

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Wednesday 17 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.

Announcements

MEMBERS' LOUNGE PRINTER

The PRESIDENT: I am pleased to announce that a new multifunction printer will shortly be installed in the members' lounge. The device will provide printing, photocopying and related functions for members within a short distance of the Chamber. Both "follow me" and direct printing will be available. The printer is designed to operate quietly to ensure there is no impact on Chamber proceedings, although this will be continually monitored. I thank members for their cooperation to install the new device and Dr Amanda Cohn for bringing it to my attention.

Committees

PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE

Extension of Reporting Date

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I move:

That the resolution of the House of 5 August 2025 relating to the reference to the Privileges Committee for its inquiry into the unauthorised disclosure of privileged information by the Hon. Mark Latham, MLC, be amended by omitting paragraph (d) and inserting instead:

- (d) the committee report:
 - (i) on matters referred in paragraph (a), and on the additional matters referred by the House on 9 September 2025, by 13 November 2025; and
 - (ii) on matters referred in paragraph (b) on a date to be determined by the committee.

Motion agreed to.

Motions

CONSUL GENERAL OF IRELAND

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

That this House notes that:

- (a) on 20 August 2025 a farewell was held for Consal Ginearálta na hÉireann, the Consul General of Ireland in Sydney, Rosie Keane, at Business Sydney, and was hosted by master of ceremonies Paul Nicolau;
- (b) the event heard moving and emotional tributes to her service from the Hon. Ben Franklin, President of the Legislative Council; Ms Louise Cantillon, Consul General of the United Kingdom; Dr Marjorie O'Neill, MP, on behalf of the NSW Parliamentary Friends of Ireland; and Crispin Conroy, AM, on behalf of the Department of Foreign Affairs (NSW Division);
- (c) a consistent theme from all the speakers was the exceptional impact that Ms Keane had in the short time she served as Consal Ginearálta na hÉireann in Sydney;
- (d) speakers remarked that Ms Keane was both a pleasure to deal with and an extremely effective advocate for her nation, and particular praise was reserved for her work in strengthening ties between the Irish diaspora in Sydney and the consulate, and promoting new forms of cultural exchange such as hosting literary events that brought the best of Irish contemporary authors to events in Sydney;
- (e) Ms Keane responded by thanking everyone for their support during her time in Sydney and she remarked that it was a life-changing posting for her, professionally and personally, and that she will miss it dearly but, of course, will visit again soon; and
- (f) many members of the NSW Consular Corps were in attendance, along with the Hon. Cameron Murphy; Mr Geoff Lee, former member for Parramatta; Mr Jonathan O'Dea, former Speaker of the Legislative Assembly; and prominent members of the Irish community in Sydney.

Motion agreed to.**AUSTRALIA-IRELAND FINANCE FORUM****The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (10:03):** I move:

That this House notes that:

- (a) on 4 September 2025 the Sydney Consulate General of Ireland, in conjunction with Enterprise Ireland, held the second Australian-Ireland Finance Forum at the Sydney Mint on Macquarie Street;
- (b) the event brought together business leaders of both Australia and Ireland with the objective of encouraging increased trade and investment between our two nations;
- (c) hosted by Enterprise Ireland's Director of Australia and New Zealand, Lydia Rogers, the keynote speaker was the Hon. Emily Suvaal, Parliamentary Secretary for Trade and Small Business, who shared her personal story of the terrifying pleasure of working with Irish nurses, a theme that inspired like-minded reflections from the guest panellists;
- (d) a panel discussion that included Neil Hosty, CEO of Fexco Group, Lysa McKenna, CEO of Corporate Markets, Emma Costello, CFO of the Reserve Bank of Australia, and Anna-Marie Turley, Head of Fintech and Financial Services at Enterprise Ireland, discussed the opportunities and challenges of investment and scaling up businesses;
- (e) the event introduced *Ambasadóir designate na hÉireann*, Ambassador Designate of Ireland to Australia, Fiona Flood, and the newly appointed *Consal Ginearálta na hÉireann*, the Consul General of Ireland in Sydney, Lorraine Christian;
- (f) the event was also attended by the Hon. Tania Mihailuk and the Hon. Cameron Murphy; and
- (g) the event was a great success, having grown from the previous year with a large number of Irish and Australian business leaders present and with many new contacts made and business ideas shared.

Motion agreed to.**COFFS KART CLUB****The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (10:04):** I move:

That this House notes that:

- (a) on 7 September 2025 the Hon. Cameron Murphy launched the Coffs Kart Club All Inclusive Multi-Sport Facility major upgrade, representing the Hon. Stephen Kamper, MP, Minister for Sport;
- (b) he was joined at the launch by Gurmeh Singh, MP, member for Coffs Harbour; City of Coffs Harbour Mayor, Councillor Nikki Williams, Mr James Morrison, president of the Coffs Harbour Kart Racing Club, and Mr John Rafferty, CEO CEX Group;
- (c) the project was awarded \$2.165 million through the Government's Multi-Sport Community Facility Fund 21/22 (Round 1) with additional contributions of \$519,000 from Coffs Harbour Kart Racing Club;
- (d) the Government committed \$200 million to the Multi-Sport Community Facility Fund across two years, with the fund designed to deliver the best outcomes for the community by creating places and facilities that enable communities to enjoy and take part in sport;
- (e) the Coffs Kart Club project scope included building a multi-sport community function/training area, installing sun-safe accessibility in/out grid covers, a track upgrade to national standards including extending the track to 1,000 metres and resurfacing it, and new facility security including fencing, electronic access gates and security camera systems; and
- (f) the launch took place during the Australian Kart Championships, hosting of which was made possible by the upgraded facilities.

Motion agreed to.**SAMSARA ECO PLASTICS RECYCLING AND RESEARCH FACILITY****The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (10:04):** I move:

That this House notes that:

- (a) on 3 September 2025 Samsara Eco launched its new purpose-built plastics recycling and research facility in Jerrabomberra;
- (b) the facility heard speeches from Minister for Climate Change and Energy the Hon. Chris Bowen, MP; Minister for Regional Development, the Hon. Kristy McBain, MP; Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education, Steve Whan, MP; and founder and CEO Paul Riley;
- (c) the launch was well attended by many community members, including Queanbeyan-Palerang Mayor, Councillor Kenrick Winchester, and the Hon. Cameron Murphy, along with international business leaders;
- (d) a traditional ribbon cutting was substituted with each of the speakers placing recycled polymer clothing scraps into the recycling process to launch its operation;
- (e) the facility provides a world-first circular recycling method for polymers utilising stable enzymes that operate for up to 60 days to break down plastics and nylon into their original polymer components;
- (f) the recycled polymers produced are identical to the original base product and can be easily re-used in manufacturing processes without adaptation and at an equivalent cost to fossil fuel polymers;

- (g) the facility also operates as a research hub in order to discover new enzymes that can build an even more efficient recycling process;
- (h) Samsara Eco has already partnered with major companies such as Lululemon and Coca-Cola;
- (i) the facility opens with more than 60 full-time jobs and will significantly expand over the coming years; and
- (j) Samsara Eco is a testament to innovation in New South Wales, and will provide significant local jobs and export income for the State going forward.

Motion agreed to.

HUMAN RIGHTS YOUTH FORUM

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

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) on 11 September 2025 approximately 65 students in years 9 to 11 from the Hunter region, Western Sydney, Blue Mountains and the Sydney metro area gathered in the New South Wales Parliament Fountain Court as part of the Youth Forum at New South Wales Parliament focused on a human rights Act for New South Wales;
 - (b) the reception, hosted by Ms Jenny Leong, MP, was in furtherance of a bill of rights in New South Wales;
 - (c) their participation was supported by a number of volunteers from the Australian Human Rights Commission, Community Legal Centres NSW, Australian Lawyers for Human Rights and the University of Newcastle;
 - (d) a number of members attended and spoke with students about human rights, including the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine; the Hon. Stephen Lawrence; the Hon. Cameron Murphy; Ms Charishma Kaliyanda, MP; Mr Edmond Atalla, MP; Mr Tim Crakanthorp, MP; Ms Jenny Leong, MP; the Hon. Yasmin Catley, MP; and the Hon. Kate Washington, MP; and
 - (e) the students participated in a series of workshops followed by a presentation to members of Parliament, with a question and answer session in the afternoon.
- (2) That this House thanks the organisers of the event and the members of Parliament who participated and congratulates all the students present on their interest in and support for human rights in New South Wales.

Motion agreed to.

AUSTRALIA POST WORKERS

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (10:06): I move:

- (1) That this House acknowledges that:
 - (a) on 7 September 2025 the Communication Workers Union [CWU] Central Branch announced that Australia Post workers received a 4 per cent pay rise as well as a 4 per cent increase in allowances;
 - (b) this major improvement to wages and allowances follows the eleventh enterprise bargaining agreement [EBA] negotiated between Australia Post and the Communication Workers Union last year;
 - (c) the agreement was approved by the Fair Work Commission on 11 October 2024 and came into effect on 18 October 2024;
 - (d) according to the agreement, all employees covered by the EBA receive a compounding 4 per cent annual wage increase which will remain in place until 2026; and
 - (e) by way of example, an adult trainee postal delivery officer would see their pay rise from \$49,850 in September 2023 to approximately \$56,075 by September 2026.
- (2) That this House congratulates:
 - (a) the CWU Central Branch on its effective advocacy and determined efforts in securing significant wage growth for Australia Post employees;
 - (b) Australia Post employees on their continued dedication to public service and for achieving a fair and deserved improvement to their wages and working conditions;
 - (c) all parties involved in the negotiation and implementation of EBA No. 11;
 - (d) CWU members on their overwhelming endorsement of the agreement, with a national yes vote of 89 per cent during the August 2024 ballot, following a strong campaign and in-principle agreement reached in July 2024; and
 - (e) CWU Central Branch secretary Shane Murphy and the CWU bargaining team on negotiating such a great outcome and CWU members for their collective solidarity.
- (3) That this House notes that by the year ending 2026, under the leadership of CWU Central Branch secretary Shane Murphy, the CWU will have delivered a 28.4 per cent compound pay increase for postal workers.

Motion agreed to.

EMUS RUGBY CLUB ORANGE

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (10:06): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) on Saturday 6 September 2025 Emus Rugby Club first grade side defeated Orange City Lions 38 to 32 to win the Central West Rugby Union Blowes Cup in a hard-fought local derby grand final; and
 - (b) on the same day Emus third grade side defeated Dubbo Kangaroos in their grand final.
- (2) That this House congratulates:
 - (a) Emus Rugby Club on another successful season, competing in their eleventh straight first grade grand final, of which they have taken home six premierships; and
 - (b) players, coaches, supporters and volunteers from all sides, as well as referees and officials who contributed to such a fantastic day in Orange and a successful season.
- (3) That this House gives special recognition to:
 - (a) Charlie Henley, first grade captain and club president, who led his team to victory and has contributed to the club over many years;
 - (b) Jan Randall for managing all senior men's grades for Emus throughout the season; and
 - (c) Keryn Phillips, who sadly lost her mother during the week yet still gave up her time to prepare the club for grand final day.
- (4) That this House acknowledges that:
 - (a) community sport is an important aspect of our regional communities and helps bring together people and promote exercise; and
 - (b) community sport would not be possible without the incredible sacrifices of coaches, referees, parents and sponsors who give up their own time and money for the benefit of their club and community.

Motion agreed to.

SUCCESS WORKS PARTNERS INC.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (10:07): I move:

That this House:

- (a) notes the important work of Success Works Partners Inc., an organisation dedicated to supporting women impacted by the criminal justice system to gain meaningful employment and rebuild their lives;
- (b) recognises that behind every criminal record check, there is a woman's untold story, with research showing that:
 - (i) 44 per cent of women impacted by the justice system have experienced domestic violence;
 - (ii) 40 per cent have experienced homelessness; and
 - (iii) 39 per cent are single mothers.
- (c) commends Success Works for its programs, including mentoring, job readiness workshops, employer engagement and advocacy, which break down barriers to employment and focuses on each woman's potential, not her past;
- (d) acknowledges the impact of the organisation's work, with over 264 women supported since 2022, 115 placed in employment and strong partnerships forged with justice-friendly employers across Sydney; and
- (e) thanks Success Works for its advocacy and practical support that not only transforms individual lives but also strengthens families, communities and workplaces in New South Wales.

Motion agreed to.

NAGORNO-KARABAKH WAR FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (10:07): I move:

- (1) That this House acknowledges that September to November 2025 marks the fifth anniversary of the 2020 Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) war of aggression by Azerbaijan and reaffirms the New South Wales Parliament's recognition of the right to self-determination of the Republic of Artsakh.
- (2) That this House recognises that 19 September 2025 marks two years since the forced displacement of over 100,000 Armenians from the Republic of Artsakh following a 10-month blockade by Azerbaijan that deprived the population of food, energy, medical supplies and humanitarian aid.
- (3) That this House urges the immediate release of 23 Armenian detainees, including former leaders of the Republic of Artsakh, who remain unlawfully held by the Azerbaijani authorities in violation of international law.
- (4) That this House calls on Azerbaijan to comply with the provisional measures issued by the International Court of Justice on 17 November 2023, including the right of return for all Armenians forcibly displaced from Artsakh, under binding international guarantees for their safety and rights.

- (5) That this House condemns the ongoing destruction of Armenian Christian and cultural heritage in Artsakh and urges Azerbaijan to take transparent and credible measures to preserve and protect all ancient Armenian historical and cultural sites.
- (6) That this House further calls on Azerbaijan to immediately withdraw its military forces from the internationally recognised territory of the Republic of Armenia and to respect Armenia's sovereign borders.

Motion agreed to.

Notices

PRESENTATION

[During the giving of notices of motions]

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Tania Mihailuk will cease engaging in audible conversation in the Chamber.

Business of the House

POSTPONEMENT OF BUSINESS

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: I postpone business of the House notice of motion No. 1 until the next sitting day.

Documents

WORKERS COMPENSATION LEGISLATION

Production of Documents: Further Order

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (10:47): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) on Wednesday 25 June 2025 this House ordered the production of documents relating to workers compensation legislation, in response to which, on Wednesday 23 July 2025 a return was received from the Cabinet Office which included certifications that all documents held that are covered by the terms of the resolution and lawfully required to be provided had been provided;
 - (b) on Wednesday 6 August 2025, in response to assertions that certain documents captured by the scope, but not returned to, the order for papers were Cabinet documents, this House:
 - (i) rejected the definition of Cabinet documents which if followed may lead to a much broader class of documents being withheld from this House;
 - (ii) reasserted its power to order the production of all documents in the possession, custody or control of the Executive Government with the exception of those documents that reveal the actual deliberations of Cabinet, as articulated by Spigelman CJ in *Egan v Chadwick*;
 - (ii) further ordered the production of documents relating to workers compensation legislation;
 - (c) in response to the further order of the House, on Tuesday 19 August 2025, a return was received from the Cabinet Office which provided certifications that "no documents that are covered by the terms of the resolution and lawfully required to be provided are held", but also stated that:

"In the interests of transparency, the Government has decided to provide further documents to the Legislative Council on a voluntary and confidential basis. These documents have not been produced to the House pursuant to Standing Order 52 because they are either subject to Cabinet confidentiality, are already in the public domain, or otherwise fall outside the scope of the resolution (for example, because they were created after 25 June 2025, being the date of the resolution)."; and
 - (d) the certification letter returned on Tuesday 19 August 2025 from State Insurance Regulatory Authority noted that certain proposals are matters which are considered by Cabinet and captured by "cabinet confidentiality", stating that:

"SIRA reviewed its assessment of Cabinet-in-confidence material in consultation with the Cabinet Office, referencing section 2.3 of the Cabinet Practice Manual, Matters for Cabinet, and SIRA maintains that documents in its possession captured by this Order and not already provided under the Previous Order are cabinet-in-confidence."
- (2) That this House:
 - (a) notes that the only established mechanism by which the Cabinet Office may lodge documents with the Clerk directly, or by which ministers and government agencies may make claims of privilege or personal information, is under standing order 52, in response to an order for the production of documents;
 - (b) rejects the statement made by the Cabinet Office on behalf of the Government that the documents returned on Tuesday 19 August 2025 were provided voluntarily; and

- (c) notes receipt of the return from the Cabinet Office on Tuesday 19 August 2025 by the Clerk under standing order 52.
- (3) That this House:
- (a) rejects the view expressed by the Cabinet Office that documents returned are subject to "Cabinet confidentiality", as none of the documents returned reveal the actual deliberations of Cabinet;
- (b) further notes that the NSW Cabinet Practice Manual, which provides guidance on State Papers and Cabinet documents, distinguishes between "Cabinet records" and other "Cabinet documents", with a definition of Cabinet documents that even exceeds those used in the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009;
- (c) rejects the use of the definitions in the NSW Cabinet Practice Manual for determining which documents are subject to cabinet-in-confidence for the purpose of responding to orders for papers made under standing order 52, which if followed may lead to a much broader class of documents being withheld from this House; and
- (d) again, notes that the true principle from *Egan v Chadwick* concerning the power of the House to order the production of Cabinet documents is, at a minimum, that articulated by Spigelman CJ, who held that " a distinction has been made between documents which disclose the actual deliberations within cabinet and documents in the nature of reports or submissions prepared for the assistance of Cabinet".
- (4) That this House, accordingly:
- (a) notes the continued failure of the Government to comply with orders of the House regarding workers compensation legislation and to produce documents necessary for this House to undertake its function of scrutinising the executive government;
- (b) notes that it has repeatedly reasserted its power to order the production of all documents in the possession, custody or control of the executive government with the exception of those documents that reveal the actual deliberations of Cabinet, as articulated by Spigelman CJ in *Egan v Chadwick*; and
- (c) again, reminds the Leader of the Government that, as the representative of the Government in this House, they are responsible for compliance with orders for papers passed by the Legislative Council.
- (5) That, under standing order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 7 days of the date of passing of this resolution the following documents, excluding any documents previously returned under an order of the House, created between 25 March 2023 and Wednesday 25 June 2025 in the possession, custody or control of the Premier, the Treasurer, the Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Youth Justice, the Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Work Health and Safety, the Premier's Department, the Cabinet Office, Treasury, the Department of Customer Service, Insurance and Care NSW (icare) or the State Insurance Regulatory Authority relating to workers compensation legislation:
- (a) all documents relating to actuarial modelling and assumptions regarding changes to the Workers Compensation Act 1987 or the Workplace Injury Management and Workers Compensation Act 1998;
- (b) all documents relating to drafting instructions for the exposure draft of the Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025;
- (c) all documents relating to drafting instructions for the Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025;
- (d) all versions of the Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025;
- (e) all documents relating to proposed amendments to the Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, including all costings, briefings, modelling, or advice;
- (f) all documents relating to premium filings for the Nominal Insurer;
- (g) all documents relating to the Nominal Insurer Valuation;
- (h) all documents relating to the expansion of Schedule 4 of the Workers Compensation Act 1987;
- (i) all documents relating to consultation regarding changes to workers compensation;
- (j) all contracts relating to Claim Service Providers;
- (k) all correspondence sent between the Premier and the Treasurer, including between their offices, relating to workers compensation;
- (l) all correspondence sent to or received from a trade union relating to workers compensation reforms; and
- (m) any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.
- (6) That, should the Leader of the Government fail to table the documents in compliance with this resolution, it will be a matter for this House to take all necessary actions and further steps to address the issue of continued non-compliance. This lengthy motion sets out a substantial history relating to several orders for papers regarding workers compensation legislation. I am forced to move the motion for one simple reason: to reassert the rights of the House against an obstructive government that is using every possible means to avoid transparency. I draw the attention of members to paragraph (3) (a) of the motion. It is clear that the Government's strategy is to expand the definition of Cabinet documents beyond any previous definition, and certainly beyond the definition in *Egan v Chadwick*. The Government does not take the approach of Spigelman, who in that case defined "Cabinet documents" as those that reveal the deliberations of Cabinet. The Government does not even take the broader view to include all documents considered by Cabinet.

The Minns Government has invented a new definition to hide documents from this House and from the public. The last time we debated this issue I detailed the evidence from icare and the State Insurance Regulatory Authority that they had sought to comply with the order from this House. Somewhere in the process of those agencies attempting to comply with the order, the documents they sent to the Cabinet Office mysteriously became available but were covered by Cabinet confidentiality. The documents were voluntarily returned to this House and we were told they were covered by Cabinet confidentiality. Quite frankly, they are simply not Cabinet documents. In fact, one of the documents had already been provided in answer to supplementary questions from the workers compensation inquiry—so much for confidentiality.

This is the level of cover-up the Minns Government engages in. On this particular order, we have received no documents relating to the workers compensation bill. We also have not received anything on the Government's alleged work in relation to presumptive cancers for firefighters. The workers compensation bill is public and is before a committee of this House. There has been so little action on firefighters that I have introduced my own bill to close this gap in the law—a gap the Government claimed to have been working on. However, when the Opposition asked for documents, under the initial call for papers on those bills, we received nothing. The new definition of Cabinet documents seems to cover all documents relating to the development of policies that either do, or might, end up before Cabinet at some point. That is just not what the law is. That definition can foreseeably capture anything the Government chooses to hide.

We already know that Ministers are operating on Signal, WhatsApp and other disappearing messaging apps. We know that in a lot of cases orders are no longer including correspondence and certainly do not include emails between bureaucrats and ministerial offices. We do not know where this direction has come from, but we do know that it is the hallmark of this Government. We need to draw a line in the sand when it comes to this issue. This House should not tolerate the disrespect shown to us by the Government when it comes to ordering the production of documents. The Government knows the consequences for noncompliance. The Government has pushed this House too far. I was a Minister of the former Government. I absolutely know there is a point at which government is forced to confront the consequences of its actions. This House has a right, and the power, to compel the production of documents. The Government can either comply or face the consequences.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (10:52): I lead for the Government in debate on this motion because the Treasurer is detained. Obviously this matter has history and the Treasurer's views are on record, but I will put the Government's case today. The Leader of the Opposition is right that this motion captures much of the history of this matter, but the trouble is it does not go back far enough. It does not go back to capture the many times he stood on the Government side of the Chamber putting the former Government's case. Time after time, he put a strong rebuttal in all sorts of cases.

I accept it is half-time, change sides, and that the current Government is in the uncomfortable position of the very same complaint being brought against us. However, the views I put in relation to this matter are that the Government is receiving the same advice from the Cabinet Office that was given to the former Government. During budget estimates hearings the Leader of the Opposition put some of these issues to the agencies, but he has not particularly pursued this matter beyond bringing it to this House in this motion. I reject the claim that the Government is seeking to radically expand the definitions. That is not the case. Many of the matters listed in paragraph (5) of the motion clearly would be the subject of Cabinet consideration. The Government is certainly not moving away from the earlier definitions. I note that documents have been voluntarily produced by the Treasurer. I thank him and the Government for doing that. The motion acknowledges:

In the interests of transparency, the Government has decided to provide further documents to the Legislative Council on a voluntary and confidential basis.

