing crisis. Most concerning, the Productivity Commissioner recently stated that if we do not act, we could become a city with no grandchildren.

The building sector is expected to construct 89 homes a day over the next four years in Western Sydney, and we know that is not possible. When you consider the complexity of legislation, bureaucracy, skill deficiencies, insurance and financial constraints, coupled with the fact that the population of Western Sydney will continue to grow by almost half a million people over the next decade and continue to grow closer to 760,000 by 2041, it brings into question the capacity of the building sector to meet even half of that target without significant help from the Federal Government. That is where the real problem lies. The Federal Government has set an unrealistic housing target, expecting the New South Wales Government to follow suit while not appreciating the many complexities, including planning and building laws, that make it difficult and certainly stifle potential growth in New South Wales.

NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (21:57): We rightly spend much time at the moment considering how the NDIS should be structured and, importantly, how we can pay for it. With the new Thriving Kids program, that becomes an important issue for the State budget as well as for all of us as taxpayers. Natasha Robinson, the health editor at *The Australian*, wrote an important article about the NDIS in late August. She wrote, "Rather than a celebrated national treasure, the NDIS is widely viewed as a fiscal burden." Yes, the NDIS comes at a significant cost, and we are struggling as a community to work out how best to pay for it. But reflecting on the experiences of her own family, where her grandparents provided lifelong care for her aunt who lives with severe disability, she asked the really important question: Why are we so surprised at the size of the NDIS bill and the amount of care which is needed and is being provided?

The reason, she says, is:

... the cost of care was previously well hidden from policy designers—care hidden within State institutions and family homes. This is because it long has been largely parents who ... have carried out the ... intensive ... work of disability care, out of sight, their labour unquantified.

This is the nub of the issue. In developed economies such as ours, we only quantify what we pay for—and that has borne unfortunate social fruit. What we count has come to be seen as what we value. So persons who work for money are counted and valued, and the more money someone's work attracts, the more value they have. But persons—most commonly women—who spend more of their time doing unpaid care are seen to have less value because we have conflated income with value and ignored the vitally important and real work of caring. From time to time we all hear the messages—often from government—that we need to get women back to work because we need to increase productivity. The not-so-hidden subtext is that nothing of economic value is being done if it is unpaid and, by extension, if it has no economic value then it has no value at all.

That leads to the rather ludicrous conclusion that child care provided by a parent in the home has no value and is unproductive, but the same children being cared for in the same home by a nanny paid for this work has productive value. I reject that messaging. I reject the concept that unpaid work is unproductive and that it provides nothing of value to society. The most important work I have ever done, and will ever do, was raise my children. While I can guarantee that work was entirely unfunded, it is also not without social and economic value. I have provided two taxpayers to the Australian economy and that is economically valuable work indeed.

Money is a very useful means of allowing us to exchange labour for goods, but it should never become a cipher for the value of a human person. Such thinking carries twin risks. We risk only seeing value in what a person can do that generates money and we also risk building a society where we encourage the monetisation of the self. Much of what we see on OnlyFans sites is a case in point. It also means that we overlook the very real ways in which different people contribute to our society and add value to those around them by what they do. Natasha Robinson's grandfather cared for his daughter at home until he was 103 and needed to go into care himself. While he was the primary caregiver, his daughter's NDIS bill was around \$30,000 a year. After he died, it became closer to \$300,000 a year.

How many of us would have looked at a 100-year-old man living with his daughter and seen him as a net taker rather than as a net contributor? But do the maths. He was effectively contributing \$270,000 a year to the Australian economy. How much would someone have to earn to pay that amount in tax? How much would we value somebody who was earning that sort of income? How much have we completely overlooked the value of the tremendous care that is provided by parents and people who love those with disabilities every day? How much social damage do we do when we fail to recognise the real importance of that care?

SOLOMON ISLANDS PARLIAMENTARY VISIT

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (22:03): Recently I travelled to Honiara, Solomon Islands, with Mark Hodges, MP, the member for Castle Hill, and members of parliamentary staff Simon Johnston, Rohan Tyler and Rhia Victorino. The purpose of the trip was to assist the National Parliament of Solomon Islands [NPSI] with improving its committee and inquiry system. Over several days we worked with staff and members of the National Parliament of Solomon Islands and shared information and perspectives on how committees and inquiries work, what they can achieve, the problems and challenges of the committee systems and much more.

As is so often the case when I have had the opportunity to work overseas, I learned so much from seeing how different people in a very different context do similar work. We were ably assisted in our trip by the Australian High Commission in Honiara, which briefed us well and imparted many important perspectives.