That is the basis on which the former Government produced the documents, but I thank the Treasurer for going beyond that. Paragraph (5) of the motion refers to a significant number of documents. If there are specific documents the Leader of the Opposition is particularly exercised about, I will convey that to the Treasurer to see the Government's attitude to releasing some of them. There is no question that some of the documents referred to by the Leader of the Opposition would come under the definitions that have been routinely used. I flag that the Government will move an amendment to the motion.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (10:55): I support the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. I share my experience with the matters raised in paragraph (3) of the motion concerning this Government's much broader definition of matters that go to Cabinet as part of its strategy of hiding material that would otherwise have been produced in response to calls for the production of documents under Standing Order 52. I had the experience of a call for papers in relation to the statutory appointment of two directors of Racing NSW, Charny and Crismale. When the documents were returned, we knew who was on the selection panel. Then all the material disappeared and we found out by press release that Charny and Crismale had been reappointed. I had very good information,

as I do in relation to racing, that something more nefarious had occurred—that the quasi-Minister, Steve McMahon, was able to veto two women who had been put forward to the selection panel. He did that, and then the Minister gave a temporary reappointment to Charny and Crismale. I know that as a matter of fact.

The Minister took a statutory appointment, under the Act—not a Cabinet appointment—that had always been made by the racing Minister and put it to Cabinet. I imagine that at the end of every Minns Cabinet meeting there is a list of appointments and other matters taken to Cabinet to prevent this House from calling for that material under Standing Order 52. After a lengthy period in politics, would anyone ever be naive about anything? Despite all the honest words from the Mookhey library founder and Honest John about the importance of Standing Order 52, we now find out that this Government is hiding material away using four strategies: the pens-down meeting on national security; government being conducted on the Signal app; material not returned, or that comes in six or nine months later; and a long list of matters dealt with in five minutes at the end of Minns Cabinet meetings solely to stop this House exercising its legal powers that are equivalent to freedom of information.

The Government should be condemned for those strategies. They will lead to this House exerting its powers and authority in this area. As a house of review, we should not be subject to the four strategies the Government has deployed. The Leader of the Opposition is right with regard to the excessive use of Cabinet to hide documents. The Minister for Gaming and Racing admitted to this during budget estimates hearings. I suggested to him that he did not have to take it to Cabinet, and his response was, "Well, I did, and that's the end of the matter." The arrogance of the strategy is breathtaking compared with what the goody-two-shoes said when they were in opposition. They all had little haloes over their heads, but those have now fallen down around their ankles. We condemn them for it.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (10:58): I support this motion and I especially support the power of this House to order the production of documents. This adds another sorry example to those we have already heard of this Government trying to obstruct the proper production of documents and thus the necessary work of this House. It appears that claims of parliamentary privilege, often spurious, are being used to stop the public production of documents. The existence of the power to call for papers has been recognised since at least 1839, as the material sought is reasonably necessary for this House to fulfil its functions.

Standing Order 52 is not new and neither is this Government. It has had ample time to get used to its obligations under Standing Order 52. It claims to stand ready to facilitate the efficient provision of government information to members of this House. However, the practice stands in stark contrast to the theory. Rather than facilitating the proactive release of information necessary for us to fulfil our constitutional role, it often feels as if the Government throws up every roadblock it can think of to stop information being released. Standing Order 52 (5) recognises that some documents may be—

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

Questions Without Notice

TIMBER INDUSTRY AND GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (11:00): My question is directed to the Minister for Finance. Prior to describing payments to impacted timber mills and haulage contractors to help cover wages for a 10-week period to 16 November 2025 as "JobKeeper-style payments", no modelling was done on exempting wages paid from those payments from payroll tax. Noting that, will the Minister now consider providing for such an exemption, as provided under section 66D of the Payroll Tax Act for wages subsidised under the Commonwealth JobKeeper scheme?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:01): I thank the honourable member for the question. Was he reading from something?

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: It was only the question. Do you want a copy of the question?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You were reading a quote out. Do you mind if I read the question?

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Yes, sure.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I thank the honourable member for the copy of the question. I thought he was reading a quote that I had made but that was not the case. The question from the member is in relation to the Great Koala National Park. It comes off the back of a question that I was asked yesterday about the payroll tax provisions that will be applied to the payments being provided to affected businesses. I make a similar point to one that I made yesterday: The process is being led by the Leader of the Government, the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Agriculture, in close consultation, as we work through the implementation of

this policy. A package of funding is available and it is true that it is for JobKeeper-style payments. As I said to the member who asked me the supplementary question yesterday, the Government took a range of economic modelling into account, including economic modelling about what the payments should look like. That informed the announcement made by the Premier and the Ministers in Coffs Harbour last weekend.

In relation to the exemptions from payroll tax, my understanding—and I am happy to be corrected—is that the payments to businesses are to cover their operating costs. Like any business that should be paying payroll tax in New South Wales, those businesses should do that. That would be part of that calculation, but there is no gotcha moment here. It is part of the calculations made through a process that is being ably led by two Ministers, as the Government works through the implementation of an important election commitment. Let us be clear: If the Government does not act, koalas will become extinct. It is not happening off in the never-never. When those opposite were in government and had the opportunity to make lasting change, they did not. They tore themselves apart and failed to act. Government members are acting in consultation with local communities and in a considered way. We are prepared to put ourselves on the line and do the work. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (11:04): I ask a supplementary question. I thank the Minister for what was an unusual clarification. Given that the so-called "JobKeeper-style payments", unlike actual JobKeeper payments, are neither designed to keep a worker connected with an employer through a period of difficulty until the employer is again able to meet the full cost of wages from the business, nor exempt from payroll tax, will the New South Wales Government cease referring to those payments as "JobKeeper-style payments" and remove all reference to that misleading and confusing description of the payments from Government websites?

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Point of order: The supplementary question contained argument and was also a completely new question.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: To the point of order: The supplementary question goes specifically to the issue of whether the payments are JobKeeper-style payments and, if so, should be subject to payroll tax exemptions.

The PRESIDENT: I do not uphold the point of order. Firstly, I have made the point that I am prepared to allow some flexibility, as previous Presidents have, when the argument is related to policy. The argument in the supplementary question is clearly related to policy. Secondly, I have also extended wide latitude in relation to supplementary questions, which I do again on this occasion. There was enough similarity to the original question and answer to warrant the supplementary question being in order. The Minister has the call and may answer it in any directly relevant way she sees fit.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:05): In short, no, because the member is wrong. The point is that the Government is referring to the payments as "JobKeeper-style payments" because that is something that is apparently—

[*Opposition members interjected.*]

The Hon. Rose Jackson: How about you work on your own policy!

The PRESIDENT: Order! There are too many interjections from members on both sides of the Chamber.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I acknowledge the interjection of the Hon. Rose Jackson because it is the most considered one. This is a really important issue. As the Government works through each negotiation, it will take into consideration the usual operating costs of the business. Any business that has a payroll threshold of over \$1.2 million should pay 5.45 per cent in payroll tax, as they are required to by law. I note that a number of the impacted mills are smaller operations and so may not hit that payroll tax threshold, but some will. If they come forward in the course of those negotiations—ably led by the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Agriculture—the Government will consider those operating costs to be part of the negotiations. This Government continues to support workers in engaging with businesses to make sure that the ultimate outcome, which is protecting koalas from extinction, can be achieved in a considered way.

The PRESIDENT: Before I call the Hon. Greg Donnelly, I welcome the powerhouse Mayor of Forbes and president of Local Government NSW, Phyllis Miller, OAM, and the chief executive of Local Government NSW, Mr David Reynolds, who are present in my gallery today. They are both very welcome indeed.

STATE ECONOMY

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY (11:08): My question without notice is addressed to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer update the House on the recent publication of the quarterly national accounts and the performance of the New South Wales economy?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (11:08): I thank the member for his question. I also welcome the mayor and the chief executive officer of Local Government NSW. Following the update I provided to the House yesterday on Fitch's decision to reaffirm the State's triple-A credit rating, I report some more encouraging news: the release of the June national accounts earlier this month, which provide a welcome sign that the New South Wales economy is gathering strength. Pleasingly, domestic economic activity in New South Wales grew by 0.5 per cent in the June quarter to be 1.8 per cent higher through the year. That is a stronger result than Victoria and puts New South Wales back on track with the growth recorded in Western Australia, Queensland, South Australia and the national economy, which expanded by 0.6 per cent over the same period.

Even more encouraging is that recovery in New South Wales is being driven by both stronger business investment, which rose by 2 per cent, and household consumption, which increased by 0.7 per cent. That growth in consumption shows confidence returning to family budgets with both essential and discretionary spending lifting, including on new cars and recreation. That is not by accident. Earlier I provided the House with an update on how fast real wages are growing again in New South Wales. I know the shadow Treasurer will welcome interest rates coming down, real wages going up and, as a result, consumption lifting, which is then catalysing business investment. That is the virtuous cycle that we would like to unleash. I know that, as the shadow Treasurer gets ready to send today's press release, he will say, "Good job keeping the triple-A rating and getting economic growth in the private sector." As a Liberal shadow Treasurer, a thriving private sector should matter to the shadow Treasurer.

It is most welcome to see private investment growth under our policies, but we still have challenges ahead of us. We still need to do more to make sure that businesses can invest in their plans, and give workers better tools to lift the nation's productivity. One of the best things we can do to lift productivity in New South Wales is to make sure that we fix our planning system—and we will have more to say about that—to make sure our skills system gets investment. We must also make sure that households have confidence in their finances so that they are comfortable spending. One of the biggest risks to that element is the shadow Treasurer's policy of bringing back a wages cap. Suppressing wages growth will undermine the progress we have made in the State's finances.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Point of order: If the Treasurer wants to quote me about a policy of the shadow Treasurer, which he described as "bringing back a wages cap", he is obliged to tell the truth, and that is just not true.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: To the point of order: I withdraw the claim that the shadow Treasurer has a policy.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Further to the point of order: That remark does not address my point of order. The Treasurer is obliged not to say something blatantly untrue.

The Hon. Courtney Houssos: To the point of order: The Treasurer withdrew the accusation that the shadow Treasurer had a policy. The wages cap is a policy. Therefore, one plus one equals two. The shadow Treasurer does not like asking the Treasurer questions, but that is the consequence of what the Treasurer just said.

The PRESIDENT: I make two points. Firstly, as I have said in previous rulings, I cannot fact-check every question and statement in question time in real time, so I do not intend to do so on this occasion. Secondly, I suspect that the Treasurer will withdraw the statement without qualification during the final six seconds of his answer. The Treasurer has the call.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I withdraw it without qualification. Let us all cheer a fast-growing New South Wales economy.

The PRESIDENT: I acknowledge the visitors in the public gallery. I welcome Councillor Callum Pull, Deputy Lord Mayor of Newcastle. I also welcome guests of the Hon. Scott Barrett, a range of delegates from Youth Action, which works towards a society where all young people in New South Wales are supported, engaged, valued and have their rights realised. I also welcome Mackenzie Chisholm, an intern in the office of the Hon. Sarah Mitchell.

NEW ENGLAND RENEWABLE ENERGY ZONE

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (11:13): I look forward to seeing the visitors later on. My question is directed to the Minister for Energy. Following a one-hour webinar on 26 August 2025, stakeholders had just 17 days to lodge a response to the extremely technical 81-page *New England Renewable Energy Zone Generation and Storage Consultation Paper*. The paper states:

EnergyCo and the NSW Government are committed to early and genuine consultation with industry, local communities and the public as we progress the design of the New England REZ.

Is allowing the community just over two weeks to consider and respond to the consultation paper really demonstrating a commitment to early and genuine consultation?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:14): I thank the member for her question, but she ignores that there have been more than two years of discussion in the lead-up to the work on the New England Renewable Energy Zone. I know that, because I have been involved in the meetings with mayors and a range of stakeholders in the design of the New England Renewable Energy Zone. On the specifics of the 17 days to respond to the consultation paper, I am happy to find out any additional information. Consultation is really important. It is ongoing and iterative, and changes with circumstances as large projects like renewable energy zones are put in place.

Since becoming the Minister for Energy, I have made very clear my expectations that EnergyCo will genuinely and seriously engage with people. The idea that there has been just one webinar is a joke; that is not the case. There has been ongoing and active consultation with individual landholders, local government, industry and a range of organisations at the same time and in different places. Routes have been changed as a result of input from community members, many of whom I have met. On the issue of the 17 days, I am happy to take on board whether people want extra time. We want people to have enough time for input.

I take on notice the various points about the circumstances, what other information has been provided and how. These are very technical reports, as they need to be, as we are building out transmission lines and locating renewable energy projects in these areas to power our State's grid. An enormous amount of work goes into it. I will not quote the full number, but I know there are literally hundreds of changes to routes all the time. People are talking to people on the ground, looking at where we can make changes. That is the importance of an iterative process when developing very large infrastructure projects. I take on board and always think it is reasonable to ask whether people have enough time. I will provide more information about the time frame compared with what we have done for other projects. If we can provide people with a bit more time, I am okay with that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (11:16): I ask a supplementary question. I thank the Minister for her answer, in which she mentioned that consultation is very technical and has involved many discussions over time. Could the Minister elucidate how, in the consultation paper, the proposed new connection assets model would impact landholders adopting it? What impact would it have on the compulsory acquisition of land in the New England Renewable Energy Zone in comparison with the hub-to-project model being used in the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone, and the generator-led model being used in the South West Renewable Energy Zone?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:17): I am glad that the Hon. Sarah Mitchell has such an interest in the different models to develop the renewable energy zones. The model is important. The Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap was established with bipartisan support and is an iterative process. I hope it continues to have bipartisan and multipartisan support in the Parliament, because it is fundamental to replacing ageing coal-fired power stations and rolling out renewable energy across the State. It is fundamental to getting things right.

When Government members came to office, the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone was already planned, and one of my jobs as Minister for Energy was to implement that process. We have learned a lot through Central-West Orana and now have a much better understanding of the considerations needed to drive down costs, to improve efficiency and to work collaboratively with the community. I will take on notice the different types of procurement and the ways those projects can be considered. I accept that they are super technical for some people, but there have been briefings and a lot of groups working through those. Talking about community engagement, the preliminary study corridor and property discussions began on June 23. That was then revised in March 2024. Since July last year, there has been the scoping report of the preferred study corridor.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: Point of order: I believe the Minister said she would take on notice the detail of the supplementary question, which she will have three weeks to answer even though the community only had two weeks to look at the consultation paper. This part of the Minister's answer is not relevant to my question.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: To the point of order: I was asked directly about what sort of community engagement there was and the way in which we were going to operate that. I am taking on notice the technical parts of the report, which, let us be clear, I have not read in detail. I am providing an elucidation of the answer, which I am entitled to do.

The PRESIDENT: The first part of the supplementary question was about consultation, and the Minister is being directly relevant. There is no point of order. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Again, community reference groups have also been in place since December last year and they have ongoing discussions. It is incorrect to suggest that there was one webinar and only some people have information. There are ongoing consultations in a range of different areas, with people on the ground working with people. Can we improve those? We always can and I am always looking to do that. But it is wrong to suggest that this is a one-hit wonder that has not been discussed. It has been, much more fully than in one webinar.

The PRESIDENT: Before I call the Hon. Emma Hurst, I acknowledge another guest in the gallery today, Daniel Azzi, who is a guest of the Hon. Rose Jackson. It is his birthday today and he has chosen to spend it watching Legislative Council question time. I wish Daniel a happy birthday.

GREYHOUND WELFARE

The Hon. EMMA HURST (11:20): My question is directed to the Special Minister of State, representing the Minister for Gaming and Racing. It was previously reported that a two-year-old greyhound, Irinka Lindsay, was being forced to race with terminal cancer. At budget estimates I was advised that the dog had been prohibited from racing, pending an assessment by a specialist veterinarian. However, it has now been suggested on social media that Irinka Lindsay is returning to racing. Will the Minister explain whether this greyhound with terminal cancer has been forced to return to racing and, if so, why?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (11:21): I thank the member for her question and her interest in issues relating to greyhound racing. As I have indicated before, the Government believes that greyhound racing, like any other industry working with animals, has to be run with the highest standards of animal welfare and integrity. I am advised that the circumstances regarding the greyhound in question were investigated by the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission. As members know, the commission is the industry's independent regulator of animal welfare and has sole responsibility for those decisions.

The commission has advised that the greyhound Irinka Lindsay was stood down from racing on 18 August 2025 under rule 165 (5) (a) of the Greyhound Racing Rules, pending an inquiry into the greyhound's fitness to race. That was regarded as a precautionary action. It was taken to ensure the greyhound's welfare and to allow time for specialist veterinary assessment. The commission's stewards then considered specialist veterinary advice as part of the inquiry. The commission's chief veterinary officer reviewed the specialist advice and has now confirmed the greyhound is fit to return to racing. I stress that that clearance has been granted on a conditional basis, subject to mandatory veterinary reviews to monitor ongoing fitness. That is the advice I have before me, but I am happy to provide any other details that the member would like.

The Hon. EMMA HURST (11:22): I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate or take on notice whether the independent specialist vet who did the assessment was independent from industry and whether the ongoing veterinary reviews that are mandatory will also be done by a vet who is independent from industry?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (11:23): I thank the member for her supplementary question. The advice I have to date is that the initial advice was specialist veterinary assessment. That was then considered by the stewards and the chief veterinary officer of the commission. At the moment I do not have advice as to whether that was an independent specialist veterinary assessment. I understand that the member is asking for that clarification in relation to the actions that have happened and in relation to the ongoing veterinary review. I am happy to take those on notice and I will get an answer from the Minister for Gaming and Racing and his office.

RENEWABLE ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (11:24): My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Energy. Will the Minister outline the policy options for managing the decommissioning of renewable energy projects?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:24): I thank the honourable member for this very important question, because I hear that the Opposition has a new energy policy, which is interesting. It is a massive backtrack on its previous policy, but I digress. The rollout of renewable energy is essential for keeping the lights on in New South Wales as we race to replace our ageing coal-fired power stations. It is also essential to getting to net zero by 2050. That is why New South Wales is lucky to have the Energy Infrastructure Roadmap—something that has been supported across Parliament for a long period.

As the rollout of the road map continues, there has been ongoing discussion and consideration of the need, or otherwise, for decommissioning bonds for renewable energy projects. I note that some of our older wind farms are now being decommissioned—in the way that they are supposed to be decommissioned, which is as part of their consent conditions under the planning system. That is what is required. It is mandatory and is already being undertaken. There have not been any problems in relation to that. To help members understand what goes on, it is important to note that the Government imposes conditions to ensure that infrastructure is removed and land is returned to its pre-existing use—when those projects were applied. That is already in place and occurring.

Landholders who host renewable energy projects do so voluntarily and are supportive of hosting the infrastructure. They are aware of the decommissioning requirements of the projects on their land. We have worked, and we continue to work, with NSW Farmers by providing guidance and support on the information that landholders need. It would be good if those opposite actually read the guide. They might learn something. We are also working very hard to deal with the waste issues for renewable projects. I am pleased to be leading work on the national re-use and recycling scheme for solar panels to make sure we do not waste even one component that can be recycled. The previous Government supported our approach. It was actually its design. But it is now curious that the Liberals and The Nationals are planning to introduce legislation that would add a levy to every wind turbine, battery and solar panel in this State. The Opposition wants to impose a renewable energy tax on every renewable project.

[Opposition members interjected.]

It will cost. Those opposite do not like that. It will cost over \$1.4 billion to maintain decommissioning bonds just for the projects that are coming on line from now until 2030. A tax sitting in a government bank account without building a single project will push up the costs of replacing ageing coal-fired power stations, make bills more expensive and deliver no new electricity to the grid. That new tax would add to up-front costs and freeze investment in new energy supply. Make no mistake, investment delays will risk blackouts and increase costs.

VENUES NSW TENDER POLICY

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (11:27): My question is directed to the Treasurer in his own capacity and also representing the sports Minister, Minister Kamper. I refer the Treasurer to the answer to a budget estimates supplementary question received yesterday from the CEO of Venues NSW, Kerrie Mather, assuring the Parliament that there has been no impropriety in the tendering practices of her organisation and dismissing my question to her about members of the Venues tender evaluation panel doubling up as referees for tendering companies and not declaring any conflict of interest. Why, in contrast to the CEO's answer, do documents show that, for the current turf supply tender at Venues NSW, senior Venues officials Johnny Naofal and Adam Lewis, who are on the tender evaluation panel, have not declared any conflicts of interest yet also appear as referees for the tendering company that usually wins such contracts, Evergreen Turf Australia?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (11:28): I thank the Hon. Mark Latham for his question. I do not have those documents. So, to the extent to which he has asked me why those documents show that, I am in no position to respond unless the member is prepared to give me the documents. With respect to the allegations that the member is making, given that he asked me in my capacity representing the Minister, I will take the question on notice. He also asked me in my own capacity but, to the best of my knowledge, I do not have any role with the Venues NSW agency.

The Hon. Mark Latham: You fund them.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Yes, I do. That is true, but it does not fall under my arrangements. Nevertheless, I will take the question on notice. I understand the question the member has asked and the serious nature of the allegations he has made. I remind members that, should they receive evidence or allegations of wrongdoing by public officials, they have an obligation to refer that to the ICAC.

The Hon. Tania Mihailuk: How do you know he hasn't?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I am not suggesting that the member has not. I am simply saying that the reason we have organisations like the ICAC is to be able to test those theories. I am sure the member will be mindful of that duty, should he be given evidence that would suggest malpractice, maladministration or corruption on behalf of any public official. I am also positive that the member takes that duty seriously, and I would argue that it is better for those serious allegations to be tested at the ICAC from a point of fact perhaps before the member asks questions about them.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (11:30): I ask a supplementary question. Under the principles of parliamentary scrutiny and ministerial accountability, I ask the Treasurer to elaborate on his answer. Will he, in

good faith, sit down with me and, hopefully, Minister Kamper to access the documents and ensure this impropriety is sorted out and does not happen again? That is my only interest in this.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: Oh, in good faith!

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Listen, there is a serious issue here, and I would like to work with the Ministers to get it sorted. I raised it at budget estimates hearings, and it has not been sorted since. I am raising it now as a parliamentarian.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (11:31): Again, I will always consider requests for a meeting in good faith from members. If a member wishes to contact me or my office, we are happy to consider a request for a meeting in good faith. But I have also undertaken to take the question on notice and refer it to the appropriate Minister for an answer to bring back to the House. Again, I remind members that we all have a duty under Acts to report allegations of corruption if we receive them.

TIMBER INDUSTRY AND GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (11:31): My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. What modelling has been done on the impact of banning timber harvesting in 176,000 acres of State forest on the supply of hardwood as green structural timber for bridge girders and timbers and wharf piles? What alternative sources have been identified, what are the additional costs and, if the alternative sources include imports or manufactured products, what are the environmental impacts, including any overall increase in emissions?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (11:32): I thank the member for her question. I am delighted that she, on behalf of the Opposition, is inching towards a position on this. I hope she gets there. I am confident there has been much work done on those estimates, given the significant processes that have been underway. I commend the Ministers who have worked on the issue. These decisions are always contentious, and a number of them have come through the New South Wales Parliament over the decades. The teamwork during the assessment process has been quite exceptional. Minister Moriarty and Minister Sharpe have been ably assisted by Minister Saffin, who has great experience dealing with these issues in impacted communities.

The Hon. Natalie Ward: Point of order: This is about relevance. My question was specifically about the impacts and the modelling. It was not about which Ministers have been involved. I ask that the Minister be drawn back to the question.

The PRESIDENT: I hate to say it, but I was not listening at that point. I was waiting to acknowledge our special guests who have just entered the gallery. The Minister is an honourable and upstanding man, and I am sure that if he was not being relevant he now will be.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Mr President, I am not offended that you were not listening.

The Hon. Rod Roberts: At least he was awake!

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: As the Hon. Rod Roberts says, it is a tough job. The point is significant: Much work has been done to get to this point. It is behind the scenes, and it has been very cooperative. Having seen some of that in the past, I commend the modelling work that has been done.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: It's all "behind the scenes". What does that mean?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I acknowledge and reject the assertion that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is making. It is not now all behind the scenes. The modelling is out in public. Significant work has been done, but the announcement is public. The only thing that is not public is the position of the Liberal Party on the Great Koala National Park.

The Hon. Natalie Ward: Point of order: My point of order is again on relevance. It was a very specific question, and I do not understand why the Minister is not able to talk about the modelling.

The PRESIDENT: I was listening on this occasion, and the Hon. Natalie Ward is quite right. The Minister will come back to the question at hand.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I assure the House that there has been significant work—

The PRESIDENT: Order! I would like to hear from the Minister. At the moment I am hearing from everyone else.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: —including the modelling for each of those aspects of the decision. The member may have missed, in the information provided by the Government, that the park will impact about 20 per cent of supply across the board for the State. That is the conclusion in the modelling. There is adequate

supply. The allegations from members opposite that it wipes out hardwood supply in New South Wales is incorrect.

[*Business interrupted.*]

Visitors

VISITORS

The PRESIDENT: I acknowledge senior representatives from the Parliament of Ghana and the Ghana High Commission who are present in the gallery. I welcome special guests the Hon. Andrew Asiamah Amoako, the Second Deputy Speaker; the Hon. Kweku George Ricketts-Hagan, the Deputy Majority Leader; the Hon. Comfort Doyoe Cudjoe, First Deputy Majority Whip; the Hon. Felix Akwetey Okle, the Hon. Collins Adomako-Mensah; Mr Emmanuel Koranteng; Mr Stanley Samuel Famiah; and Mrs Betty Osafo Mensah. Having been to Ghana, I know that it is an extraordinary country and a beacon of democracy in Africa and the world. We thank them for their presence today.

Questions Without Notice

NSW SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

[*Business resumed.*]

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (11:37): My question 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 local communities across the Riverina and Murray region to manage the Federal Government's water buybacks?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:38): I thank the member for that important question. We are standing by southern basin communities by delivering a very important program: the NSW Sustainable Communities Program.

[*Opposition members interjected.*]

The National Party should pay attention to this. It is why people are moving away from their party. I remind the House again that the Government is standing by those communities with the very important NSW Sustainable Communities Program, an investment of \$160 million to support the Murray and Riverina regions by generating jobs, boosting economic growth and supporting resilient communities. Whilst the Government does not support water buybacks, the Federal Government is pursuing its agenda in that regard, and we are not going to turn down—

The PRESIDENT: Order! There are too many interjections from and conversations between Opposition members. The Minister will be heard in silence.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: The people of the Riverina and Murray regions are very interested in this information and in the \$160 million package of support for communities across that very important region of New South Wales. While the State Government does not support buybacks, the Federal Government is pursuing that work, as it is entitled to do. We will not miss the opportunity to invest \$160 million into these very important regions. Two weeks ago I was in Leeton, where I announced the successful applicants for the Sustainable Communities Program Early Investment Round.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: Point of order: From the back of the Chamber, I am finding it difficult to hear a very important answer on a very important issue for the people of southern New South Wales and for anyone who cares about water in this State. I am finding it difficult because Opposition members are entertaining themselves with stunts of pouring water and conversation. It is enormously disrespectful to the Minister and anyone who is interested in this issue. I ask you to ask them to be quiet and not perform petty stunts.

The PRESIDENT: I will not comment specifically on that issue, but I will make some broader comments. There is a practice creeping into question time of predominantly Opposition members but also Government members having conversations loudly amongst themselves rather than listening to answers. That is not what question time is for. All members will consider that. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: The disorder is incredibly disrespectful to these communities, who want to hear about the investment from the New South Wales Government in very important projects for the future of their communities.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Wes Fang and the Hon. Natalie Ward will cease interjecting.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: Our investment in the initial round of \$16.3 million for eight projects includes upgrades to SunRice's distribution centre, with a \$1 million investment to support significant

improvements to secure rice distribution in the Riverina and maintain up to 90 jobs in the region. SunRice is a very important company. We are providing a \$2 million investment for upgrades to the Roxy Theatre and to establish the Roxy Institute of Performing Arts. This is an incredibly popular facility in that part of the world, and the Government is really pleased to be supporting it. A very significant \$4 million investment in Hay, for the expansion of the Ravensworth feedlot to 75,000 head of cattle, will be a game changer for that region. The projects also include a \$4 million upgrade to the Bullanginya precinct at Barooga Sports Club for upgrades to tourism and accommodation for Aboriginal communities and everyone across the region; a \$3 million investment to improve tourism sites and revitalise the Griffith CBD; a \$1 million investment to develop sites, improve access and help attract new businesses in the Moama CBD; a \$700,000 investment to support tourism in the Balranald shire—*[Time expired.]*

The PRESIDENT: I welcome to the gallery students from Sydney Girls High School who are participating in the Legal Studies and the Legislature program conducted by the Parliamentary Education and Engagement team. They are very welcome.

COASTAL EROSION MANAGEMENT

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN (11:42): My question is directed to the Leader of the Government. Earlier this year the Premier travelled to Wamberal on the Central Coast, where he intervened in the council's work with residents to build a structure to bring an end to coastal erosion at Wamberal Beach. He informed attendees that the Minns Government would not cooperate with council and residents and instead offered his view that works similar to those around Newcastle Harbour and Stockton were his personal preference for Wamberal. Last month a Central Coast councillor and her husband were charged by police after they physically confronted a resident who was placing rock bags in his backyard to save his property. Last week the Auditor-General released a scathing report slamming the State Government's handling of coastal management and erosion by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. Does the Government have a plan to give certainty to residents losing their homes due to inaction, bureaucracy and local council politics?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:43): It is a great question. I like the optimism that somehow the Government can manage the Central Coast Council conflict, which seems to be ongoing. But we are trying, and we are working very closely with the council. This is a very serious matter. The unfortunate incident that people saw last week shows that the heightened tensions within the community are not helpful. It is not good that the situation has landed here. I have a couple of things to say. Firstly, the reason we have the Auditor-General and the audit reports is to tell us when we are not getting things right. The report was very clear about the changes and improvements that need to be made in relation to coastal management performance. Coastal management is extremely complicated. It is challenging for councils and for my department. But I reassure the member that the Government supports all five recommendations that were made. Work is already underway. We want to take the practical actions to improve how we deliver the coastal management program. My department is already working on the implementation plan for the management framework, which we hope will help.

Secondly, Minister Janelle Saffin and I—there are a bunch of us because the matter crosses a range of portfolios—are working closely with Central Coast Council to manage the erosion issues. Again, there is significant conflict within the community about how to deal with it. The ability for people to protect their private land is not in contention. What is in contention is what else goes outside, onto public land, in relation to walls or the various types of treatments, whether it is sand nourishment or something else. The NSW Reconstruction Authority has provided council with the ability to install temporary protections while it finishes its coastal management plan. The Government is working on this. I accept that there are challenges with the local community. We have also had an increase in weather events. There are a few sceptics in this place, but climate change is real and is impacting on coastal erosion. We have both sea level rise and an increase in weather events that are impacting erosion in a way we have not seen. We have always seen a bit of erosion, but we have not seen the frequency which we are seeing now. Extreme weather events are making all of that harder.

The point I make is, yes, we accept that we need to do better. The audit report is welcome, from my perspective. The question is how do we make this work better over time? People in New South Wales love their beaches and live close to the coast but see the impacts of erosion all the time. We are working with councils on their plans. I am giving some councils longer to get their plans in place. But once they have them in place, they can also get financial support—*[Time expired.]*

TIMBER INDUSTRY AND GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

The PRESIDENT: I call the Hon. Scott Barrett.

[A member interjected.]

Order! The question is to come from the Hon. Scott Barrett, not the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (11:47): My question is directed to the Minister for Agriculture. A spokesperson for the New South Wales Government was quoted in a recent article in *The Land* as asserting:

The majority of research confirms that timber harvesting has negative impacts on numerous threatened species, including Koalas.

Does the Minister, who is responsible for forestry, endorse this statement?

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: Point of order: The member is asking the Minister to express an opinion. Asking whether the Minister endorses a comment is a clear invitation to express an opinion.

The Hon. Wes Fang: To the point of order: The question clearly referenced a quote from a Government spokesperson. The question is whether the Minister, as the Minister responsible for forestry, endorses the position of the New South Wales Government. That is not seeking an opinion; it is seeking what the Minister's policy is in relation to what the Government spokesperson said.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: To the point of order: The definition of "endorse" is "declare one's public approval or support of". That is clearly seeking an opinion.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: To the point of order: The word "endorse" is interpreted as "Is that the Government's position?"

The PRESIDENT: Order! While this is an interesting intellectual debate, I do not uphold the Treasurer's point of order. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition and the Hon. Wes Fang. The question is, "Does the Minister, who is responsible for forestry, endorse this statement?" As such, there is a clear link with the Minister's role within the Government and the policies that she is pursuing. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:50): I want to take a swing at the question, but I cannot remember the quote that was put to me.

The PRESIDENT: The Clerk will stop the clock. The question is:

A spokesperson for the New South Wales Government is quoted in a recent article in *The Land* as asserting:

The majority of research confirms that timber harvesting has negative impacts on numerous threatened species, including Koalas.

Does the Minister, who is responsible for forestry, endorse this statement?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I thank the member for the question. I do not know the details of the article, the context for the quote or who gave it. I do not have any further information about any of the context that has been put. In general terms, this has been a topical conversation in this place and in the community since the Government made an announcement about its longstanding commitment to create the Great Koala National Park, to protect koalas, which are facing extinction, and other very important animals in New South Wales. We have announced the work to establish that park. As part of that work, we have also talked about the impact on industry in that part of the State. Government members are committed to the creation of the park and to industry in New South Wales. We will continue to do that work. Whether individual quotes pulled out of articles that I do not have the full context for will shape that debate, I cannot say. But I am happy to talk in general terms or with any specific detail that I can about the forestry industry and the work we are doing on what that could look like into the future—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Once again, there are too many interjections. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: —while we also deliver on the longstanding commitment to create that very important national park.

HOUSING SUPPLY

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (11:52): My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Housing. Will the Minister update the House on how the New South Wales Government is continuing to invest in and commit to addressing the housing crisis with innovation and delivery?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Youth) (11:52): I am very pleased to inform the House about a really important initiative that the Government has recently launched, which is the modern methods of construction showcase. There has been a real push in recent years, under this Government, to make New South Wales a leading jurisdiction in Australia for the use of modern methods of construction to support housing delivery. That has culminated in a showcase that is currently happening in Mascot, with a demonstration

two-bedroom unit that was built entirely using modern methods of construction. Industry, stakeholders and—on Friday this week—members of the general public are invited to come and look at, touch, feel and walk around that unit.

All members of the House are invited if they happen to be free. Nothing could be better after a fortnight in Parliament than coming to O'Riordan Street, Mascot, and seeing for themselves some of the incredibly innovative, high-quality, well-designed, beautiful homes that will be coming off the factory line over the coming years using modern methods of construction. Modern methods of construction are a game-changing short cut in the delivery of housing stock. There is a huge housing crisis in this State, and we desperately need tens of thousands of new homes quickly. It was pleasing to see the Treasurer, the Premier and the planning Minister announce incredibly significant reforms to the planning system. Obviously, that is a really important initiative. The reality is that labour shortages, supply chain shortages and the weather—all of the rain that we have had—can delay construction. Waste is another issue—traditional methods of construction produce a significant amount of landfill. All of those factors can stand in the way of delivery.

The PRESIDENT: Members will come to order. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The technology that is now available through modern methods of construction can circumvent all of that. It means homes can be delivered in half the time that traditional methods take, while saving between 10 per cent and 20 per cent of the costs. They are faster and they are cheaper. A lot of people, including the Leader of the Opposition, have said, "Yes, but they are not as good. These are not quality homes. These are not the kinds of homes we need."

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Hang on, where did I say that?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The Leader of the Opposition said, "We are asking the next generation to accept a standard of housing that is lower", and that is just nonsense.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: That is not true.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: You are on record as saying that those homes are of a lower quality and a lower standard. Come on down to Mascot this Friday and see the quality homes that we are able to build using modern methods of construction. More quality homes for New South Wales, quickly—that is the Government's plan.

The PRESIDENT: Before I call the Hon. Tania Mihailuk, I make this point. I understand that there is goodwill and levity in the Chamber today, and that is lovely. However, members have to pull it back so that Hansard can do its job.

HOUSING SUPPLY

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (11:55): My question is directed to the Leader of the Government, representing the Premier and representing the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading. NSW Labor made a commitment to reduce red tape in its building legislation—which is much promised but still illusory—in order to unlock new housing supply. But the transcript of the hearing of the Public Accountability and Works Committee review of building industry legislation on 11 August 2025 revealed that stakeholders are frustrated with the slow pace of reform, with red tape only continuing to add to construction costs and slowing the delivery of new supply. Has the Government's building legislation been delayed because once again the Premier's office has had to step in and crisis-manage yet another one of Minister Chanthivong's failures, proving once again that he and his office appear to be incapable of presenting significant legislative reform to the Parliament without yearlong delays?

The Hon. Bob Nanva: Point of order: That question contained a lot of argument. I would suggest it is not consistent with the standing orders.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: To the point of order: The question also contained an epithet. It described a characteristic that is out of order under Standing Order 65 (1) (e). It used the word "illusory".

The PRESIDENT: Order! I call the Hon. Scott Farlow to order for the first time.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: Throw him out!

The PRESIDENT: I call the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham to order for the first time. I made a number of comments about this exact issue last week. The question contained far too many inferences, imputations and arguments of a personal nature. I rule the question out of order.

RENEWABLE ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (11:57): My question is directed to the Minister for Energy. Noting that the average life span of wind turbines is 20 to 30 years, that the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner estimates that the cost of commissioning a single wind turbine is between \$400,000 and \$600,000, and that there is a power imbalance between farmers and large energy companies, will the Minister support a mandatory decommissioning bond scheme to ensure that no farmer is left disadvantaged at the end of any renewable energy project on his or her land?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:58): I have already indicated that the short answer to that is no. The reason is that we already have a significant decommissioning process in place that is mandatory for renewable energy projects, as is appropriate. As part of development approval—

The Hon. Wes Fang: What's the bond?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Are you going to stop interjecting?

The Hon. Wes Fang: You said there was a bond. What is it?

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Wes Fang will cease interjecting. As I have said several times this week, Ministers' answers will not be peppered with comments from members on the benches. The Hon. Penny Sharpe will not respond to interjections as it only makes the situation worse.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: It is very hard to answer questions in a civilised manner when there are constant interjections.

The PRESIDENT: I understand. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: It is particularly hard when I have been asked a question by a member of this House who is genuine. I suspect she actually wants an answer, and I am trying to give her one. There are a range of different ways to decommission land to make sure that it is returned back to its original state if it is not going to continue to be used for renewable energy projects. Members opposite previously agreed with us that decommissioning bonds were not the way to deal with that. We will deal with it in a number of ways. Firstly, we will work closely with landholders to make sure that they know all the information when they host projects. Many landholders across the State are very happy with the arrangements that are in place. They understand the decommissioning arrangements well.

Secondly, I make the observations that once renewable energy projects are in place, particularly solar farms and wind turbines, it is unlikely that they will be completely decommissioned over time. The blades and panels may run out over time but, once the infrastructure is there, it can be replaced and upgraded as technology gets better. There is a future where the large turbines we use may get smaller and smaller as the result of new technology. I am not pretending we are there yet. I am trying to give a genuine answer about these matters. Decommissioning is a mandatory part of development approvals. As I said, the problem is that decommissioning bonds are essentially an up-front renewable energy tax that will kill the investment we require in New South Wales to actually build the projects under the road map. The privatised energy system has also made it harder.

Decommissioning bonds are not the answer that members opposite think they are. All they will do is slow investment and make it more difficult to get projects off the ground. They will not guarantee that projects will even get built in the first place. In the meantime, ageing coal-fired power plants are coming out of the system. We will have an increased risk of liability problems and increased prices because of wholesale spikes as outages on those coal-fired power stations increase. I understand that some members think decommissioning bonds are the answer, but they are not. They are a great big tax on renewable energy that will kill the road map.

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

NEW ENGLAND RENEWABLE ENERGY ZONE

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (12:01): I have additional information to provide in response to the question and supplementary question from the Hon. Sarah Mitchell about the New England Renewable Energy Zone [REZ]. EnergyCo published the *New England Renewable Energy Zone Generation and Storage Consultation Paper* on 15 August. Submissions closed four weeks later on 12 September. The paper outlines proposed design features under consideration, including a potential access scheme, a connection assets model and the provision of system strength for the New England REZ. That is part of the preliminary consultation.

The paper includes what happens if the Government decides to proceed with the development of an access scheme. Access schemes provide certainty for landholders about which projects will go forward and which projects will not. For example, 10 generation projects in Central-West Orana have access schemes. That deals with a lot of the angst that communities have about projects that are proposed but do not actually go forward. Access schemes are really important. If the Government decides to go ahead with a draft access scheme, it will be declared and published. There will be further consultation in 2026.

Consultation on this is iterative; it will change over time as we roll out the project. We are dealing with that for the New England REZ, which is several years away. I also place on record that other consultation is ongoing, as it should be. We have held over 17 community drop-in sessions. There have been seven community reference group meetings for people to talk through these issues. Those meetings are really important. There have been seven presentations to local community groups, as well as hundreds of other meetings and individual consultations with affected landholders and others who have an interest. Those will all continue to take place.

GREYHOUND WELFARE

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (12:03): In relation to the question I was asked by the Hon. Emma Hurst, I am advised that the expert veterinary specialist report that the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission relied upon to consider Irinka Lindsay's ability to race was independent of any previous veterinary practitioners involved in the matter. Further, the independent veterinarian was recommended and sourced by the chief veterinary officer of the commission. The veterinarian is employed by a veterinary hospital and specialist centre based in the Hunter region. The veterinarian is not employed by the commission nor by Greyhound Racing NSW. The independent veterinary report was also reviewed by the chief veterinary officer of the commission.

Supplementary Questions for Written Answers

NEW ENGLAND RENEWABLE ENERGY ZONE

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (12:04): My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Minister for Energy. I note the additional information that the Minister just gave. Apart from the one-hour webinar that was held on 26 August 2025, what other webinars or in-person community meetings were held from when the *New England Renewable Energy Zone Generation and Storage Consultation Paper* was released up to 12 September 2025, when the feedback was due, to specifically address the issues canvassed in the consultation paper?

TIMBER INDUSTRY AND GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (12:05): My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Minister for Agriculture. Further to the Minister's comments on the longstanding commitment of the Minns Labor Government to establish the Great Koala National Park and the implications of that decision on the forestry industry, will the Minister please provide a copy of her recent ministerial direction to Forestry Corporation under the State Owned Corporations Act?

VENUES NSW TENDER POLICY

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (12:05): My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer and his colleague Minister Kamper examine the Venues NSW and Evergreen Turf tender documents—they are small in number—and, in particular, the conflict of interest and referee declarations of Mr Naofal and Mr Lewis, and report to the House what action they will take on this matter? What action will be taken regarding the CEO of Venues NSW, Ms Mather? Will Minister Kamper and the Treasurer exercise their responsibilities under section 11 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act, given there is a whole section just for them?

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.

NEW ENGLAND RENEWABLE ENERGY ZONE

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (12:06): I address the question I asked the Minister for Energy about consultation with the New England community on the *New England Renewable Energy Zone Generation and Storage Consultation Paper*. From the outset, I give a massive shout-out to the member for Northern Tablelands,

Brendan Moylan, who has diligently kept his community informed on these issues. Like many in his community, he is extremely frustrated by the lack of consultation from this Government and by the impact it is having on good and decent people across the New England area. We are very concerned by the lack of consultation under this Government. Community members are concerned about having little to no time to consider very complex policy documents.

I note that the Minister took her answer on notice. I asked quite a technical question based on some of the information in the report, and the response from the Minister was "I will take that on notice. I will have to come back to you." The Minister gets 21 days to respond to the question I asked, and yet she expects the community to be able to respond to a far more complex technical paper in a smaller time frame. The good people living in the New England area are very switched on, but they are also running farms and businesses and managing their families. The Government just dropped the consultation papers on them and said, "Here we go. You've got a couple of weeks to come back to us." That does not represent a genuine and early consultation process with industry, local communities and the public. People are getting cranky about this. They do not feel like they are being listened to.

I have been to the New England area on the renewable energy zones inquiry. I know the area well. I live in Gunnedah and have family in the Armidale area. People want to understand what is happening. They want to have an opportunity to engage. They want the Government to hear their concerns. It does not help the situation when they get such a small amount of time to respond to a consultation paper. In fact, I would say it inflames the situation. People in that part of the world want to be heard. In her additional answer provided at the end of question time, the Minister spoke about why access rights are important in giving the community clarity and allaying some of its concerns. She also spoke about the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone.

We are not seeing less concern in the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone because, even though only 10 projects have access rights, there are still a plethora of projects in the planning system that are dividing communities, pitting neighbour against neighbour. The rollout of renewable energy zones under this Government has been nothing short of appalling. Good people and good communities are being torn apart. They do not have the information they need, they are not getting the consultation they deserve and they are not being listened to.

VENUES NSW TENDER POLICY

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (12:09): I take note of the answer given today by the Treasurer to my questions regarding tender processes at Venues NSW. I draw to the attention of the House that answers were returned yesterday by Venues NSW to supplementary questions I raised, following the Portfolio Committee No. 4 budget estimates hearing, regarding turf contracting issues involving Allianz Stadium and other venues. I asked the supplementary question:

Does the CEO regard it as an acceptable standard for members of the Venues Tender Evaluation Panel to double up as referees for the tendering companies and not certify any conflict of interest? What action has she taken against this corrupt practice at Venues NSW?

The CEO of Venues NSW, asleep at the wheel, answered through the Minister:

... All procurement undertaken by Venues NSW has been in accordance with the NSW Government's Procurement Framework.

After I raised this question in the budget estimates hearing, she made no attempt to check the current turf supply contract tender that is out. She only had to go away and do a little bit of research during the four-week period since budget estimates. The documents I have here clearly show that Mr Johnny Naofal, general manager of facilities at the Sydney Cricket Ground, and Adam Lewis, the head curator at the SCG, are both referees for Evergreen Turf, the company that normally wins those tenders, and both of them are on the Venues tender evaluation panel. Mr Lewis signed a declaration of interest on 17 January this year. There was no declaration with regard to his role as a referee for Evergreen. One would think that he would declare that obvious conflict and recuse himself from the tender evaluation process. It is an absurd situation.