Those of us who had visited before renewed friendships, and those who visited for the first time made new friends in the "Happy Isles". As always, the hospitality was outstanding. Despite having left Honiara 18 years ago after living there for three years, I find that I still run into old friends and colleagues around and about Honiara who recognise me and tell me how old I now look. All in all, a few stomach problems aside, we had a great time. I hope our trip was useful for the NPSI.

I extend a big thank you to Speaker Oti and all the staff and members of the NPSI. At the closing night dinner, Mark Hodges and I had the opportunity to make some remarks. I focused my remarks on the critical importance of institutional and people-to-people exchanges between our two countries, which are so close and yet so different. I reflected on being Mayor of Dubbo when the first group of Pacific Australia Labour Mobility scheme workers arrived in the Central West, and the wonderful contribution they have made to the economy and society.

My trip to Honiara has led me to reflect on the complex history that Australia has with the Pacific, and that almost everything we do has the potential to be seen in a historical context. The recent decision of the Federal

Government to pay the Republic of Nauru to take a cohort of non-citizens whom Australia had previously detained, but then had to release as a consequence of a decision of the High Court, is an example of that. Nauru is a tiny, isolated country with an extraordinary history and a complex relationship with Australia. I learnt a bit about Nauru during extended trips there to appear for members of the former Nauru Parliament who were at that time being persecuted by the current President, David Adeang. It is entirely understandable that Nauru would leap at the financial opportunity presented by the current deal.

My late friend Sprent Dabwido, a former President of Nauru, signed a regional processing deal with Australia some years prior to the time I spent in Nauru. In meetings before his premature death—which was, in fact, caused by current President David Adeang—he explained in great detail the burden he had, as the leader of a tiny, impoverished island, in deciding to accept or reject a similar deal. He said that he ultimately regretted signing that deal. He thought he was helping the refugees and his country, but he later realised that while he might be happy to "eat fish and sit on sand", for others, the island became a torture.

I do not want to criticise the Federal Government's proposed policy for dealing with these people. Human rights lawyers and many others have vigorously criticised the deal and its implications for the cohort of people who stand to be sent to Nauru, and for the people of the tiny nation of Nauru, who will be forced to live with those of the cohort who end up there. It is yet to be seen if the deal will survive legal scrutiny. However, I am concerned that the advantages of the deal, including for the Australian community in being rid of that cohort, might one day come to be seen as offset by the harms that the deal may wreak to our reputation as good Pacific neighbours.

Those harms are real in the context of the current geopolitical situation. The competition with China is obvious almost as soon as one lands in Honiara. One can hardly imagine China deciding to financially persuade a tiny, impoverished Pacific country to take hundreds of its criminal offenders. That is inconceivable. I simply state that it seems to me that this deal and its aftermath will need to be extremely well managed to minimise those impacts. Otherwise, the fleeting political and perceived substantive advantage of ridding ourselves of that cohort may conceal a more harmful future.

ANTI-IMMIGRATION PROTESTS

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN (22:08): It would be hard not to notice the coverage over the past month about the wider community's concerns regarding the current level of immigration into Australia. In the lead-up to the 31 August rallies across the country, I, like many others, was curious about the driving force and the people or entities organising those protests. Scanning social media, it was hard at first to ascertain who was behind it all. Mainstream media seemed keen to pin it on Victorian-based neo-Nazi groups, but there was enough evidence publicly available online that that was not exactly the case. From what I could see ahead of 31 August, almost all quarters of the wider right wing of our political spectrum seemed to have some involvement, large or small—with the exception, maybe, of the Coalition.

Anyone who has ever had any involvement in right-of-centre politics in Australia will know how hard it can be to get anything organised in large numbers, given that, more often than not, one of the things that binds those on the right is the freedom of the individual—a resistance to being organised and directed in a collectivist nature. It is like herding cats. When we witness something like we witnessed on 31 August, we should all take note. Whoever it was that first circulated the idea of an anti-immigration rally on 31 August, it certainly struck a very rich vein of emotion across a wide section of the Australian community. Mainstream media attempted to pin it on a very small number of loud, violent extremists, but those people were largely panned by so many who attended the rallies themselves, draped in our nation's flag.

Over the past week, the media has covered the ham-fisted comments, when some in the public eye started to single out particular nationalities and attribute the motivations to the current Federal Government for overseeing such migrant numbers into our country. I do not think it is helpful at all to engage in commentary that generalises particular groups of migrants, nor do I think it is productive to try to assign motives to political parties regarding their immigration policies. What is needed is for us to step back and have a clear-headed look at why many thousands of ordinary, everyday Australians—many of whom have probably never attended any rally or protest before in their lives—have all of a sudden become active and vocal in regard to the current level of migration into Australia.