Johnny Naofal signed off on his declaration of interest on 20 January this year, in which he stated, "I have had direct contractual dealings, meetings and other interactions with both Evergreen and HG Turf in my current role at Venues NSW. This includes regular coffee meetings, catch-ups and ongoing discussions regarding turf issues related to the stadium." All he is declaring is "I've been doing my job by talking to them." He has not declared the fact that he is a referee advocating for the major company that gets millions of dollars for supplying turf to venues all over New South Wales and was responsible for the drainage debacle at Allianz Stadium.

The CEO of Venues NSW has been asleep at the wheel and should be out of a job, because for three years it has been known—and I raised this with her at the budget estimates hearing—that the drainage for the turf at Allianz Stadium has been substandard. It came in well below the acceptable standard from the very beginning, which she identified. Why was that? It was because Evergreen was subject to the big floods that we had in Western

Sydney through the Nepean catchment in 2020 and 2021, and when it provided the turf at Allianz Stadium it was heavily silt affected. There is footage of the Evergreen farm being five metres underwater. After the floodwaters subsided, all the silt naturally settled on the turf. Nobody from Venues NSW inspected the product. They knew it was faulty. The CEO is asleep at the wheel and she should go.

RENEWABLE ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (12:12): I take note of the answers given by the Leader of the Government in relation to whether bonds should be put in place for renewable energy projects. I note that this issue came up in the recent Portfolio Committee No. 4 inquiry into the impact of renewable energy zones, or REZs, on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales. The committee comprises several members of this House. The evidence provided by EnergyCo and others in that inquiry was quite clear: Bonds are unnecessary. They are a massive inhibitor to new investment and are totally unnecessary in order to require the clean-up of renewable energy sites after the expiry of the current leases. What makes renewable energy quite distinct from something like a mine is that, at the end of the life span of wind turbines or solar panels, those old solar panels will most likely be taken down, recycled and replaced with new solar panels. Most of the work is in building the electricity infrastructure to get the renewable energy to the network.

As the Minister said, having a policy in place that requires an enormous up-front amount to be set aside in a bond will ultimately slow down the rollout of renewable energy. At a time when we already have coal-fired power plants quickly exiting this space, we have to ensure that we get as much renewable energy into the system as quickly as possible. To have a policy that requires a bond is utterly ludicrous because it will work against the renewable energy transition in every possible way. It will be money tied up sitting in a government bank account, which cannot be used for the rollout of that renewable energy. It is totally unnecessary; there will not be the sort of damage that occurs in mining, where a pit several kilometres wide is cut into the ground. It would be an absurd policy to say that there is some sort of equivalency in relation to that. As part of the REZ inquiry, the committee has been out to many of those sites. As I said, at the end of the life of the project, wind turbines and solar panels will be replaced with new ones, re-using the underlining infrastructure that is already in place. The Opposition should think twice about this policy.

RENEWABLE ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

NEW ENGLAND RENEWABLE ENERGY ZONE

NSW SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

The Hon. WES FANG (12:15): I take note of the answer given today by the Minister for Energy when she stood up and told this House that there are decommissioning bonds in place. There are no decommissioning bonds in place at the moment; the Minister was wrong about that. The Hon. Cameron Murphy's contribution to the take-note debate confirmed that fact. The energy Minister described decommissioning bonds as "a renewable energy tax". She said that they will reduce investment in renewable energy projects. Ultimately, those projects need to stand on their own. If the companies that are providing renewable energy projects to the State cannot afford a bond to ensure the site's return back to original use later on, then they should not be doing them in the first place. We on this side of the House—and, in particular, farmers who have those projects on their land—fear that the companies will walk away when the projects reach their end of life.

The removal cost is approximately \$600,000 per wind turbine. Imagine being a farmer who has had those projects put on their land and then all of a sudden, at the end of the project's life, the company declares insolvency and walks away. Who is stuck with that project? The farmer is. At least with the scheme that the Opposition is putting forward, there will be a bond in place to assist the farmer to remove the projects at their end of life. The Minister says that a decommissioning bond would restrict investment. If the projects are unable to stand on their own merits, they should not go ahead. When they fall over, rural and regional New South Wales will cop it in the neck when it comes to cleaning them up.

Mining companies that want to mine in New South Wales are required to put up a decommissioning bond. They have to make a commitment to return the land back to its original use. The Opposition is asking for a similar scheme for renewable energy projects. That is not an unreasonable ask. It is reasonable for the Government to seek to protect rural and regional New South Wales from the onslaught of renewable energy projects being rolled out around the State. I also note that the Minister for Energy provided a supplementary answer at the end of question time today in which she seemed to confuse the New England Renewable Energy Zone with the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone. If the energy Minister cannot get that right, what hope do we have under this Government? Finally, the Minister for Agriculture trying to claim the Federal money for water as hers is a disgrace.

COASTAL EROSION MANAGEMENT

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (12:19): I contribute to the take-note debate regarding the question the Hon. Taylor Martin asked about the very valid concerns that Wamberal Beach residents have about their houses. There has been quite a bit of emotion and misinformation on the issue. Having been involved at some level as the spokesperson for Terrigal, my understanding is that people on both sides of the argument—the Wamberal Protection Association and the Wamberal Beach Save Our Sand group—are on a similar page, notwithstanding the obvious emotion surrounding these important issues. The owners of the beachfront properties correctly want a workable solution so that their houses do not fall into the sea during another major weather event, and so does the Save Our Sand group. The issue is that there is a broad community view that a vertical seawall, like we see at beaches like Collaroy, is not the answer and some sort of sand nourishment and rock revetment process is the way to go.

The Premier announced that the Government will not support a seawall on the government-owned properties in the area. Effectively, that means that to get a practical outcome that works for the residents and allows the public to enjoy the beach requires sitting down with both sides and coming up with a workable solution, which is sand-nourishment-based recovery, perhaps with a rock revetment. The local council has been exceedingly difficult on this issue. It has been stuffing around for the past two or three years, to be quite frank, with a coastal management plan that it should have had in place by now. The Reconstruction Authority under Minister Saffin has done a great job of declaring the area an urgent requirement, which means that the council should get its finger out, get the community together and come up with a workable solution. That is the council's job. There is a way forward that will satisfy both the interests of property owners and the public's desire not to have a seawall. We need to gather round the table and sort through it as a collective. Council needs to stop playing politics and put the residents' interests first.

RENEWABLE ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (12:21): Minister Sharpe indicated that the existing planning laws and guidelines already provide safeguards with respect to the decommissioning of renewable energy projects. If the current framework was adequate, we would not have repeated warnings from the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner about decommissioning costs. The risk is real and the costs are known, but the safeguards are absent. This is not about opposing renewables; it is about fairness and ensuring that farmers are not left with stranded assets and steel towers at the end of projects.

On the issue of the tax, a bond is not a tax; it is accountability. The cost of decommissioning is a real, unavoidable cost of doing business. If companies do not set aside funds up-front, the bill lands on the farmer or the taxpayer. Just like in mining, bonds are not considered a tax; they are a safeguard. The renewable energy industry should not be given a free pass to walk away from its obligations, leaving regional families with the liability. If renewables are truly competitive, they should be able to carry their full costs and not offload them onto farmers.

RENTAL LAWS

HOUSING SUPPLY

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (12:23): I take note of answers to a couple of questions that I put on notice to the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading. I recently asked him some questions relating to his portfolio responsibilities of rental bonds and supply, including specific questions about whether there is any data held by Fair Trading about how many new owner-occupied properties there are in comparison with rental properties that going straight onto the rental market. I also asked him very specific questions about whether any of the new legislation that has been passed by the Government has had any impact on matters before the tribunal. I appreciate that not all of those areas fall within the purview of the Minister. For example, some of the matters in relation to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal might be more appropriate for the Attorney General. But my questions were very specific to Fair Trading, and I am really concerned about the fact that Fair Trading does not hold the relevant data to ensure that we are appropriately meeting the needs of the housing market.

For example, understanding how many properties end up for rent as opposed to being owner occupied is a significant bit of data that the Government needs to know. It is important because the Government is encouraging new supply. We want to try to meet the various new housing supply targets being set by both the Premier and the Prime Minister. In meeting those targets, the Government needs to ensure that, as supply comes on, it provides rental opportunities for people who are largely now seeking tenancies rather than wanting to buy a property, or who are simply not in a position to buy a property. Fair Trading does not hold that type of data. I urge the Government to realise that it needs more data, particularly given the types of laws it has put in place this year in regard to residential tenancy legislation. There are significant impacts on property owners and landlords, putting

them in a difficult position as they rent properties. It is important that Fair Trading has consistent data available to it to ensure that legislation is not held up or delayed in any way, or subsequently fixed up by regulation at a later date, as we saw with the Residential Tenancies Act.

HOUSING SUPPLY

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (12:26): I take note of answers given by the Hon. Rose Jackson. I must admit to being fascinated by the answer we received. Frankly, we heard "modern methods of construction" so often that it left me wondering what those modern methods of construction actually were. We got tantalisingly few details. I presume that we are ruling out adobes and yurts. I hope that we are not including brutalism, because I think Sydney has seen enough of that modern method of architecture. We heard that those modern methods would address four issues, the first being labour. Is the Minister telling us that the modern method of housing that the Labor Government is pioneering will involve retrenching workers in the housing sector? If so, I would like to be there at the discussions with the CFMEU and other building workers.

We were told that one of the hallmarks of the modern methods of construction was less labour. We were also told that there will not be weather delays. The mind boggles about how to build without weather delays. Maybe we will have a giant tent over construction zones so we can build in all types of weather, or we will build a building in which to build the building with those modern methods of construction. There will be less waste, which is always important, but the Minister again gave no details. Supply chain issues will be addressed by the modern methods of construction. Supply chains of what? What will this modern method use to build the houses that we are all going to live in in the future? It is unlikely to be timber, because we heard today of the major impact of recent Government decisions on the hardwood timber industry. If I heard correctly, the figure was a 20 per cent cut to hardwood supplies from timber grown in this State for houses being built in this State.

We must get serious. It is great if the completely unspecified modern methods will be used to build the houses, but we need liveable houses that can be good homes for families, where people will want to bring their children home and where they will want to bring up their children. We need homes that are conducive to family life. We have seen the mistake of building ticky-tacky boxes and we have had to pull down those ticky-tacky boxes. We must ensure that we build real community housing, instead of just throwing together emergency housing and living with the consequences of that for decades.

NEW ENGLAND RENEWABLE ENERGY ZONE

RENEWABLE ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (12:30): I take note of the Minister's response regarding the New South Wales Government's commitment to genuine consultation on the New England Renewable Energy Zone, particularly in light of the renewable energy zone's impact on rural and regional communities. What do we know about community consultation? We know that Portfolio Committee No. 4 - Regional NSW investigated the impact of renewable energy zones on rural and regional communities and industries. I draw the attention of the House to findings 3 and 4 of the report, which state that poor engagement with the Central-West Orana community has eroded social cohesion, impacted mental health and undermined the social licence of renewable energy operators. I have seen and heard it for myself: The community has been let down. As my colleague the Hon. Wes Fang indicated, the rollout by the Government has been poor. The Government has a responsibility to engage with and educate the community.

I refer to the comments of my colleague the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, who said that when Parliament receives reports about a 17-day consultation period relevant to an 81-page technical document, that is not good enough. The Government's failure to prioritise genuine consultation disregards the values of the renewable energy community and the new energy sources the Government is attempting to provide. Landholders are not just stakeholders; they are the backbone of rural New South Wales. I remind the House that the recommendations made so far include a call for mental health support. An urgent cumulative impact study underscores the human toll of mismanagement by this Government. Yet what did we hear today from the responsible Minister? We heard the contempt and the threat of a renewables tax. When issues are put to the Government about the cost of and responsibility for removal of renewable infrastructure from private property, the Government's answer is a threat. That is unbelievable when rural communities are asking who will remove it, who will pay for it and how landholders can be sure it will leave their property. The questions remain unanswered.

HOUSING SUPPLY

RENEWABLE ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL (12:33): I take note of the answer from Minister Jackson in relation to modern methods of construction. I have inspected a number of sites that are producing wonderful housing

through modern methods of construction. Many of them are based in regional areas. We have AJC Modular, Clearspan and Rezicast in Queanbeyan alone. Copenhagen is a leading light in modern methods of construction. While some of the solutions really are outstanding and could potentially pave the way going forward, serious problems still need to be addressed. The Hon. Susan Carter raised questions about how modern methods of house construction will be developed, where they will be built and how they will be built. The restrictions partly come from local government and those restrictions will apply differently in different areas. Such things potentially could impede the provision and supply due to over-regulation and red tape. Those issues should be addressed by the Minister instead of simply talking up positive impacts. The Minister should consider how the industry and housing sector might be assisted to ensure that houses can be delivered as required.

I turn now to comment on Minister Sharpe's responses on decommissioning bonds and the attitude of "She'll be right, mate. It'll be fine. We're the Government and we're here to help." Communities cannot rely on that type of response to this very serious matter. Previously I raised the example of the renewable energy rollout at Bowning and Binalong and the issues experienced by those communities. The communities told me that when they first said yes to renewable energy projects, they were given untold promises about how the community would benefit. There would be a new service station, a new shop and multimillion-dollar benefits for that community, but in the end the community wound up with a \$1 million footpath to a school that is no longer open because people do not want to live in the area. We talk about decommissioning bonds because of the potential future impact of renewable energy rollouts. If promises are not being kept to communities about what they may or may not receive when the projects go ahead, what will happen at the end of life of the wind factories, turbines and solar panels? Those issues must be seriously addressed. For the Minister to be so glib as to say, "She'll be right, mate", is not good enough.

TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (12:36): Reflecting on question time today, I have to say we heard about the Government delivering across a broad range of areas. Now that the Government is 2½ years into its term, that is what the Government is doing. We heard fantastic updates from the Treasurer on the quarterly national figures and economic growth. We heard about the renewable energy zones and the Great Koala National Park from the Minister for Energy and the Minister for Agriculture. We also heard from the Minister for Housing about the benefits of modern methods of construction and how this Government will address the housing crisis.

Yesterday I said that I believe in this House. I believe in the transparency measures and the accountability measures; I think they are important. But we heard nitpicking by the Liberal Party as the Government implements serious election commitments and big, significant reforms such as the Great Koala National Park. As I said today in question time, the Government must confront those big challenges and that is difficult, but the Government is working through the challenges in a careful and methodical way. I give the Nats a pass here because at least they turned up to vote. The Liberal Party, which is a major political party trying to present itself to the community as the alternative government, did not turn up to vote on a significant, major reform that is confronting the State. They chose to squib it.

Members are elected to this Parliament by the people and we have a responsibility to turn up and make decisions. Sometimes that means backing in the government. Sometimes it means asking some hard questions and then saying, "We've tested it. We're going to support that, after all." The Liberal Party absolutely failed the test of the Great Koala National Park. Another significant test is coming, which is the planning reforms the Government announced today. They are significant, big and potentially generation-changing reforms. Liberal Party members will have another opportunity to front up and say, "We want to be part of this. We can have a bipartisan approach on this important issue and fundamentally make reforms to the planning system."

It is up to them whether they take the responsibility of being elected to this place, testing ideas and supporting the ones that are worthwhile. Labor members did that when we were in opposition. We asked questions when they needed to be asked, but we backed the Government when that was required. That is the test for the Liberal Party now. On the Great Koala National Park, the Liberal Party completely missed it, but now has an opportunity in relation to planning reforms. I encourage Liberal Party members to take a closer look and consider them carefully because it is a once-in-a-generation opportunity.

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

Motion agreed to.

*Written Answers to Supplementary Questions***TIMBER INDUSTRY AND GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK**

In reply to **the Hon. RACHEL MERTON** (16 September 2025).

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources)—The Minister provided the following response:

The New South Wales Government considered a range of economic modelling prior to imposing a temporary moratorium on timber harvesting within the proposed boundary of the Great Koala National Park. This included assessing the impacts of the moratorium on workers and employers.

Comprehensive assistance will be provided to impacted businesses and workers, including JobKeeper-style payments to support workers by covering salaries, and financial assistance towards business operating costs.

The Government has contacted every impacted mill and has commenced discussions with them about their long-term options to ensure appropriate support for workers.

GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

In reply to **Ms SUE HIGGINSON** (16 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:

Creating the Great Koala National Park will involve changing land tenure and management practices. Timber harvesting will cease, allowing native forests to continue growing beyond standard harvesting rotation cycles, sequestering more carbon. Emissions from harvesting and post-harvest management will be also avoided. Establishing the park will positively impact carbon abatement.

The final creation of the Great Koala National Park is dependent on the successful registration of a carbon project under the Improved Native Forest Management method.

The Emissions Reduction Assurance Committee, established under the Commonwealth Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative) Act 2011, is responsible for assessing whether methods comply with the legislated offsets integrity standards, including additionality.

The draft Improved Native Forest Management method is currently under review by the Australian Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, and will only be approved if it meets the statutory offsets integrity standards.

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***GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK**

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (14:00): At long last the New South Wales Labor Government has announced the formation of the Great Koala National Park—a promise delayed and deferred for over a decade, and to which the Government had to be dragged kicking and screaming. The Government came in on a promise it would create the Great Koala National Park, but for years the reality was that logging had not only continued but intensified and grown in scope. Up to that moment, less than two weeks ago, those forests were being logged more intensively than they were in the decades before. It was a profound betrayal of trust. Climate and environmental justice delayed is justice denied.

What possible justification could the Government have had for the egregious delay? The Premier, Chris Minns, let the cat out of the bag some time ago when he admitted it was because he was looking for a way to cash in on dodgy carbon credits granted for avoiding logging forests that the Government had already promised to protect. When the Great Koala National Park was finally established, the Premier restated that desire to generate carbon credits from its protection from deforestation. Let me make it extremely clear: The Government was propping up an artificial demand for native forest logging—a loss-making enterprise for Forestry Corporation, requiring millions of dollars in public subsidies—just so that it could eventually stop logging and then cash in on the carbon credits for avoided deforestation.

That kind of economist-brainrot, möbius strip logic underpins the Government's approach to nature conservation. Biodiversity and carbon credits do nothing to halt damage to climate and habitat, but instead merely create a permission structure for corporations to damage and pollute. The credits and offsets will be highly profitable for those who trade in them because they are, in effect, a permission to destroy. Who would want to buy an offset or credit unless it was to get permission to destroy something or to pollute? People who reduce their emissions do not need to offset them. That is the product that the Government hopes to create: a permission structure for destruction.

Is it even really offsetting anything at all? Analysis by the Australia Institute found that there were not enough bulldozers in New South Wales to carry out the clearing that landholders were supposedly threatening, and then forgoing, in return for receiving an earlier iteration of carbon credits. Despite that, the credits were generated, sold and used as a fig leaf by polluting and environmentally destructive industries to claim reductions in their net emissions. All the while, we are hurtling towards a barren and volatile world, driven by climate change and ecological destruction. Nature is priceless and we need to protect it. We do not need to monetise our forests. We need to recognise their intrinsic value and preserve them, rather than allowing the sweaty money of corporate influence and profit motive to continue dictating the rhythms of our governments. Nature positive is the goal; the very least that Labor could do is stop being nature negative.

GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (14:03): I also speak about the Great Koala National Park, which I was proud to see Labor establish last week and debate in this Chamber. Labor Party members in my duty electorate of Coffs Harbour, including Councillor Tony Judge and many others, have fought for it consistently for decades. Without decisive action, koalas could vanish from the wild in New South Wales by 2050. Unfortunately, for 12 long years the Coalition did nothing to prevent that. It did worse than nothing—it watered down land-clearing laws, allowed destructive forestry practices and put our most iconic animal on the fast track to extinction.

Labor will not let that happen. We have committed \$60 million to establish the park, in addition to the \$80 million already delivered. That will establish 176,000 hectares of State forest, linked with existing reserves to create a 476,000-hectare network of protected habitat. It will be one of the largest national parks in New South Wales. The Great Koala National Park will be a sanctuary that will protect more than 12,000 koalas and 36,000 greater gliders, and it will provide critical habitat for over 100 threatened species. It is the single biggest step in a generation to protect our environment, and Labor is delivering it.

Just as the Wran Government is remembered for protecting rainforests and the Carr Government for expanding our national parks estate, the creation of the Great Koala National Park will be a landmark achievement of this Government. We know it will impact the timber industry but, unlike those opposite, we are standing with them. A \$6 million support package is in place to help affected workers and small businesses on the Mid North Coast, including redundancy top-ups, retraining, assistance to find new jobs and support to diversify the local economies in affected areas. The website of the World Wide Fund for Nature Australia, or WWF-Australia, states:

WWF-Australia has hailed the creation of the Great Koala National Park as a game-changer in the fight to save koalas from extinction and end native forest logging.

Only Labor can be trusted to protect our environment and our native animals, and to stand up for workers. I was proud to debate a motion in this Chamber last week just after establishing the Great Koala National Park. I am eager to see how the park develops over the coming years. It will be a wonderful addition to New South Wales national parks and something iconic that domestic and international visitors will want to see.

BILL DRAFTING SIMULATION PROGRAM

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (14:06): I will talk about civil discourse and young people in politics. In the traditional media and on social media, we are overwhelmed with stories of extremism, violence and radicalisation. That is unfortunate because it only tells one side of the story of young people engaging in politics. As many members who have engaged in politics for a long time will know, they could be doing much more constructive and inspiring things to improve the political discourse, imprint their vision of a better world and make a contribution.

One such example occurred last month, when the Macquarie University Liberal Club and the Macquarie University Law Society partnered to hold the inaugural New South Wales Bill Drafting Simulation at Parliament House. University students participating in the event were presented with a previously proposed bill, the Alcohol Consumption in Public Places (Liberalisation) Bill 2024, with amendments. The event was an opportunity for students to politically engage with their criminal justice unit and reflect on how the bill would alter the criminal law and police powers.

The event allowed students to step into the shoes of the Legislature, a normative task not often exercised by students when taught the "issue, rule, application and conclusion" framework and doctrines. They debated in the Legislative Council and, from what I have been told, did a much better job than many of the members of this House. During the day, participants heard from me and our colleague the Hon. Jacqui Munro about our experiences in politics. The inaugural event's organisation was led by the president of the Macquarie University Liberal Club, Mr Pedro Roh. When not balancing university studies and organising events, Mr Roh works as a secretary and research assistant in my office. He is the real boss. As of today, I can say he does a good job. They

say to never give a reference to someone in politics. But as of 17 September 2025, to the best of my knowledge, Mr Roh is making an outstanding contribution to the political engagement of young people in New South Wales.

It takes a lot to organise a brand-new event in Parliament and then encourage and get—let's face it—at times cynical university students to come into a building like ours. I thank him and all of those students for participating and for the efforts that they made. Members of this House may learn some lessons from them. I also thank Sinclair Hill and the Legislative Council and Parliament House staff. For an institution as formal and significant as a parliament, it is lovely how open and welcoming the building becomes when it is not in session. The other place may decide who runs New South Wales, but we all know that the Legislative Council decides what really happens in the State.

PUBLIC HEALTH WORKER WAGES

Dr AMANDA COHN (14:09): Health workers deserve a raise, not just praise. It is getting harder and harder to access quality public health care in New South Wales. Every week there is reporting about wait times blowing out for emergency care or surgery, out-of-pocket costs rising and rural inequities getting worse. Health professionals cannot provide the quality of care their patients deserve and that they are trained to provide when they are understaffed, under-resourced and undervalued. We all know that the public sector wages cap from the previous Liberal-Nationals Government got us into this mess, but at least the Liberal Party and The Nationals stab essential workers in the front. They think that wages for essential workers are an expense to be reined in. The Minns Labor Government, on the other hand, made a promise to care for essential workers, but its words without action have left nurses, midwives and doctors feeling insulted, betrayed and hopeless.

The Government is touting its 3 per cent interim offer to nurses and midwives as "long-overdue recognition". Things have been so bad for so long for health professionals in New South Wales that a 3 per cent raise might feel like a win, but the pay gap between New South Wales and the neighbouring States that our health workers are moving to is in the order of 15 per cent to 30 per cent. Successive governments have so utterly destroyed hope and made people feel so desperate that they are accepting the Government's crumbs. Having two consecutive days off, consultation before publishing roster changes and no night duty before annual leave would be considered the bare minimum in any other industry. The increased night duty penalty of 20 per cent is still below most other States.

Pay rises from this Government have been below inflation—in real terms, a pay cut. With a 3 per cent raise, first-year graduate nurses will still be the lowest paid in the country. We may as well still have a wages cap. A similar interim pay offer was put to doctors, with 75 per cent of members of the Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation of NSW rejecting the offer, saying that the deal undervalues their work and puts patients at risk. Those interim offers require unions not to take industrial action, removing the most powerful tool that workers have to wield collective power. It is particularly astonishing to have come from the Labor Party, which was founded to represent workers.

Nurses and midwives have campaigned for years for ratios. The Government's rollout of safe staffing levels is glacial, with changes underway at 44 individual departments within the State's 220 public hospitals. The vast majority of nurses across the State have not felt any tangible benefit. It is a testament to how far behind we are in New South Wales that this basic aspect of workplace and patient safety is a huge step forward. The debate about whether the State can afford to pay nurses, midwives and public hospital doctors what they are worth is a distraction. It is a question of political will. Budgets are about priorities, and the Government has made clear what its priorities are. It is not paying doctors, nurses and midwives what they are worth to the communities that we represent.

MURRUMBATEMAN RECREATION GROUNDS

The Hon. BOB NANVA (14:12): A few weeks ago I was privileged to officiate at the opening of the new multipurpose amenities facility and other improvements at the Murrumbateman Recreation Grounds. It was a great day, with a community barbeque and a series of highly competitive matches of Australian rules football, featuring men's and women's teams from the Murrumbateman Eagles, the Yass Roos and the Batemans Bay Seahawks. The project was made possible through a \$1.4 million grant from the Government's Multi-Sport Community Facility Fund, with a significant \$700,000 co-contribution from Yass Valley Council. In addition to the new amenities facility, the project also included upgrades to the internal access road and the construction of a new accessible public toilet.

Those facilities are important because of the community activities and events they support in a growing area—activities like community footy, Little Athletics, the local scouts group and the equestrian club. Community events and activities like those draw people together to enjoy each other's company, support each other and support their region. It has been mostly good times for the mighty Murrumbateman Eagles this season, and I congratulate

the club on a very successful season in the Australian Capital Territory AFL Men's Division Two competition. I can inform the House that the Eagles went through the regular season undefeated, but unfortunately suffered their first defeat in the grand final, going down to the Molonglo Juggernauts by 17 points.

While I was in Murrumbateman, I also announced a \$20,000 funding grant to the Murrumbateman Community Association for its flagship Murrumbateman Field Days event, which is a huge weekend of activities, food and exhibitions showcasing the best of the local region. In 2024 the event attracted 15,000 visitors, providing a huge stimulus to the local economy and raising \$100,000 for local schools, churches, sporting clubs, scouts and community organisations. The funding came through the State Government's Regional Event Fund, which provides grants of up to \$50,000 to bring events like that to life, from marketing and public relations campaigns to infrastructure and equipment hire to enhance the visitor experience. The 2025 Murrumbateman Field Days event is coming up soon, on Saturday 18 October and Sunday 19 October. I hope to be there and I recommend that anyone who can make the trip to Murrumbateman gets along to be part of a fantastic local event.

TIMBER INDUSTRY AND GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

The Hon. WES FANG (14:15): I address a matter of great importance: the plight of timber workers who have effectively been cut out of their industry by the Government's decision about the Great Koala National Park. Members have already heard contributions about the fantastic impact that the Government believes the park will have. But yesterday Kirsty and Matt Parker, who have effectively had their whole business closed down because of the Government's decision, visited my office. The lack of clarity for the industry on the Mid North Coast has been amplified by the unclear availability of packages for impacted companies and workers. A moratorium on timber harvesting indicates that timber harvesting will return at some point. Companies are seeking clarity on what will be available, where they can harvest, what wood supply agreements will be in place and what the Government will do to ensure that workers are covered in the interim.

Members have asked questions in this House about the payments: whether the Government will impose payroll tax, whether that would be on base wages or include overtime, and what will happen after 10 weeks. Workers and companies effectively had their industry closed down in one fell swoop on Father's Day, yet the Government has not provided any clarity to them. There is a lot of angst in those areas. I plead with the Government. It knows what it is doing to those workers and communities. Many of them were impacted by floods a couple of months ago. A lot of the mill workers who live around Taree just finished cleaning out and rebuilding. This is another issue that they cannot deal with. The Government has promised that it would look after those workers and that there would be something on the table. Every question we ask is answered with "Modelling is there and it will happen". The Government needs to provide detail and clarity to give those workers some certainty moving forward.

COFFS HARBOUR LIFEGUARDS

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (14:18): Recent revelations surrounding City of Coffs Harbour council's decision to implement resolution 2025/160, which instituted the outsourcing of lifesaving services, has sparked immense outrage across the community and raised serious concerns about the council's integrity, transparency and care for its employees. The United Services Union [USU] has revealed that the council made a confidential decision to outsource its beach lifeguard service without proper consultation with affected staff or the union. The decision was adopted on 24 July 2025 and buried in a confidential report, only to be disclosed to lifeguards days later.

Lifeguards are vital to the safety of our communities. To learn that 26 lifeguards may be replaced, with a reported pay cut of up to \$50,000 per year, is beyond unfair and unjust. According to USU acting manager northern region Luke Hutchinson, the council has likely breached the Local Government (State) Award 2023 by failing to consult with the affected staff and with the union. Further, the union maintains that \$25 million of New South Wales Government grant funding is wrongly being used to fund the outsourcing project. Hutchinson said, "This is a council that's not just turning its back on its workers; it's actively trying to shut them up". The amount of uncertainty and anxiety that the issue has caused is unconscionable. It has been exemplified by the community response, which saw a petition to keep lifeguards in house that ended up attracting over 1,700 signatures.

Furthermore, the USU has urged that residents attend local council meetings and has encouraged them to demand accountability. The call to action saw the council referred to the Industrial Relations Commission [IRC], with the following recommendations being instituted: to rescind resolution 2025/160, which instituted the outsourcing, to halt the decision whilst the matter undergoes investigation, to disclose all relevant documents and to commit to effective consultation with staff and the union. On 29 August 2025 the council reported a commitment to broader consultation; however, it is continuing to refuse to rescind resolution 2025/160. This is a matter of public safety, community ownership and ethical governance. I urge City of Coffs Harbour to abide by

the directions of the IRC and negotiate in a constructive and positive way with the union to come to a resolution on this important issue.

MACQUARIE POINT STADIUM, HOBART

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (14:21): This afternoon I venture where angels fear to tread: into the very difficult territory of the proposed AFL stadium in Tasmania. As a lifelong AFL fan, it is with a sorry heart that I inform the people of New South Wales that the Tasmanian Planning Commission has announced today that it has not recommended building the Macquarie Point stadium. It is a shameful decision and puts at risk the Tasmanian Devils AFL venture and licence. It is lamentable that the decision to grant Tasmania an AFL licence has been linked to the stadium, and it is lamentable that the Tasmanian Government and the Tasmanian people have not found a way to build it.

As a lifelong AFL tragic and as a foundation member of the Tasmanian Devils in the 1990s, when I was living in Tasmania and when Kevin Sheedy got behind it, I call on Anthony Albanese to get behind the stadium and the Tasmanian Devils. It is time for Tasmania to have a national AFL team. It would enrich the sporting fabric of this nation to finally have that great AFL island represented in the AFL. It is incredibly disappointing that it has taken so long to find a licence for that State and that there is not the money and support for it. It is a complex situation. I understand some people think it should be built at York Park. I am agnostic about that.

The Hon. Wes Fang: It's a stadium at Launceston.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: I am a child of Launceston. I was born in Launceston. There is a strong argument that Launceston is the centre of that State—that will probably get me shot when I go there the next time I visit my mum. Anthony Albanese must act and pump the money into that State. Build the stadium and people will come, and Tasmania will have an AFL team, the mighty Devils. I am sure the Hon. Bob Nanva, who loves the Devils too, will support me in this. It is time for this nation to give back to Tasmania, which has done so much, and to build the stadium, wherever it is. It should find the money and get behind the Devils. I am sure that one day soon they will be competing in the AFL, winning a grand final and adding to the colour, fabric and depth of the great Australian Football League in this country.

CHARLIE KIRK DEATH

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (14:24): "Prove me wrong"—that was the sign over the table Charlie Kirk would set up at college campuses. It was an invitation to students to debate the issues of the day and, if they could, prove him wrong. It encapsulates the ideal of academic freedom, which should be the hallmark of every university. "Come, read, learn about ideas, think about them and, if you can, prove them wrong"—not by shouting, slogans and violence but by engaging in civil, respectful discussion and the contest of ideas, which helps us shape and reshape our thinking and move knowledge forward.

Charlie Kirk did not express it in that way, but his method differed little from that of Karl Popper, for whom scientific truth is determined by that which cannot be proved wrong; or Hegel's dialectic, whose thesis and antithesis would lead, he was certain, to an improved synthesis; or the classic and eponymous dialogue of Socrates, a method of testing and advancing knowledge older than the idea of the university itself. But is respectful debate something that we have lost today? Are we still looking for knowledge, or are we instead only seeking confirmation of our existing biases, scared of where challenging them may lead us?

Charlie Kirk's silencing, with a bullet rather than a better argument, suggests we are no longer universally searching for the truth. The encampment at the University of Sydney and related protests—where there was no attempt to engage in civil discourse and where yelled chants calling for the abolition of the Jewish State and, by extension, its people filled the quadrangle—illustrated an attempt to squash free speech, not to foster it. If, as the SafeWork inspector found, a climate of fear and anxiety is created and perpetuated so that Jewish students and staff are fearful of attending the university, how is respectful dialogue possible? To defend that as protecting protest—as senior university executives sought to do—elevates protest above free speech and above the traditional university mission of searching for truth and advancing human knowledge.

Traditionally, protest was a part of dialogue—a loud and often messy dialogue, but one where an opposite case was put and a response was sought. But the protest at the University of Sydney was one where the other side of the debate was seen as having no legitimacy and, therefore, there was no debate to be had. That is the action of fascist truth suppressors, not free truth seekers. It is the approach of those who would shut down inquiry rather than encourage dialogue. If Charlie Kirk's death is to have any meaning, let it be that we all, across the spectrum of ideas, recommit to solving our problems through peaceful discourse and eschew violence and chants that simply block our ears from hearing the ideas of others.

*Visitors***VISITORS**

The PRESIDENT: I welcome to the public gallery students from my alma mater, the University of Sydney, who are currently undertaking the Parliament and Democracy course.

*Documents***WORKERS COMPENSATION LEGISLATION****Production of Documents: Further Order****Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (14:28): Standing Order 52 (5) recognises that some documents may be subject to a claim of privilege, but that claim has been overused to the extent that it is no longer clear that the Government understands what privilege means. On 25 June this House passed a motion calling for papers in relation to a SafeWork investigation at the University of Sydney. Of the five boxes returned, two were subject to some form of claim of privilege. That statistic alone—representative, in my experience—indicates a problem with over-claiming privilege. I chose to contest privilege with respect to some of those documents, and the evaluation of the arbiter is a scathing commentary on the practices of this Government. With respect to the claim of parliamentary privilege, the arbiter, the Hon. Keith Mason, AC, KC, noted:

Identical submissions have been advanced and rejected countless times in the context of calls for papers ... So many times, that one wonders whether there is an explanation beyond infectious want of care. Is its recurrence evidence of inappropriate pressure being placed on legal officers, or an elaborate joke? ... the notion of 'Parliamentary Privilege' in the context of a call for papers by Parliament is a nonsense, correctly described as 'entirely misconceived' in *New South Wales Legislative Council Practice* ...

We all have access to that, including Government members. Is this over-claiming a bad joke or deliberate obfuscation? The arbiter continued:

It is a waste of time and taxpayer money for these fruitless claims of 'Parliamentary Privilege' to be presented again and again and rejected again and again. Their continuance after so many rejections in Reports adopted by the House can only raise suspicions about the bona fides of other claims of privilege.

Not every document that is seen or may be seen by ministerial eyes is privileged. It is time for this Government to stop abusing claims of privilege and respect the proper role of this House.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (14:30): The Government opposes the motion. The idea that the Government has failed to produce documents is completely false. Icare and the State Insurance Regulatory Authority each produced two boxes. The total production is quite extensive indeed, and the accusation that the Government wants to squash or evade transparency is simply defied by the fact that it voluntarily produced 1,500 pages to the inquiry—without a Standing Order 52 motion. The scenario modelling that has been called for was provided at record pace and upon request. Not only did the Treasurer and the Minister do that, but the committee and members were also provided with private and public briefings. The Government met the request of the shadow Treasurer and the Hon. Mark Latham to model their amendments. I am not aware of the previous Government ever doing a similar thing—

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Don't take the Treasurer's word for it.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: —and I have not been corrected. That is what we did, and we kept our word to support the second inquiry into this legislation in its deliberations. To the extent to which members say there is an effort from the Government to hide information about a contentious change, that is just not true. In addition, the Government has made witnesses available at all times, and I note that the Treasurer has appeared before the inquiry on multiple occasions. The Government has complied with its obligations when it comes to this order for the production of documents, as it should, and stands by the advice from the Cabinet Office about which documents are Cabinet documents.

In terms of the amendment, as the Minister has said, the idea that the simple, good-faith act of returning additional documents voluntarily can somehow change the definition of Cabinet documents is ludicrous. As he has previously done, the shadow Treasurer quoted the judgement in *Egan v Chadwick*. But Government members recall that when the shadow Treasurer was in government, his argument went completely the other way. The biggest defender of Cabinet-in-confidence privilege in this House, I am reliably informed, is the shadow Treasurer. Members can read the record. He was the biggest defender of precisely the same definition that the Government is using. The Government is using the same definition of Cabinet documents that he used with respect to icare and all of the other calls for papers. The Government respects that members want to see the documents, and it has assisted the House immensely on the workers compensation changes that have been proposed.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (14:33): The Greens support the motion. The Government should just stop lying. Listening to the responses of Government members is frustrating. They say that whether they comply with Standing Order 52 is irrelevant because they have given us the documents that they wanted to give us, and that should absolve them of all responsibility for giving us the documents that we actually asked for. That is an absurd proposition. The Hon. John Graham talked about how the Coalition used to make those arguments and say that it did not want to provide documents. That is absolutely true, and it was within its rights to do so. It is within the rights of the current Government to say that it does not want to provide documents. It can resist, try to pick off crossbench members or do whatever it wants to prevent a Standing Order 52 motion from passing. But once a motion is agreed to, the argument stops and it has an obligation to provide the documents. If the Government does not do that, it is in breach of an order of the House. It is that simple. Government members saying that they have made themselves available and the Treasurer happily grandstanding in front of the inquiry telling a bunch of mistruths is not the same—

The Hon. Emily Suvaal: That's outrageous.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I stand by that. I can quite happily provide the evidence. That is not the same as complying with the order of the House. I listened to the Hon. Stephen Lawrence. He was not in this place under the previous Government. As a crossbencher, I have had the experience of both major parties being in government, and I can say unequivocally that Labor is less transparent, less accountable and far more willing to hide, obfuscate and divert attention. Ask a Labor member a question and they will generalise and speak about something else. For example, ask them why they have a 31 per cent threshold that will be absolutely rubbish for people with severe psychological injury, and they will say, "Do you want this model instead?" They will speak about something completely different. Ask them to provide a specific document and they will say, "We will give you all of these documents instead." That is not honest behaviour.

The Government knows it is not providing the documents. At least the Federal Labor Government is honest about its lack of transparency. It now has a bill that will expand the definition of Cabinet in confidence to be anything that could maybe touch some sort of decision made in Cabinet. Federal Labor is being honest about it. Labor in New South Wales is using the same playbook but, instead of being honest about not wanting to be transparent, it is lying to us and pretending it is. I am calling that out because it is true. I am sick of the lies. Labor has to stop and comply with the House, or we will force it to.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (14:36): Just because the Government puts a Cabinet-in-confidence stamp on a document does not mean that it actually is Cabinet in confidence and is beyond the powers of this House to request. That is just another trick that this Government uses to withhold essential documents from this Chamber. Complying with Standing Order 52 is not an optional extra; it is compulsory. The Government has to do it. It uses many tricks to try to get around it. One, of course, as many previous speakers have mentioned, is the bogus Cabinet-in-confidence claim. Another is simply not giving us documents at all, whether they be Cabinet in confidence or not. Another is essentially not providing documents in the time frame requested without any real explanation, which happens for various tactical purposes.

When we want to look at documents on a certain topic before an important committee hearing or a parliamentary sitting week so that we can ask about it in question time, those documents are given to us either after we need them, or with so little time for us to read through them that we cannot use the material. Various calls for papers that I have been involved with are about the Local Small Commitments Allocation [LSCA]. We should have had all those documents in January this year. The Opposition submitted a comprehensive request under Standing Order 52 for all documents regarding the LSCA program, but it has taken us four orders for the production of documents and a request under the Government Information (Public Access) Act [GIPAA] to finally get the information we need. Only a couple of weeks ago we got the information that we could have had back in January.

It used to be that if the House passed a Standing Order 52 motion, it would get the documents. Now it takes four Standing Order 52 motions and a GIPAA application. It is just beyond comprehension. It is nothing like the previous Government. The contribution from Ms Abigail Boyd is absolutely correct. This Government is using all of the dirty tricks and tactics. The Local Small Commitments Allocation is an example, as is workers compensation. I say to members opposite that it is not optional. Provide us the documents in the time frame. Do not do it in tranches. Do not try to hide. Do not put a Cabinet-in-confidence stamp on documents that clearly have nothing to do with Cabinet. Get us the documents as per the powers entrusted to us.

The Hon. BOB NANVA (14:40): I oppose the motion. Previous orders in the same terms were passed on 25 June and 6 August 2025. The Government complied with both orders and produced documents to the House on 23 and 25 July and 5 August. It is not entirely clear what further documents the House considers should be produced pursuant to the proposed order. In the interests of transparency and in a manner entirely consistent with the previous Government, this Government has produced further documents to the House on a voluntary and

confidential basis. But it is not correct that those documents were produced or were required to be produced under Standing Order 52.

Those documents were not required to be produced to the House, either because they are Cabinet documents, because they are already in the public domain or because they fall outside of the scope of the order. That is why the Government explicitly rejects the parts of this motion that assert that the simple good-faith act of returning additional documents voluntarily can somehow change the definition of Cabinet documents. I move:

That the question be amended by omitting paragraphs (2), (3), (4) and (6).

I do so reluctantly because I am loath to debate as experienced a member with as distinguished a contribution to this place as the mover of this motion. But I note one previous contribution of the member, who has not maintained consistency with his time in government. In relation to a Standing Order 52 motion, he said:

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

As the member himself has noted, the Legislative Council does not have the power to require the production of Cabinet documents. While the member's motion quotes from the judgement of Chief Justice Spigelman in the case of *Egan v Chadwick* in the New South Wales Court of Appeal, the quote is only a fragment of his Honour's reflections on the scope of documents protected by Cabinet confidentiality. His Honour also held that the Legislative Council's power to call for documents:

... should, at least, be restricted to documents which do not, directly or indirectly, reveal the deliberations of Cabinet.

It may be that there are other Cabinet documents, access to which would contradict the collective responsibility of Ministers.

A document may directly or indirectly reveal the deliberations of Cabinet in many ways. For example, a document containing a record of Cabinet's deliberations on a particular matter will directly reveal the deliberations of Cabinet. A document relating to a new policy proposal may outline the previous deliberations of Cabinet on the matter, even if the new policy proposal has not itself been submitted to Cabinet.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (14:43): I say, "The lady doth protest too much". The Opposition is hoist on its own petard. I have been here long enough to see scores of wafer-thin bundles of documents produced under Standing Order 52 motions for all kinds of reasons. I remind members of the Mount Penny call for papers, where I was seeking some documents that were part of a significant ICAC investigation and jailing of former members. I made a call for papers on coal exploration licences. Not much came out of it, yet at ICAC there were people literally wheeling in trolley-loads of documents. I said, "Compare the pair". That was the former Government. On one hand, what I was given you could handle very easily.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: You would be supporting us, though.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: I certainly support the provisions of Standing Order 52. But, in reality, the histrionics about this are more to do with Opposition members failing to get a shot on the Government. They have had all kinds of Standing Order 52 motions passed, and where is the big scandal? Where is the public outrage over anything—

The Hon. Wes Fang: You are blinded, Jeremy.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: I am an objective observer, and I have not seen any big shots on the Government. Opposition members have to try harder. They are going after the rules now because they are just being outplayed. That is my advice to Opposition members: They are being outdone. I had a Standing Order 52 motion passed for Ivan Milat's work records, and I received six documents, yet the Supreme Court had absolute volumes. I am negotiating that with the Government. But I think this is more about the Opposition and The Greens failing to really get a shot on the Government rather than the Government failing to comply with the standing orders.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Taylor Martin): Order! Pursuant to standing orders debate is interrupted to allow the mover of the motion to speak in reply.

[*Business interrupted.*]

Business of the House

CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: According to Standing Order 94, I move:

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

Motion agreed to.

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

[*Business resumed.*]

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (14:46): I thank the House for the extension of time. I oppose the motion, but I support the amendment so adeptly moved by the Government Whip. As has been outlined, the Government has already produced copious quantities of information, both voluntarily and through orders of the House. In terms of the precedents and the history of Standing Order 52 motions in this place—which I acknowledge extends well beyond my time—it is well known that we have had the Mookhey library. But we should consider the Comrade Tudehope cellar. Piling up in there are volumes of unread information and boxes upon boxes of returns to orders of the House. Another Wednesday comes and there is another Standing Order 52 motion in relation to workers compensation and various other matters, and here we are again. It is a carousel of wacky Wednesdays.