When you cannot get a foothold in the property market and you have given up hope, when you cannot rely on our public hospitals to provide timely care, when you cannot rely on our public transport system to get you to work and back home reliably and on time, when your local council rates and water charges are going up by double-digit per cent increases every year, when you turn on the evening news and there is yet another instance of violent crime by youth gangs, particularly in Victoria, it is not too hard to see why so many Australians are starting to speak up and say that something must change, and that the current trajectory of society is not headed towards a pleasant place.

I heard many of the cries of attendees at the rallies last month, from "stop migration" to "pause migration"—even our colleague in this place the Hon. John Ruddick talked about a five-year pause on migration. I heard calls for "remigration", which is the policy of the current Government of the United States—and it is making progress to achieve that outcome across the US. Regardless of each individual call to action from any of those attendees at the rallies, what is clear is the widespread feeling of migration fatigue. I do not think it is offensive or politically incorrect for me to point that out tonight.

Migration fatigue is a serious problem. Housing supply cannot keep up with the current planning settings. Our infrastructure has not kept up with the amount of people utilising our road, rail and bus systems. In a debate earlier this year in this place I made the comment that we do not live in an economy, we live in a society. While high rates of migration may well be what those in Treasury and the business lobby seek, it may well not be what those in our society appreciate. We have not heard the last on this issue.

AUSTRALIAN INDIAN COMMUNITY

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (22:13): A few years ago I visited the Hambleton Cottage Museum in Parramatta, which was built in 1824 by John Macarthur. I was struck by a portrait hanging in the study with the inscription "Bishop Heber – Bishop of Calcutta". I asked, "Why is there a picture of the Bishop of Calcutta?" The guide told us that it was a depiction of the study used by the Reverend Samuel Marsden of St John's Anglican Cathedral in Parramatta, the oldest church in Australia, and that until 1836 the Anglican Church in Sydney had sat within the Diocese of Calcutta. That moment brought together two strands of my ancestry, as my fifth great-grandparents, William Bellamy and Ann Fay, had been married at that church in 1797, with my fourth great-grandfather baptised there a year later, under the Diocese of Calcutta.

On the other hand, my fourth great-grandparents, Stephen and Diana Bailey, along with my third great-grandmother, Jane Bailey, emigrated from Calcutta to Sydney aboard the *Rory O'Moore* in 1853 before settling in Young. Stephen, a native of Shropshire, England, had been deployed to Bengal in the 62nd (Wiltshire) Regiment of Foot in 1842. He married Margarate Dian Victor, a native of India, at Danapur, Bihar, in 1844. Their first daughter, Jane, was born in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, on 9 September 1845. Happy belated birthday for yesterday, Great-great-great Grandma.

Part of my Australian story started in India 170 years ago. Australia's connection with India potentially goes back more than 4,000 years. In terms of the colonial settlement, India certainly played a very important part from very early on in trade, labour or transportation. Prior to Federation, the Indian Australian population was estimated at around 7,000 persons. Like my family, they have been coming here since the 1800s. Australians of Indian heritage have made a significant contribution to our nation for more than 200 years, and they will make an even greater contribution to our nation in the future. New South Wales is home to more than 200,000 people born in India, and there are many more with Indian ancestry.

I speak so warmly of Australians of Indian and South Asian heritage because I grew up with them and have worked with them. They are some of my closest friends. They have been hurting in recent weeks. I have heard from them that they are hurting, and I told them that I would speak in this place on their behalf. They feel targeted. They are concerned for their safety and wonder what they have done to deserve this. Many of these wonderful Australians of Indian heritage have been here for decades, and in some cases for more than half a century. I have stood by members of the Indian community against attacks in the past, and I stand by them against attacks tonight.

Multicultural communities across our State cannot be used as a political football. I reiterate again that Australia is the most successful multicultural society in the world. It is an asset and something we should cherish. There is a legitimate debate to be had when it comes to the levels of migration to this country and to the composition of the migration program categories of skilled, working holiday and student visas. I have engaged in that debate both in this House and publicly. I have raised the challenges of unsustainable immigration levels in this country because the infrastructure and housing supply cannot keep up. I have raised the point that housing supply is one part of the equation. The demand from unsustainable immigration levels is another concern. I have pointed to the approach taken in Canada which, even under a progressive government, has reduced its migration program and aligned it with housing supply. This has seen asking rents fall and house prices decline.

I have called on the Premier to implore the Federal Government to make net migration more sustainable to allow the housing supply to catch up. These are legitimate debates to have. The issue is not about country of origin. It is about the competencies of our Government and the infrastructure it provides. No community deserves to be targeted in this debate. Australians of Indian heritage have made an amazing contribution to our country. They will continue to be a major part of writing the story of Australia that is still to come:

In history's page let every stage
Advance Australia fair

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The question is that this House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 22:17 until Thursday 11 September 2025 at 10:00.