It must be tough on the Opposition's side of the House—may I never be there. But there is an inherent tension between what they used to roll out and then, all of a sudden, having to drink the Kool Aid. It must be so tough. Opposition members say that there has not been honest behaviour. Some of the accusations that have been thrown around quite cavalierly in terms of the Treasurer's contribution on workers compensation and to the inquiry are appalling. I place that on record. To make those accusations is appalling and I reject them entirely. It is a misuse of parliamentary privilege and misleads the House. If someone was to use CTRL+F to search the *Hansard* over the past couple of months, the number of times that *Egan v Chadwick* was quoted would be extraordinary. But what they would find is only a small, convenient section—a selective quoting of *Egan v Chadwick* to try to fuel the Opposition's case. I finish by saying that I really feel for Opposition members; it must be tough over there.

The Hon. WES FANG (14:49): Look at the cannon fodder on the other side of the Chamber. Look at the members the Government is sending over to try to defend its decisions, who were not even here in the previous term of Parliament. The Treasurer knows whom he is sending into the trenches. "Jump over," he says. "Come on, let's go!" He is sending over the Government Whip and the new Parliamentary Secretary, neither of whom were here in the previous term of Parliament. This is the worst government for transparency, and the Treasurer absolutely knows that. Ms Abigail Boyd was quite correct in her contribution: This Government has absolutely failed on transparency. What is worse is that it is sending out the cannon fodder to try to defend the decisions.

Why not send the Ministers who were in opposition in the previous term of Parliament? They can speak to what was released by Opposition members when we were in government. We released a lot more documents and we did it in accordance with the rules. Government members are not acting in accordance with the rules. They are not following the rules of the House. They must deliver the documents and they must do it on time. It is not that hard. That is what the motion says—just do it. But here we go—yet again, the Government seeks to cover up its failures. It is unfortunate that the Government Whip has to move these amendments because, once again, the Treasurer has told him to go out of the trench. Ultimately, this is yet another example of this Government not delivering.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Taylor Martin): Order! Pursuant to standing orders debate is interrupted to allow the mover of the motion to speak in reply.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (14:51): In reply: I thank members for their contributions to debate on the motion. There is no doubt that this is an ongoing debate and there will be lots of opportunities to engage with it. The Government Whip's further quoting of the judgement of His Honour Justice Spigelman has not really clarified the question of what a Cabinet-in-confidence document is. I am happy to embrace that definition because it makes a lie of the documents that Government members are seeking to hide from this House. I go back to what the Deputy Leader of the Government said when he was in opposition—and it defies belief that he had the audacity to return here and make the contribution that he made earlier today. Let us go back to 5 June 2018. During debate on the definition of Cabinet-in-confidence documents and Cabinet information, the Hon. John Graham argued for the Spigelman definition. He said:

As a party of government we aspire to occupy the government benches and we know that in raising this issue today we will be bound by the arguments we put today, but there is a principle at stake.

Please bring that man back. Bring back the man who, when he was on this side of the Chamber, was able to so clearly articulate the principled position we should be able to rely on. I would like him back. I would like the Labor Party to get its principles back. I would like to see someone like Adam Searle back, but the Labor Party decided to betray him. That is fine. In the same debate in 2018, the Hon. John Graham said:

We accept that in putting this argument today we will be bound by that argument down the track, but I say to the Chamber, and to the crossbench members particularly, that the Leader of the Opposition should be congratulated on putting the argument he has put today.

He was talking about Adam Searle putting exactly the same arguments that I have put to this House. Members might say, "When you were in government, you put the opposite side". No, I did not.

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: Yes, you did.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: No, I did not. I continually put the argument that Standing Order 52 motions were used for fishing expeditions and the like. I kept arguing for forensic purpose. However, I never sought to reject the Spigelman principle. I thank all members for their contributions. I especially thank Ms Abigail Boyd for her contribution. I urge members to reject the amendment moved by the Government Whip and to support the motion. We know where that will lead.

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Damien Tudehope has moved a motion, to which the Hon. Bob Nanva has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes15
 Noes22
 Majority.....7

AYES

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

NOES

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

PAIRS

Kaine Munro

Amendment negatived.

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

Leave granted.

The House divided.

Ayes22
 Noes15
 Majority.....7

AYES

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

	AYES	
Farlow Higginson	Mihailuk	Ward
	NOES	
Buckingham Buttigieg D'Adam Donnelly Graham	Houssos Jackson Lawrence Mookhey Moriarty	Murphy (teller) Nanva (teller) Primrose Sharpe Suvaal
	PAIRS	
Munro		Kaine

Motion agreed to.*Motions***COMMUNITY PRESCHOOLS****Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (15:05):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) community preschools are managed by volunteer parent management committees, are not for profit and have a particular focus on being inclusive, catering to all children, including children from backgrounds of economic disadvantage and children with disability;
 - (b) there are around 710 community preschools across New South Wales, from metropolitan areas to remote and rural areas;
 - (c) preschools are funded by the New South Wales Government, not the Commonwealth Government;
 - (d) community preschools provide high-quality early education and care, with around 75 per cent of community-based preschools rated as "exceeding" in the National Quality Standard, compared with around 25 per cent of all early childhood education and care services, which are predominantly long day care services; and
 - (e) community preschools are experiencing a workforce crisis, with an ageing workforce and difficulty attracting teachers and educators.
- (2) That this House further notes that:
 - (a) preschools are losing staff to other sectors because those other sectors offer better pay and conditions;
 - (b) community preschool teachers and educators receive rates of pay up to 30 per cent less than their colleagues with the same qualifications and roles in State government schools and in school settings;
 - (c) the Victorian Government funds its preschools by 50 per cent more per child per year than the New South Wales Government does for its preschools;
 - (d) government funding to provide significant pay increases for teachers in schools and government preschools has not been matched for community preschools;
 - (e) the Commonwealth Government has funded 15 per cent pay increases for workers in long day care services;
 - (f) the early childhood education and care sector is highly feminised, with over 90 per cent of the workforce identifying as women, and as a result low rates of pay prevail and there is systemic gender undervaluation of the work being performed;
 - (g) funding for community preschools is solely derived from the New South Wales Government, with limited funding raised by fees and fundraising, and over 80 per cent of funding received by community preschools is spent on wages;
 - (h) last year the Independent Education Union, United Workers Union and Community Early Learning Australia filed for a supported bargaining authorisation, which enables the Government to be joined as a party to the bargaining and address the systemic concerns with pay and conditions in the sector;
 - (i) in July 2025 the Government sought to withdraw from the bargaining process, claiming it has no intention of providing additional support to community preschools to address the systemic and growing workforce crisis; and
 - (j) the Government has claimed it has no role in facilitating the attainment of fair pay and conditions in the sector, which it could do by providing greater statewide coordination and financial support.
- (3) That this House calls on the Government to address the workforce crisis in community preschools by:

- (a) recognising the professionalism and expertise of early childhood teachers and committing to a principle of pay parity for early childhood teachers with teachers in school settings, who often have the exact same qualifications;
- (b) providing additional funding to support an uplift in pay for teachers and educators in community preschools; and
- (c) working with unions and the not-for-profit preschool sector to establish and deliver an equitable and sustainable funding model for community preschools that emphasises quality and safety.

There are over 700 community preschools across New South Wales, from metropolitan areas to remote and rural areas. Community preschools are managed by volunteer parent management committees, are not for profit and have a particular focus on being inclusive. They cater to all children, including children from backgrounds of economic disadvantage and children with disability. Preschools are somewhat unique in the funding environment of the early childhood and education care sector. They are funded by the State Government and not the Commonwealth, which administers the childcare subsidy for centre-based services and family day care services.

Community preschools provide high-quality early education and care. Around 75 per cent of community-based preschools are rated by the National Quality Standard [NQS] as "exceeding", compared with around 25 per cent of all early childhood education and care services, which are predominantly long day care services. It is impossible not to identify the profit motive in the distinction in quality. Community preschools are not for profit and operate for the benefit of children. They deliver improved safety and quality compared with the long day care sector, where 70 per cent of providers are for-profit services.

The Australian Education Research Organisation has identified a clear and direct link between the quality of the service and child development. Its research found that children who attended services rated as "exceeding" had measurably improved early childhood development outcomes, which track through to positive NAPLAN results and lifelong outcomes. The key finding from the research is that access to services alone will not deliver outcomes. Both quality and access are needed to deliver outcomes for children. Simply meeting the NQS will not get us there.

The Government will undoubtedly trot out flimsy excuses about why it is refusing to fund a salary uplift for this overwhelmingly feminised industry. It will make offensive arguments about not-for-profit, community-board-managed preschools somehow hoarding cash. The Government is apparently unaware that having a cash reserve is simply prudent management for unforeseen maintenance, potential relocation costs and other unforeseen expenses. We need to create an early learning sector where standards of the highest quality are the norm so that families, carers and children can have confidence that there will be safety, dignity and respect for children and workers, no matter which service they use.

We need to foster more services like those in the community preschool sector. Rather than supporting and nurturing the sector, the Government has stubbornly refused to engage. It was eventually forced by the Fair Work Commission to appear at and potentially be joined as a party to the community preschool supported bargaining application to address systemic concerns about pay and conditions in the sector. The community preschool sector is seriously struggling. At our parliamentary inquiry into early childhood education and care, we heard from Janene Rox, the director of Cronulla Preschool and an Independent Education Union preschool ambassador. Her evidence was damning. She told the committee:

Community preschools in particular, where I work, face a perfect storm: chronic staff shortages and wages far below that of our schoolteachers. We are qualified to teach in schools as well. ... The crucial professional development, particularly in child protection and the Child Safe Standards, is often done in unpaid time.

...

The needs of children, including children's safety, wellbeing, learning and development are always put before profit, but it is also done at the expense of educators and teachers themselves. We have just seen so many dedicated educators and teachers leave the profession because they feel undervalued, unsafe and exhausted. When experienced, knowledgeable and previously passionate staff leave, this increases the risk to children exponentially.

The simple fact is that quality costs money, and the Government does not fund quality preschool adequately. Victoria funds preschools at a rate per child of 50 per cent more than in New South Wales. Over 80 per cent of all funding provided to community preschools goes towards wages. If we value children's futures, we must value the people who teach and care for them. The Government will make the argument that it is not the employer in community preschools and so it has no responsibility for wages. That is a wilful misapprehension and a misstatement of reality. Nobody has ever claimed that the New South Wales Government is the direct employer, but it is the predominant funding source. Preschool funding is the Government's responsibility, and funding is overwhelmingly for workforce wages.

The Government's refusal to increase funding to accommodate wage increases will have one of two impacts: Either fees will have to rise in order to support the wages needed to stem the workforce crisis, or staffing levels will have to be reduced in order to keep services open, driving down quality. Services have already said that they had to forgo professional development and investment in workforce development just to remain afloat.

The Government's intransigence will drive a race to the bottom. The solution is clear. We need pay parity with teachers, to not only retain staff but also attract new staff; funding from government that truly reflects the cost of supporting all children, including those with disability; and a model that drives and nurtures quality and access. Whether the Government will do the right thing and fund the sector properly is squarely within its control.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (15:10): I move:

That the question be amended by:

- (1) In paragraph (2) (b) inserting at the end "due to varying industrial arrangements between State government employees and those covered under the Fair Work Act".
- (2) In paragraph (2) (d) inserting at the end "due to varying industrial arrangements between State government employees and those covered under the Fair Work Act".
- (3) Inserting after paragraph (2) (e):
 - (f) the Government has provided substantial additional funding to community preschools since the COVID-19 pandemic, with total funding to community preschools having increased by more than 106 per cent since 2020;
 - (g) the newly announced Expanding Quality Access program includes capacity to increase wages should providers choose to;
- (4) In paragraph (2) (f) inserting at the end "which is a matter for consideration by the Fair Work Commission".
- (5) In paragraph (2) (g) omitting "solely" and inserting instead "partially".
- (6) In paragraph (2) (i) omitting "claiming it has no intention of providing additional support to community preschools to address the systemic and growing workforce crisis" and inserting instead "as the Government is not the employer in the community preschool sector".
- (7) Omitting paragraph (2) (j) and inserting instead:
 - (j) the Government has attempted to facilitate the attainment of fair pay and conditions in the sector through a 106 per cent uplift in program funding since the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - (k) the average cash on hand of parties to the supported bargaining process has increased from approximately \$685,000 in the financial year 2022-23 to approximately \$738,000 in 2023-24, an increase of 7.72 per cent; and
 - (l) the Government supports the rights of workers to bargain with their employer for higher wages and avail themselves of the industrial instruments available for them to do so.
- (8) Inserting after paragraph (2):
 - (3) That this House encourages all parties to participate in negotiations in good faith.
- (9) In paragraph (3) omitting "Government" and inserting instead "bargaining parties".
- (10) Omitting paragraph (3) (b) and (3) (c) and inserting instead:
 - (b) paying workers fairly in community preschools;
 - (c) acknowledging the important programs in the 2025-26 budget which address burnout challenges, increase qualification pathways and completions, and improve access to quality professional learning that deliver:
 - (i) \$19.6 million for scholarships and career advancement; and
 - (ii) \$3.4 million for TAFE NSW quality professional learning.
 - (d) acknowledging that key progress has been made to address workforce issues by:
 - (i) awarding of over 2,000 scholarships, seeing 147 early childhood teachers graduating via an intensive four-year program; and
 - (ii) over 1,000 educators participating in fee-free TAFE-delivered professional learning.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Taylor Martin): The Hon. Courtney Houssos' time has expired.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I seek an extension of five minutes.

Leave granted.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Community preschools are incredible. They are fantastic organisations that, as I said yesterday when the Government announced its Expanding Quality Access program, have often served their communities for generations. They are wonderful, local, quality providers, and our Government wants them to do more. We want them to be able to provide more spaces for more children, perhaps for more weeks of the year, perhaps for an increased range of ages, perhaps for longer hours, and that is what we are seeking to do. The Government has put \$100 million on the table for the Expanding Quality Access program. It was a significant announcement in this year's budget, a program that has been championed by the Deputy Premier and one that we are really proud to introduce.

The amendments seek to make some factual changes to the program. I note the comments of the mover of the motion and say that while the Government really values the work that educators do in our community preschools, it does not employ them. That is not the case. It funds programs and has for a long time. Even in my 10 years in this place, there have been some changes to the way in which programs are administered, and no doubt there will be more changes in the future. But the important thing to note is that those preschools are community-based and community-run organisations that have received a significant increase in government funding.

It is true that the Government has been compelled to participate in the Fair Work Commission process. That process is underway at the moment, so I will be very cautious in my acting ministerial capacity to limit my comments in relation to those negotiations so as to allow them to occur. But I acknowledge the important role that our community preschools play. We have more than 700 of them in New South Wales, providing care for about 49,000 children each and every day. As we rebuild public confidence in the early childhood education and care sector, it is so important that we have quality local services, like our community preschools, providing that care. That is why we want to expand their services.

The Government has some targeted workforce initiatives, and in moving amendments to the motion I seek to recognise some of that important work. We have invested in specific workforce measures via a range of existing and new sector-specific programs. The budget also included an investment to support programs to grow and strengthen the Aboriginal early childhood education and care workforce, from study preparation and scholarships to mentoring, professional learning and peer support. Other programs are in place to provide training through TAFE. But the motion is not correct in saying that the Government sought to withdraw from the Fair Work Commission process. I think it is worthwhile to put that on record.

The Department of Education is not a bargaining party, but I am advised that it has supported the process by attending all seven supported bargaining conferences to date and by providing information to assist the commission. The Government has a range of funding mechanisms available to provide support to community preschools. We think it is important to provide that support and will consider carefully how to do it in the best way. As I said yesterday, there is now \$100 million on the table to expand our community preschools, and the Government encourages them to apply for that funding when applications open in November.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (15:19): I speak in support of the motion moved by Ms Abigail Boyd and indicate at the outset that the Opposition will not support the Government's amendment. There is some merit to the amendment. There are just a lot of paragraphs, and they change the intent of the original motion quite a bit. If the Government moves a motion on another day that deals with some of the issues, such as additional funding to community preschools—particularly since COVID, which was during our term in government—we would be happy to look at supporting that. But, in the interest of debating what is actually on the agenda, we will support the motion as is, notwithstanding that there is merit in some—not all—of the Government's amendments.

As I have done probably a thousand times, I put on record the importance of community preschools. I certainly spoke a lot about them in the six years I was early childhood learning Minister. The benefits of community preschools are enormous, and we know the incredible work they do to support children. Those parent-run, community-run facilities are far and away the highest quality preschools, employing long-term staff and often servicing regional communities. They really are the centre of our towns. With the indulgence of the House, I mention one particular community preschool, which is Gunnedah Baptist Community Preschool. My daughters attended that preschool, and I am very proud to say that it recently received a rating of exceeding the National Quality Standard in all seven quality areas. That reflects its incredibly high-quality practice every single day to support learning, wellbeing and development for all children. I give a shout-out to director Michelle Tydd and her team at Baptist in Gunnedah. How lucky we are as families in Gunnedah to have such a wonderful service, which is replicated in communities across the State.

Community preschools need to be backed. They are facing a real crisis at the moment, not having the funding they need to pay their staff properly. I met with the Independent Education Union recently to talk through those issues, and I will speak about that later tonight. The bulk of this motion is really important because the Government funds community preschools for their operational costs, and that should include and does include wages. We have a terrible situation where some of our best educators, teachers and services are coming to us and saying, "We don't know how we're going to keep the doors open". Those services also benefit some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children in our communities.

In the short time I have left, I touch on the \$100 million that the Minister mentioned, which was announced this week. Make no mistake: That is not what the sector is asking for. They are asking for wage increases. To say to a community preschool that offers education and care in the two years before school, "We'll give you more money, but you have to extend your hours, take younger children and open in school holidays", shows a complete lack of awareness of the importance of this model and the high-quality services it delivers. It is not what

community preschools are asking for; they are asking for wage increases for teachers. The Government should pay them more money.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (15:22): I contribute to debate on the motion. Like others, I have a deep concern about the early childhood sector in general. No person knows much more about it than Ms Abigail Boyd. I have followed this issue and this debate intensely. I too have met with the Independent Education Union, and I am seriously concerned about the wage and remuneration package for those teachers. They are dedicated professionals, and we want them to stay in the industry and the not-for-profit sector. In my opinion, that sector provides a better level of service than the for-profits. By their very name, for-profits must run at a profit. If they do not, they go broke and close, no matter what business they are in. That model revolves around money; the community preschool model does not. As I said, they usually provide better care because they are not motivated by profit.

Having said that, I agree entirely with Ms Abigail Boyd's motion, but I will support the Government's amendment. I had a meeting with Acting Minister Houssos and she told me—and I accept her words, and if I am misconstruing them then I am sure she will take a point of order—that her amendment is based on true fact. I see a shake of the head from Ms Abigail Boyd, but I take the acting Minister at her word. It is true, unfortunately, that the Government is not the employer of those people. Perhaps it should be. Perhaps we should be looking at a different model altogether. To a degree, I have concerns that some facilities are sitting on substantial amounts of money, the average being \$738,000. That means there are some with lots of money but, conversely, others with no money in their bank accounts.

Obviously there needs to be budgetary restraint, and we have to be careful how the Government allocates money. I support the Government's amendment, but I will watch this space carefully. I encourage Ms Abigail Boyd to continue with her good work exposing all those issues. I put on record that early educators deserve to be paid properly. I can understand why they are leaving the not-for-profit sector and chasing greater wages. I do not blame them, but we do not want that to happen. We need them to stay where they are. The acting Minister said that the Government would work carefully with the sector and look at providing additional support on a case-by-case basis.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (15:25): I speak in support of the Government's amendment, moved by my colleague the Acting Minister for Education and Early Learning. At the outset, as the acting Minister and many other members have done, I acknowledge and thank our early educators in New South Wales, and particularly those who work in community preschools, which we are talking about today. Like many members of this place, I have met with educators working in community preschools, including in Clunes and Muswellbrook this week. I thank them for making the time to come to Parliament to meet with us. I also thank them for the work they do in their communities. I give a particular shout-out to Muswellbrook, which I believe won an award for its contributions in this space.

I would hazard a guess that I am the only member in this place, and perhaps in the Parliament, who has a child attending a community preschool at the moment—in fact, today. I declare that now, and I also commend the work of Aberdare community preschool, affectionately known in our house as Humpty Dumpty preschool. It does a fantastic job, and the educators who work in the facility go above and beyond. I give a shout-out to them, although I will not put their names on record because I have not sought their permission to do so. On behalf of our family, I express our gratitude for the amazing work they do and for the care they give to my children and many other families—and generations of families—across Cessnock.

Over 700 community preschools across the State do that important work, day in, day out. I thank Melinda and Raelee and the Independent Education Union more broadly for making the time to meet with me, for telling me about the challenges they face in their day-to-day work in the facilities, and for conducting themselves with passion and professionalism every day in doing that important work. I will continue to be a strong advocate, within the Government and within this place, for community preschools and the sector more broadly.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL (15:28): I support the motion and echo the sentiments expressed by my colleague the Hon. Sarah Mitchell. The motion is about a female-driven industry and sector, and I note that it is largely women who have spoken in debate in support of it. It is great that the Hon. Rod Roberts also backs the motion, but with the Government's proposed amendment. Labor members are always ready with praise for themselves and offer no real substance. They brag about the end of the wages cap and lift it for certain sectors, including teachers—and rightly so—but not for the workers for whom this Labor Government is directly responsible. It is a cop-out and literally semantics to suggest otherwise.

Funding for the critical sector of community preschools comes from the State Government. Community preschools do have the option to increase fees, which is what the Government is suggesting, but socio-economic factors need to be considered. Community preschools that have money in the bank may be located in areas where

people can afford slightly higher fees, but preschools in other areas do not have that luxury. What do those preschools do? They ensure that their services are affordable for all. Therefore, funding from this State Labor Government is absolutely critical. Everyone acknowledges that teachers, staff and childcare professionals are critical—we all have connections with them in one way or another—but community preschools are being left to fend for themselves.

How can community preschools open for more hours on more days and meet more expectations when already there is almost no-one left to staff them? Given that community preschool teachers and educators are paid 30 per cent less than early childhood teachers in schools, why would anyone stay when they can take their skills and talents to the school teaching sector, for example? Labor is robbing Peter to pay Paul by giving with one hand and taking back with the other. Where does that situation hurt the most? It hurts those small regional and rural communities that rely on community preschools to provide critical child care that cannot be sourced anywhere else. Labor also brags about establishing 100 new government preschools—never mind that the Liberals and Nats committed to 500—but how many of them will be staffed? Will the Government take from community preschools and watch the closure of 700 community preschools? If the Government wants them to do more, then it must give them more.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (15:31): I support the motion on the basis that if we could do one smart thing to improve education outcomes in New South Wales, it would be to have more community preschools providing high-quality learning programs, supported by people who have their hearts in the right place. As a parent, I know that the three children who went through community preschools could not have received better care or from kinder, more generous or better motivated people. The profit motive has its place in our society, but in education it can be problematic. There is no doubt that community preschool centres are the best in the system. They are better than any government centre and better than any private, profit-motivated centre.

It should be a priority for the Government to keep its teachers by ensuring they are well rewarded in wages and salaries, and to have more community preschools throughout the State. Community preschools also have the virtue of having an eye on affordability. By and large, management of community preschools is in lower income, working class areas. They know that if the fees are not affordable, the kids will miss out altogether. We know community preschool interventions get better results for students later in life, as they go through the formal school system, and that the earlier childhood education starts, the better the outcomes. I cannot think of a better cause. The more community preschools we have, the better New South Wales education results will be.

My kids loved community preschools. Although I am probably not depicted as a kind-hearted home parent or a volunteer at the centres, my daughter at the wonderful Oaks community preschool said, "Dad, you've got to come and be the volunteer every second day." I said, "Why is that?" She said, "When you're the volunteer, I'm the leader of the line as we march into school. I'm the leader." I said, "I don't know where you got those thoughts from, but I'll turn up and volunteer as often as I can"—which, of course, I did. I got to know the people who ran The Oaks Preschool, as I did at the Airds community preschool attended by my two sons. I cannot speak highly enough of what was achieved. There cannot be any higher ideal in our civilisation than giving children the best start in life with well-motivated quality teaching programs. We should unite as a Parliament to support this motion. Ms Abigail Boyd has brought the matter to the Parliament's attention by moving the motion. We should unite in saying that it is a wonderful cause. If we are serious about quality education outcomes, all members should back the motion.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (15:34): I support the motion and recognise the absolute value of what community preschools do. I am a very proud graduate of the Dural memorial preschool. My twin brother, Andrew, also graduated from that preschool. I pay tribute to Mrs Irwin, who led that preschool for life. She was the absolute go-to for the community and for the mothers—she knew everything. Those educators are absolutely priceless. Today we recognise all of them who are doing exactly that. In the current high-cost-of-living environment, a lot of community preschools are also managing and accommodating families in that regard. Community preschool educators are meeting with families, accepting and accommodating their needs and offering flexibility in relation to fees. Community preschools are critically important in outer metropolitan and country areas. We must provide them with funding stability to give them confidence and must recognise their critically important role in the early education of young children. They are definitely part of their communities, which only adds value to the services they provide. I commend the motion to the House.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (15:36): In reply: I thank all members who contributed to debate on the motion. I also thank the Hon. Rod Roberts for his kind words. I care very deeply about this issue. As the Hon. Rod Roberts said, not-for-profits and community preschools are the very best when it comes to quality and safety. That is borne out by regulatory statistics, which show that 75 per cent of them are rated as higher than meeting standards, as opposed to only 20 per cent to 25 per cent of the general sector—so we know they are better. To date, the Government's response to the revelations of the past 12 months has been to go after bad providers. That is

important, but it is also really important to look at who is doing well in the sector and why, and encourage and grow them so that we have more of those services and fewer bad services. That is what this motion is trying to achieve.

But we know that without a wage increase, we are really putting upon people who are already overworked and underpaid. They could go next door and work for a private provider, or they could go to work in a school, and they would be paid a lot more. Underpaying them is not fair and it undervalues their work. We need to pay them more money. I take issue with a number of factual matters in the Government's proposed amendment. The first is the reference to the Government having increased funding by 106 per cent. The Greens keep asking for data on exactly what that is, because it does not accord with the records of the community preschool sector. In the absence of that, and given how much everything else has increased during the period, I would like to understand how that 106 per cent plays out in real terms.

The argument that not-for-profit community preschools have loads of money lying around just waiting to be used is quite misleading. The amount that has been declared as the average amount of cash on hand is not the mean cash on hand of those services. A lot of them are on peppercorn rents. As we know, a lot of peppercorn rent arrangements are drying up and are quite unpredictable. The services need to have enough cash on hand to be able to move premises and to make ongoing rental payments. Also, maybe they have to pay staff more because they are not getting enough funding through, and the cash can last for only a certain period. Relying on those reserves to argue against funding teachers' wages is really quite offensive, so The Greens do not agree with that amendment.

I seek leave for an extension of time of one minute to deal with the amendments.

Leave granted.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: The Minister's announcement yesterday of \$100 million of Government funding is problematic. As the Hon. Sarah Mitchell said, that is not something the sector was asking for. The money is only available for preschools that choose to become long day care providers and then transfer from New South Wales funding to Commonwealth funding. The New South Wales Government only expects around 10 per cent of preschools to do that. While we support efforts to have not-for-profits providing long day care, to suggest the solution is for those preschools to transition to long day care is really problematic—and especially so when they are not getting funding for preschools.

Finally, I refer to the idea that because the New South Wales Government is not the direct employer, it does not get involved in the bargaining process. It is worth noting that when a similar process was being worked through in relation to long day care centres, even though the Commonwealth was not the direct employer, it was party to the Fair Work Commission proceedings, and it supported the recommendations and facilitated the increase in teacher wages. That is all we are asking for from the Government, so that this much better quality sector can thrive.

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

The House divided.

Ayes20
 Noes19
 Majority.....1

AYES

Banasiak	Houssos	Murphy (teller)
Borsak	Jackson	Nanva (teller)
Buckingham	Kaine	Primrose
Buttigieg	Lawrence	Roberts
D'Adam	Mihailuk	Ruddick
Donnelly	Mookhey	Suvaal
Graham	Moriarty	

NOES

Barrett	Higginson	Merton
Boyd	Hurst	Mitchell
Carter	Latham	Overall
Cohn	MacDonald	Rath (teller)
Faehrmann	Maclaren-Jones	Tudehope

Fang (teller)
Farlow

Martin

NOES

Ward

Sharpe

PAIRS

Munro

Amendment agreed to.

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

Motion as amended agreed to.

Documents

PUBLIC SCHOOL SAFETY

Production of Documents: Order

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (15:48): I move:

That, under standing order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 21 days of the date of passing of this resolution the following documents created since 1 January 2023 in the possession, custody or control of the Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning and Minister for Western Sydney, the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism and Minister for the Hunter, the Department of Education or NSW Police Force relating to weapons incidents in New South Wales public schools:

- (a) all documents relating to the possession, discovery, use or threat of use of weapons in New South Wales public schools;
- (b) all documents relating to the reporting, investigation or management of incidents involving weapons in New South Wales public schools;
- (c) all advice, policy documents, draft or final guidelines, risk assessments or recommendations relating to the prevention, detection or management of weapons incidents in New South Wales public schools;
- (d) all statistical data, summaries or reports relating to weapons incidents in New South Wales public schools; 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.

This motion is a straightforward call for papers. I am seeking information from the Government, from the offices of the Minister for Education and Early Learning and the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, the relevant departments and the NSW Police Force in relation to weapons incidents in New South Wales public schools.

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

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We are very lucky that in New South Wales we do not have a large number of incidents—thankfully—involving the use or threat of use of weapons, but it is important that the Government is as transparent as possible with the data. I am interested in looking at the data over a period to identify any trends. I am also interested in the way the Government is working within agencies to manage such incidents, as well as in any risk assessments and policy work that might be happening in the space. As I said, it is pretty straightforward. I have spoken about it with members of the Government and crossbench, and I ask all members to consider the motion favourably.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (15:49): I move:

That the question be amended by:

- (1) Omitting "21 days" and inserting instead "28 days".
- (2) Omitting "created since 1 January 2023" and inserting instead "created since 1 January 2019".
- (3) Inserting in the opening paragraph "(excluding documents held by schools)" after "the Department of Education".
- (4) Omitting "public" wherever occurring.
- (5) Omitting paragraph (a).

I understand that the Hon. Sarah Mitchell finds my amendment acceptable, and I thank her for her constructive engagement in limiting its scope. When she and I used to be in government and opposition, respectively, we spoke about limiting the scope of the provisions of our House, and particularly not wanting to impose them on individual schools, given it is a pretty onerous task. I appreciate her taking that into account. I make a couple of points. The Government supports the call for papers because the issue is a serious one. All schools follow strict policies

prohibiting weapons on school premises. They have zero tolerance of prohibited weapons. Matters are referred to the NSW Police Force.

I can only talk about the public school sector, but our schools and the NSW Police Force Youth Command run programs to educate students about the dangers and consequences of carrying weapons, promoting a culture of safety and respect. The Department of Education's incident notification and response procedures outline the process for reporting incidents. Support for weapon-related incidents is initiated through the incident reporting hotline. The department provides a broad range of support services, including counselling and conflict resolution, to address underlying issues that may lead to violence and weapon possession. We know that is usually the point of escalation, so there is a range of things in place for that.

The department specialist, risk and response unit and team around the school collectively support schools with behaviour and risk management. I am also advised that the NSW Police Force works closely with schools to monitor and respond to threats involving weapons, including regular visits and rapid response to incidents. Police liaison officers are available to provide advice and support to secondary schools, delivering crime prevention programs. These combined efforts aim to create a safe learning environment free from the threat of weapons. We talk a lot about establishing the best possible learning environment where students feel safe and secure and can be focused. There is some new research out from the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study that shows that safe classrooms are the best environments for learning. That is what we want to encourage.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (15:52): On behalf of The Greens, I support the Standing Order 52 motion as sought to be amended by the Government. However, I put on record some concerns. My concerns are not about the intention of the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, with whom I have had nothing but good interactions, and whom I believe to be committed to public education in this State. My concerns are about the tendency of both sides of politics and the media to use information about things like weapons in schools to develop knee-jerk policy responses that do not serve the best interests of children or teachers. The pictures of students in the United States walking through scanners checking for weapons show a path that I would never want Australia to go down. There is a tendency for the media to take such information about schools and put up a league table of "New South Wales's most dangerous schools". I wish that were not the case, but unfortunately that gets clicks and the media are prone to do it a bit too much.

The Greens will always support transparency and accountability, and we need to know what the Department of Education is doing about various challenges across our public and private school system. Indeed, I wish we could get more accurate data from the private school system. But, fundamentally, any response to an increase in weapons in our schools or other identified problems needs to look at evidence about what works to make a safer workplace and school environment for teachers and children alike. We need to make sure that any response is guided by the expertise of teachers and students themselves, as well as the wealth of education academics in Australia and across the world. On that cautious note, The Greens support the Standing Order 52 motion.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY (15:55): I contribute to debate on the Standing Order 52 motion and thank the Hon. Sarah Mitchell for bringing it before the House. She obviously brings it with experience as the former Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning. The matter of weapons in schools is a serious one. At least to the people I have spoken to, it did not always appear that the incidence of weapons in schools was at the same level it is these days. But these days we have, through instant communication and the media, very rapid information about matters at school. For example, before we know it, the filming of a fight or scuffle and the pulling of a weapon at school is uploaded to the internet for all to see. There is a higher level of consciousness about weapons these days. Notwithstanding that point, it is worth reiterating that we do not have a high number of annual incidents of weapons in schools. Nonetheless, the ones that we become aware of and that are reported are of significant concern.

The Government—specifically the Department of Education—has very strict policies with respect to weapons in schools. The term "zero tolerance" gets thrown around a bit too much, losing its potency. But it is fair to say that in this case there is indeed zero tolerance, in a strict sense, of prohibited weapons being brought into schools. Where that has been discovered to be the case, it is referred—as one would expect—to the NSW Police Force. The whole school hierarchy—from principals down—and the regional hierarchy within the Department of Education are very conscious that they need to respond immediately to reportage or identification of prohibited weapons in schools. The NSW Police Force Youth Command runs programs to educate students about the dangers and the consequences of carrying weapons, and we commend that. I support the motion and the amendment of the Hon. Courtney Houssos.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (15:58): I support the motion of the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, as sought to be amended by the Hon. Courtney Houssos. It is a good motion. As Ms Abigail Boyd noted, it is important that we do not go down the path of the Americanisation of schools. The last thing we want in this country is to end up

with metal detectors, wandering or all those other crazy things, where schools become encampments to keep out weapons. Fortunately, we do not appear to have much of a problem. But this order for papers under Standing Order 52 will uncover whatever incidents have occurred and will provide the associated documents going back to 2019. I am very thankful that we have a sensible approach. As the Minister outlined, the Department of Education has an incident notification and response procedure. That outlines a comprehensive process for reporting incidents of weapons. It also allows those notifications to be captured under the Standing Order 52 order.

The Hon. Greg Donnelly remarked on the importance of the police and the NSW Police Force Youth Command, which runs programs about weapons in schools. It operates in a way that tries to de-escalate any conflict before it gets to the point where people are considering bringing weapons onto school premises. I also note that the department provides support services, and there are all sorts of counselling and conflict resolution processes already in place to try to de-escalate and address those underlying issues so that we avoid weapons being brought into schools at all costs. I think every member in this place would support that, and the Government is also committed to that. I am very glad that we are not going down the American path, where everyone is armed to the teeth and it is a powder keg ready to explode. We have seen the horrific consequences of that. I commend the motion as amended to the House.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (16:02): In reply: I thank members for their contributions. Even though the Minister already foreshadowed it, I note I am happy to accept the amendment. I have had discussions with her about this, as well as with Maddie from the Deputy Premier's office. I am keen to get some of the specific names of schools from the centrally held documents. I expect and would anticipate that they would be kept privileged, as they should be, to avoid the problems that Ms Abigail Boyd spoke about. But it is important that members actually see which schools the issues are occurring in. The Hon. Cameron Murphy also spoke about making sure that there are good youth engagement programs and that the police are involved if there are concerns in some areas. Prevention is far better than dealing with the aftermath.

Some members spoke about what happens in the United States. Quite a few years ago, when I was the Minister, I had the opportunity to visit a school in New Jersey that had scanning machines as people walked in, similar to what we have at the front of Parliament. I have to say the staff and students were pretty relaxed about it. They were used to it and they did it. But it was very confronting and compelling for me to see that. We obviously do not want to see that happen in our society, but that is the level of risk that some communities around the world are dealing with. These are important issues. I am very interested to see the trends in the data and the documents. I thank members for their support.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The Hon. Sarah Mitchell has moved a motion, to which the Hon. Courtney Houssos 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.

Visitors

VISITORS

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): I welcome and acknowledge Mr Corey DeAngelis, executive director of the Educational Freedom Institute, and Mrs Miranda DeAngelis. They are in the gallery today as guests of the Hon. John Ruddick. They are both most welcome.

Motions

SCHOOL CHOICE MOVEMENT

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (16:04): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) the New South Wales public school system is increasingly failing to adequately educate our children; and
 - (b) parents, not bureaucracies, are best placed to decide which school is most suitable for their child's education, and that funding should follow the student rather than the system.
- (2) That this House supports parents having greater access to educational choice for their children, and increasing school choice is more ethical, effective and efficient than the current big bureaucracy approach.

- (3) That this House notes the growing body of evidence from the United States that school choice programs, including education savings accounts, scholarships and vouchers, have delivered higher educational attainment for low-income students while expanding opportunity for all students.
- (4) That this House recognises:
 - (a) the success of large statewide programs such as Arizona's Empowerment Scholarship Account and Florida's universal voucher/Educational Savings Account framework, which allow families to direct their education dollars to the school or learning setting that best fits their children; and
 - (b) recent evaluations of the school voucher program in Milwaukee by the Urban Institute shows voucher participants have higher rates of high school graduation and college enrolment than comparable students in traditional government schooling.
- (5) That this House calls on the Government to embrace the school choice movement, including the introduction of school vouchers, where government funding goes to the parents instead of the schools and the parents can then choose the best way to educate their children.

Education is too important to be left to government. Government will always have a self-interested agenda in setting the curriculum. Ideological activists will get themselves into positions where they can influence the curriculum in an effort to shape the politics of the next generation. When I studied modern history for my HSC in 1988, we studied three subjects: the communist revolution in Russia, the communist revolution in China and the communist revolution in Cuba. The curriculum never bothered to teach us about the rivers of blood that those revolutions caused. I recently spoke to a year 12 student who is studying modern history this year. I asked him what was on the agenda. It was the same things. In the four decades since I went through the course, the Berlin Wall came down and the Soviet Union imploded, but someone somewhere, deep in the bureaucracy of the education department, still wants to pump communist revolutionary urges into the kids.

Why was there no interest in the good revolutions that have truly shaped our world for the better, like the English Revolution or the American Revolution? The curriculum shoves down our kids' throats the shame of being Australian, freak-outs over non-existent global warming, and the radical rainbow agenda. The curriculum seems designed to make kids gloomy. So, yes, libertarians believe that the education system is too important to be left to government. Sometimes we hear the argument in the reverse. Some people claim that the free market is all well and good in some situations, but things like education are too important to be left to the market, so we need government schools to provide education for the public.

That argument is exactly backwards. Let us apply that logic to grocery stores. Let us say the free market is all well and good, but food is too important to be left to the market, so we need government-owned farms and government-owned grocery stores to provide food for the public. Each person would be allocated a single grocery store, which would provide little choice, with products of low quality and often no quantity. The grocery managers would be answerable to bureaucrats instead of their customers and so there would be no incentive to respond to customer preferences. Instead, decisions by the grocery stores would be worked out in backroom deals between the government grocery department and the grocery union.

No matter how much extra funding was funnelled into the grocery system, most of that would go to the grocery administrators, while customer service, choices and food quality would continue to decline. Obviously, we would not tolerate such a dystopian approach to grocery stores, but for some reason we have been conditioned to accept exactly that sort of approach with schools. It does not need to be that way. The school choice movement provides a better way forward. The idea of school choice is exactly as it sounds: Give parents more choice about how to educate their children.

The benefits of choice in education, as in all other areas of life, are twofold. First, at the most basic level, school choice allows parents to pick the sort of education that best fits their preferences and values plus the aptitude and interests of their child. Parents who want more of the same would be welcome to choose the status quo, but those who want something different would be more able to choose the right sort of education for their family. That sort of freedom is a good thing in and of itself, but that is only half the story. School choice also creates competition, and that competitive dynamic fosters excellence and innovation.

Whether in business, politics, sports or anywhere else, competition drives improvement. The same is true with education. Empowering parents to have real, meaningful choice over their educational options would force schools to be sensitive and responsive to the demands of parents, to search for ways to improve, to quickly copy what works from elsewhere and to quickly abandon failed ideas. It is a win-win policy agenda, giving more freedom to parents to choose what is right for their family and encouraging general improvement across the education sector.

The most obvious and direct way to increase school choice is with school vouchers. Instead of government funding going directly to government schools, the idea is that government funding would instead go directly to parents, who would use that money to pay for education. This is how the school voucher system would work. At

the beginning of each year, all parents of school-aged children across New South Wales would be given a voucher by the Government. That voucher would have a face value of around \$10,000 to \$15,000. It would then be used to buy one year of education for a child, and the parents would then decide which school they would cash in their voucher with. That school would then educate their child. It would make schools small businesses competing for the confidence of parents to educate their children. The voucher would be sufficient to provide a good education for schoolkids from every socio-economic group but, of course, parents with good incomes could still choose to pay their own money on top of the voucher so their kids could attend a school with high-quality facilities et cetera. Under the proposal, government would still be funding education.

I seek an extension of two minutes.

Leave granted.

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK: The idea of school choice was first proposed by Milton Friedman in the 1950s. He was probably the greatest economist of the twentieth century. In places like Milwaukee, efforts have been made to expand and trial the process, but the school voucher revolution really took off in America during the stupid COVID lockdowns. Parents could see what the kids were being taught on Zoom, and they were horrified. Starting in places like Arizona and Texas, there has been a school choice revolution. It is led by Corey DeAngelis, who is the gallery. He is known as the school choice evangelist, and he is touring Australia with his wife, Miranda, at the moment and speaking at the mighty Conservative Political Action Conference on the weekend.

If we really love our kids, this is a cost neutral thing. We are not talking about taking money away from the Department of Education; we are talking about ending the Department of Education and all of its left-wing bias. We are talking about having a competitive, dynamic education system that will be motivated by market forces and produce excellence. Schools will learn from each other about what does and does not work. No-one loves a kid more than their parents. They certainly love them more than bureaucrats. Parents know what type of school will suit their child. Often that school will look very similar to the way schools look today, but there will be microschools, homeschools, specialist schools, religious schools and whatever. I reckon only 2 per cent of parents would want their kids to learn the current curriculum, and they are allowed to do that. In places like Newtown, if they want a bohemian education and they want to learn to hate Australia, that is fine. But that is only 2 per cent of parents. Let us get the school voucher revolution underway.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (16:11): I support the intent of the Hon. John Ruddick because I believe the libertarian presence in this Chamber is healthy. It makes us examine a lot of important issues from first principles. The motion is also timely because, not long ago, the head of the Department of Education said he did not want any choice in the education system. He believed in a Soviet-style, one-sector system where people could have any school they liked—as long as it was a government school. He walked that back in his *Australian Story* public relations exercise, but we all know he did not really believe it. It is a worry that he would be putting a dead hand on the other sectors that are important in education.

Quality education matters, but it also correlates with parental choice. Parents do have the right to identify quality teaching, the values they are comfortable with and the disciplinary and behavioural standards they want for their children, and no-one is more important in a child's life than their parents. So choice is essential. At the moment in New South Wales we have three sectors: the government sector, which is losing enrolments and is projected to lose even more numbers throughout the life of the Minns Government; the non-government sector; and a growing homeschooling sector, where parents are clearly not happy with the quality of education in the government sector but cannot afford private schools. If they have the capacity for the home parent to do it themselves, that has been their choice.

I propose a fourth sector: charter schools. If there is a cooperative of parents that have an intent and a desire to try their own approach to education, they could take their entitlement out of the government system and set up their own school. The Hon. John Ruddick, in effect, is proposing a fifth system, which is the ultimate laissez faire system of full vouchers. On charter schools in New South Wales, 25 years ago the then member for Werriwa represented the wonderful parents of intellectually disabled children in Campbelltown. They had the support of the University of Western Sydney and charitable money from the Pratt Foundation. Then Premier Bob Carr said he wanted to be an innovator in education, and the members lined everything up to run the first ever trial of a charter school. Those parents would be the committee selecting the principal and teachers, helping in the management of the school and mobilising all of the extra resources from the university and the Pratt Foundation.

It was one of the most deflating moments of my time in public life—devastating, in fact—when Bob Carr ultimately wrote back and said that the Teachers Federation would not support it, so it was not going to fly. It was for parents of intellectually disabled children in Campbelltown, and it was one trial that I think would have been instructive and a great success. I think a charter model trial is commendable and would be a step in the direction

that the Hon. John Ruddick is indicating. We need more innovation in New South Wales school education for one simple reason: It is not going too well, is it? The results are going backwards. Trialling innovative approaches—not necessarily on the full-scale *laissez faire* model—has a lot to commend it and should be considered by the Government.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (16:15): What can I say about this motion? I was tempted, and remain sorely tempted, to ignore this motion out of hand as just another piece of tragically irrelevant cultural detritus that has washed ashore from the failing state that is the United States of America. It must be so blissfully serene inside the mind of a libertarian, where one's ideology requires no thought, analysis or substance. The ideology is just that big government is bad, and then they wait by the door for the next care package of imported American cultural preoccupations and specialty interests. Libertarianism is a profoundly juvenile ideology. It is the ideology of the already incredibly privileged, of the spoilt and surly teenager of political thought, screaming, "No, Mum. Get out of my room. You're not the boss of me!" It is the self-deluding ideology of those who consider themselves self-made men—and it is fairly consistently men who dominate the ranks of its adherents, which should tell us something—who were born on third base and go through life thinking they hit a triple.

But I digress. Let us take this policy on its merits, however slim they may be. The policy of school vouchers is an all-out assault on the principle of collective, equitable and public education. It cannibalises public school funding while delivering State-sponsored subsidies to private schools. There is no requirement for internal coherence here from the Libertarian Party raging against government subsidies and market distortions. We are now seeing what happens when you have had government subsidies going towards private, for-profit providers in the early childhood sector. We are only trying to unpick that now because it has had really disastrous outcomes for children, and I will do everything I can to keep those dangerous market forces out of the education sector.

I put on record The Greens' strongest support for the public education system. We believe, as a simple premise, that education is a right of children and people at all stages of life, and an educated populace is a public good. Universal access to high-quality education is fundamental to the development of a fair, economically and socially just, and environmentally sustainable Australia. We believe that governments have primary responsibility for funding all levels of the public education system, including early childhood education, schools, vocational education and training and universities, to provide high-quality education to all students.

The Greens will not stand idly by while public school teachers are denigrated and talked down in ignorant motions like this one. In my experience, public school teachers are some of the most socially minded, passionate and professional people working in this State. I am highly concerned at the increasing drift away from vigorous and full-throated support for public school teachers by this Government. As I exposed in budget estimates hearings, the wages correction for teachers has gone some way to reducing burnout and retaining and attracting teachers, but rates of psychological injury continue to increase, driven primarily by bullying and harassment. But rather than accepting responsibility for creating a safer workplace, this Government, as the employer of teachers, instead wants to cut back teachers' workers compensation entitlements. Our teachers deserve far better than the Labor Government.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (16:18): I lead for the Opposition in this debate and indicate that, while we do not support the motion as it is written, we acknowledge its mover, the Hon. John Ruddick. I know that he believes very strongly in these issues, and I think that is a good trait to see in a member of this House. He knows what he believes, he stands by it, and he brings it into the Chamber for healthy debate on a Wednesday. That is what we should be doing on private members' day. There may be contributions from some of my colleagues, particularly on the general principle of parents having choice. Opposition members absolutely support that. We think that is important.

While we do not support the school vouchers approach, making sure that parents can make decisions about what is best for them, their children and their family when it comes to education is something that we feel strongly about. It is essential that parents can make those decisions. As a parent, I want to make the decisions about what is best for my girls and their learning. I call out the parts of the motion where the member talks about looking at evidence from other jurisdictions. I am interested to learn more about some of the programs that he has mentioned. I do not know a lot about them, to be honest. But if we can look as a collective to overseas or other areas where things are being done differently and they are seeing improved outcomes and parental engagement, that is not a bad thing. It is not a bad thing to look at how other jurisdictions do this.

The Hon. Mark Latham spoke about the charter school model. I have been fortunate to visit a number of charter schools in the United States over the past couple of years. He is right; it is a really interesting model. Most recently in April I went to a couple of charter schools in Los Angeles that have been built in some of the most challenging socio-economic communities. Some parents, teachers and other educators got together and said, "We can do better by our kids, and we are going to set up a model with high expectations, parental involvement and strong discipline." They are having great outcomes. We should not just dismiss other jurisdictions. It is worth

having that engagement. We also see that in the United Kingdom, where I have visited a couple of the free school models. It is a similar concept. It is important that we look to what is happening around the world. We should be having robust conversations about education delivery.

As I said, we will not support the motion as it is. But I appreciate the intent of the mover. It is a healthy dialogue to be having in terms of what education delivery looks like in the State. We absolutely support the principle of parental choice in which school parents send their children to or if they want to homeschool. Parental choice is very important. We will continue to hold that position.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (16:21): The Government opposes the motion, but it is fantastic that we are having a great debate like this on a Wednesday. We all come from different perspectives, and I respect that the Hon. John Ruddick has brought this to the attention of the House. At the outset I correct a few points from previous speakers. I start where some might not expect me to, which is agreeing with the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, in saying we absolutely need evidence-based policy, and we should learn from other jurisdictions. In correcting some of those earlier comments by the Hon. John Ruddick, we are in the process of rebuilding public education. I cannot quibble with his disapproval of the way that the public education system was run for the past 12 years and that he is looking for innovative solutions. But we have a different plan that is in place. The Deputy Premier has been leading that for 2½ years, and we are starting to see some early green shoots in results.

I correct a few more things. We do not have the same curriculum that was in place in 1988. We are rolling out a new knowledge-based rich curriculum because we know that the foundation of learning has to be a rich knowledge base. That is a new program that is in place and being rolled out with a renewed focus on literacy and numeracy. One of the most concerning things out of the NAPLAN results this year was the fact that we went backwards in writing across all of them. As part of the new curriculum, we will embed writing not just in English but right across the curriculum. That will be really important, and we hope that it will produce results.

I have talked a lot about the ambitious program that the Deputy Premier has been leading. One aspect of that is putting teachers in classrooms. We know that we need teachers in classrooms so that kids get better outcomes. We have seen teacher vacancies reduced by 61 per cent by day one, term 3 this year. That is an important first step. We are building schools where they are needed. It is true that we have seen enormous growth in the independent sector, but that is also the result of having a government that did not build schools where families were going to build their lives. If the only option is to send children to the local independent school, as opposed to driving four suburbs across and past the vacant block of land that was reserved for the public school, then I cannot quibble with that for parents.

We are spending \$9 billion over the next four years with a record-building school building program, and the Deputy Premier has fundamentally changed the way that we are rebuilding schools. I make this point in closing: School choice is a fundamental feature of the Minns Government's education policy platform. It has been a bipartisan position for generations. The Greens might not like to hear this but, according to the OECD, Australia spends more public money on private schools than any other OECD country. School choice is embedded through the needs-based funding that we have in New South Wales schools, because a family can choose to enrol in any school— [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (16:24): I make a contribution to debate on the important motion moved by my good friend the Hon. John Ruddick, which highlights the challenges in the government school system and champions parental choice as the ethical, effective path forward. The Hon. John Ruddick's motion and his thoughts on vouchers is an interesting contribution to the wider debate concerning parental choice. I appreciate the opportunity to make a few comments about the issue. I have long advocated for the freedom of parents to choose the education that best aligns with their beliefs and their child's needs. In May I put forward a motion that the House recognises that parental choice is a pillar of the New South Wales education system, allowing parents to select schools that best suit their child's needs and their family's values. The motion was passed.

I again thank members for their contributions to the debate that evening, including the Minister and many who are in the Chamber tonight. For over a century parental choice in terms of government, independent or Catholic schools been a fundamental part of the State school education system. Parental choice is not a privilege. It is a fundamental right that underpins our State's success, allowing families to escape the one-size-fits-all bureaucracies and opt for schools that foster discipline, values and real outcomes. New South Wales has some great schools and great teachers in all three of the pillars that make up our education system. Nevertheless, in considering the context of this motion, it would be remiss of the House not to note the stark evidence of the ongoing decline in government school enrolments.

In 2023, New South Wales public school enrolments dropped by 5,001 to 786,434, the sharpest fall in years, while non-government enrolments surged 2.6 per cent, reflecting parents' growing concerns with a system that has become characterised by falling standards and—as I have discussed many times previously—politicised classrooms where ideology replaces learning. The decline in education standards is a real concern to many parents. The 2024 NAPLAN results revealed concerning trends. Only 53 public schools were deemed high achieving compared with schools with students of similar backgrounds, with statewide proficiency in reading and numeracy stagnating or declining in year levels, particularly for disadvantaged students.

Parents from all demographics in such an environment are voting with their feet. They are seeking better environments amid classroom disruptions and left-wing ideological pressures. Bureaucracies do not educate children; parents do by directing funding where it matters. In New South Wales, non-government schools are now educating 36.6 per cent of students. The figure will only continue to grow whilst these concerns remain with the existing government system. As I stated previously, parents quite simply have the right to send their children to a school that best suits their values, beliefs and needs. As legislators, we need to uphold that right.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (16:27): I thank the mover of the motion, the Hon. John Ruddick, for bringing it to the House. It is extremely important that we have these debates. That is what Wednesday should be for. I suspect, though, that we are polar opposites in terms of the issue. I will set out why. At the moment we have a pretty well funded public education system. It is something that can always do with improvement, but I do not support vouchers at all because vouchers are the antithesis of choice. At the moment parents already have choice in our education system.

Any parent can decide to take their child to a private school if they are interested in a particular form of religious education or they think a school offers something that a public school does not. They already have that choice. They pay for it, and so they should be paying their private school fees. The issue with vouchers is if we have a system that takes money out of the public education system and puts it into some other school, we effectively just undermine the choice of the people who are left in the public education system. I do not support doing that. I believe in lifting up education standards for every child, and I do not think a voucher system does that in any way whatsoever.

I thought the Libertarian Party was the party of eliminating red tape. I cannot think of a more complicated and difficult administrative burden than the one that we would thrust upon every parent with children in the education system in the State by handing out vouchers, asking the parents to present the vouchers at a particular school, and creating a whole administration system at that school to process the vouchers and fill out the forms to claim the requisite funding. I always thought the Libertarian Party was about reducing red tape—removing that burden on people to make life easier—and making government smaller. The voucher system appears to be the complete opposite of that, and I do not understand how it fits in with the libertarian ethos. If the member wishes to explain why he thinks vouchers are an efficient system then I am happy to learn, but I do not support the motion. I support strong public education that is properly funded, in the way that the Government is doing at the moment.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (16:30): If the Hon. Cameron Murphy thinks that the voucher system is complicated, he should look at how the Department of Education allocates funding. It is far more complicated than any voucher system where parents have the choice to determine which schools are allocated funding. I have always liked the idea of vouchers—or, at least, ever since I read Milton Friedman as a student at university. I even went so far as to mention vouchers in my inaugural speech in this place. While I acknowledge that the Opposition's position is to not support the motion at this time, an inaugural speech gives members the opportunity to express their views in a more flexible manner. In my inaugural speech, I said:

... we need to move away from the fundamentally flawed thinking that more and more government spending will lead to better outcomes in health, education, transport or other services. The volume of spending is often not the problem; rather, it is how it is being spent. Clearer KPIs for how money is spent, greater private sector involvement in the delivery of services and greater choice for individuals are critical factors. It is why I have always liked the idea of school vouchers, where parents and students not only choose which public or private school they attend but then also issue a certificate of funding to their chosen school, thereby creating real choice and competition in education. Using government funding and a market mechanism, choice in schooling then becomes available to everyone, not just the rich and powerful.

That is an important point. At the moment choice in education is, in many ways, for the rich and powerful. If a person is from a low socio-economic background, they do not have much choice. They have to go to a public school, and that school has to be within a certain radius based on where they live. There is very little choice in education at the moment, and school vouchers would change that. Some states in the United States have done exactly that. I think it is an interesting idea, and I have looked into it. It would probably lead to more competition. It would lead to more parental choice. It would probably lead to better outcomes because parents would make a proactive decision to send their children to better schools, where there are better education standards. That would lead to better education standards overall. It is a very interesting concept, and it is good that the Hon. John Ruddick has moved this motion today. Unfortunately, I cannot support the motion at this time.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (16:33): In the vein of the Hon. Chris Rath, I also contribute to the Wednesday debating club on the school vouchers motion. I have also always admired that idea and seen it as a step that a government could take in Australia. However, there are complicated funding arrangements between the Federal and State governments. Unfortunately, it is not within the purview of the States to be able to issue such a voucher. In principle, funding should follow the student. The Government should facilitate that choice and provide the safety net for everyone across society. I am a product of public education, and I think the Hon. Chris Rath is also—no, he is shaking his head. Well, I am a product of public education, but I believe that we should allow choice. We should be able to support families. As the Hon. John Ruddick said, it is about providing school choice for those at the bottom end of society, not those at the top end.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Pursuant to standing orders debate is interrupted to allow the mover of the motion to speak in reply.

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (16:34): In reply: I thank the Hon. Mark Latham. When he spoke to me yesterday, he said that he was generally sympathetic to the motion but that he is a believer in charter schools. I said to him, "I'll take the ideologically pure position, and you can take the pragmatic position." He is right: It would be a good idea. A trial of charter schools would be a big step in the right direction. We might talk about that in a future debate. Ms Abigail Boyd seemed very hostile to the motion. Her Twitter account openly says that she is a socialist. She said that America is a failing country. Let us go through America's achievements. It is only the biggest economy in world history. They put man on the moon. They built the internet, artificial intelligence, mobile phones—Ms Abigail Boyd is on her mobile phone all day—and TVs. They have championed democracy around the world. They dominate Nobel prizes.

Whenever migrants around the world want to get out of some hellhole, the country they most want to go to is the United States. When migrants arrive in this country, they often say that their first preference was the United States. Apparently, that country is a failure. I sincerely thank the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, the Opposition spokesperson on education, who said that she is interested in this subject and sympathetic to increasing school choice in general. I thank Minister Houssos for welcoming a debate about good ideas. I like to think that is what this is. She seemed to think we can patch things up—

The Hon. Courtney Houssos: It was "big ideas", not "good ideas".

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK: Big ideas—thank you for the correction. Minister Houssos is one of my favourite Ministers in this Government, but the reason she is in the Labor Party is that she knows there are problems and she thinks she can patch them up through more government. I thank one of my most longstanding friends in politics, the Hon. Rachel Merton. Her contribution reminded me about Murat Dizdar, the Secretary of the Department of Education. He publicly said on the ABC that he wanted to shut down all the private schools and have just one curriculum for the kids.

The Hon. Cameron Murphy made a remarkable contribution. I thought he was one of the more intellectual people in this Chamber—he is a former president of the Council for Civil Liberties. He said that we already have choice in education. That is not true. Poor people do not have a choice. Rich people like the Hon. Cameron Murphy might have a choice, but 70 per cent of people have no choice about what school they go to. He thought that the motion would create more red tape, but then he admitted that he does not know much about the subject. I suggest to the Hon. Cameron Murphy that in the future, if he does not know much about a subject, he should talk to members on this side of the Chamber. We will fix him up so that he does not make himself look like an ignoramus.

The Hon. Chris Rath gave a brilliant maiden speech, and he knows good public policy when he sees it. I thank the Hon. Scott Farlow. I urge the Hon. Scott Farlow and the Hon. Chris Rath to keep fighting within the Liberal Party. Australia can only hope that one day the once great Liberal Party will rediscover its small-government roots. I hope that happens. I commend the motion to the House. There will be a division, so members can go on record as either supporting a socialist-communist education system or a free market system.

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

The House divided.

Ayes3
 Noes34
 Majority.....31

AYES

Latham (teller)

Mihailuk

Ruddick (teller)

NOES

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

Motion negatived.

*Bills***POLICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (MISCELLANEOUS) BILL 2025****First Reading**

Bill received from the Legislative Assembly, read a first time and ordered to be published on motion by the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, on behalf of the Hon. Tara Moriarty.

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

Statement of public interest tabled.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: 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. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I move:

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

Motion agreed to.

*Documents***TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES****Production of Documents: Order**

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (16:48): 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 30 June 2024 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, Premier's Department, The Cabinet Office, Treasury, Transport for NSW, Sydney Metro, Sydney Trains or Transport Asset Manager of New South Wales relating to transport and roads asset delivery and performance:

- (a) all documents relating to the cost, delivery timeline, project delays, changes in project scope, opening dates, target dates or contractual negotiations of the M6 Stage 1;
- (b) all documents relating to the cost, delivery timeline, project delays, changes in project scope, opening dates, target dates or contractual negotiations of the Sydney Metro Bankstown to Sydenham Conversion;
- (c) all documents relating to the cost, delivery timeline, project delays, changes in project scope, opening dates, target dates or contractual negotiations of the Sydney Metro Western Sydney Airport;
- (d) all documents relating to the cost, delivery timeline, project delays, changes in project scope, opening dates, target dates or contractual negotiations of the Sydney Metro West;
- (e) all documents relating to the Review of Sydney Trains 2025; and
- (f) any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.

Labor is back to its old trick of saying it will do a lot but delivering nothing. Who would have thought that simple questions would have stumped a Minister at budget estimate hearings? When I was drafting my questions, I did

not think that asking the Minister when a project will open would be such a difficult question. This was not a question like "Did you order the code red?" It was simply "When will it open?" I did not have to ask, "Why the two orders, Colonel Jessep?"

When Opposition members asked him basic questions, the Minister would look at them like he was Robert De Niro in *Taxi Driver*—"You talkin' to me?" The lack of any detail or substance was, quite frankly, pathetic. These are government projects and the Labor Government is treating the public with contempt. I asked the transport Minister, "When will the Bankstown conversion open?" He said that the target date is 2026. It was a bit like the old Abbott and Costello comedy routine "Who's on First?" But Abbott and Costello would not believe it if they had seen it for themselves.

It is "a wing and a prayer" stuff at Sydney Metro—welcome to life under this Labor Government. The delivery date could be 1 January, it could be 15 January, it could be 27 July or it could be 1 December. We do not know. It will be 2026; pick a number. The worst part is that either the Minister will not tell us the date or he does not know it. It is a \$20 billion project and no-one knows when it will be complete. The Government is treating those people who are forced to use the pink replacement buses with contempt. It is a classic Labor move. Because this is happening within what is traditionally a Labor area, the Government does not care one iota about the punter. Everyone knows that the best time to be a Labor Party member is when the party is in opposition, because that is when they will actually listen to you. Announcing dates about projects is not about the politicians; it is about the public. Finding out project opening dates should not be like the plot of *All the President's Men*. We do not need a Deep Throat here; we just need answers—my thanks to Sinclair Hill.

To put it on the record, the former transport Minister promised that the Sydney Metro Southwest conversion would involve a 12-month shutdown and would be ready to open in September 2025. The Government has missed that mark and no clear reason has been given for the delay. The target date is now sometime in 2026, but the Minister will not give any more detail or a new cost update. This is a \$20 billion project. The Minister's message to the public during the budget estimates hearing was "It's complex." His own department has bamboozled him. The one thing government departments like more than a disengaged Minister is a bamboozled one. I wonder where the transport Minister is in all of this. I am trying to help him.

Sydney Metro Western Sydney Airport was supposed to open in 2026, alongside the new airport. But in May this year *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported that the project was at risk of a \$2.2 billion cost blowout and opening a year late. The Government has said nothing about the date or the cost. The most we have been given was the Premier saying at a press conference, "We won't miss it by much." That is not an answer. The Minns Government delayed Sydney Metro West for two years, for no reason. The Government's own metro report stated that the delay in getting tenders into the field would lead to a cost escalation. It is already costing over \$23 billion, and after the "station by press release" of Rosehill and the mystery second station, all the community got was a two-year delay and a Lego set. I refer to Chris Minns' post on X. In the recent budget estimates hearing I asked the roads Minister when stage one of the M6 would open. Her answer was:

I really don't want to say too much ... on this one.

...

... that's really a question for the engineers.

I asked the Minister whether she had been advised that it would not be open until the 2030s. Her response was:

Maybe I have; maybe I haven't.

Sinkholes first appeared in the M6 project in May 2024, but again the Government has provided no detail. It expects to receive toll revenue in the forward estimates, but it is not even sure that the road will open. The public deserves to know the truth about what is going on with these projects and where their billions of taxpayer dollars are being spent. It is their money, it is their time and it is their future. Opposition members have gone through the proper processes, posing questions of the relevant Ministers at the budget estimates hearings and during question time in this House. We deserve answers, but we have not received any. I commend this call for papers under Standing Order 52 to the House, so that we can find out what is going on with the people's money and the people's projects.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (16:53): Firstly, the Government has answered a number of questions from the Hon. Natalie Ward quite specifically on these projects. I was interrupted while giving those answers and that made it difficult to get some of the facts on the table. I will repeat them for the benefit of the House. The Metro Southwest will open in 2026. As I have made clear, we will have further information and an update for the community as we move into the high-speed testing phase. Recently I have been meeting with the national regulator and the agency on a weekly or fortnightly basis. Those regulatory decisions are crucial to being

able to update the community in more detail. As soon as we can be more precise, we will be. The Metro West project will open in 2032. It is not assisted by the fact that those opposite knew that its cost had blown out by more than \$10 billion but never told the public that. It is unbelievable that they would not disclose such a huge blowout. We had to update the public about it.

In relation to the Metro Western Sydney Airport, the date will be provided if there is a shift. But as the Government has made very clear, we are in commercial dispute with one of the partners. By inviting the Government to provide an early update while it is in that commercial dispute, the Opposition could disadvantage taxpayers, costing them hundreds of millions of dollars. The Government simply will not do that, and nor did former transport Ministers. Labor members were always aware of that when we were in opposition. We pressed the Ministers for answers, but when they gave similar answers to this, we accepted the commercial realities. The Opposition is pressing us, asking, "When will these projects be delivered?", but at the same time slowing down delivery with these calls for papers.

That is the sad reality here. The Government will be opposing this call for papers, not in principle—these are reasonable things to ask for—but in practice, because it will further delay these projects. I am advised that there are 70 Transport officials working on delivering the papers called for by the Opposition last week, at a cost of \$1.5 million. The scope of documents sought by this motion is so broad that it will have a similar impact. The metro projects that the Opposition is calling for to be delivered rapidly will be slowed down by these calls for papers. In relation to the Sydney Trains issue, the Premier has made it clear that shortly the whole report will be released publicly. I move:

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

That is the position of the Government in relation to this matter.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (16:56): I support the motion moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in this place. The Greens examine motions under Standing Order 52 that come before us to make sure that the documents sought are being called for in the public interest and to assist the efforts of members of this place to hold the Government accountable. The Hon. Natalie Ward has expressed her frustration at the inability to get meaningful answers at the budget estimates hearing from the transport Minister or senior officials in relation to the projects listed in this motion—and a hell of a lot of other things. Questions which the Minister and his departmental officials should have been able to answer, front and centre, relating to project delivery dates and delays, were all taken on notice.

I had a look back at some of the transcripts of previous budget estimates hearings involving transport Ministers in the previous Government. I am loath to say it, but we got a bit more information in relation to delays from them. If something was going to be delayed, we were told roughly whether it would be to early 2024, for example, or early 2025. But at the most recent budget estimates hearing, it was very, very difficult to get any kind of information at all. Of course, the Government knows full well that the release of such dates and any mention of a delay will lead to headlines. That is potentially one reason why a lot of the information was not given. I am just making that assumption. But the mover of the motion, and the members of this House who support it, want to know whether these projects are delayed because we want to be able to inform the travelling public about where they are up to. That point applies to the Sydney Metro Sydenham to Bankstown conversion. Those passengers really want to know how long they will be catching buses for, and that is why we support this motion under Standing Order 52

The Hon. BOB NANVA (16:59): I oppose the motion. It is quite obvious that it seeks an extensive range of documents relating to transport and roads asset delivery and performance, but it only provides a very limited time for compliance. It comes in addition to an order of a similarly vast and unconstrained scope that the House passed last week. With Transport teams operating at full capacity complying with last week's order, this week's order is the straw that could break the camel's back. Some 70 staff were diverted to work on the previous order, and I understand that the cost of processing that order and this new one will run to \$1.5 million.

Paragraphs (a) to (e) of the order cover five separate topics that would be more appropriately dealt with across at least five separate motions. Reference was made during last week's debate to the motion under Standing Order 52 moved by the now Treasurer, but any cursory reading of that order shows that it is in stark contrast to these two motions. It was constrained and focused. As has been 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, noted:

It would be reasonable in our view, to query or dispute an order that contained an 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 upon compliance.

That bears repeating—"so broad and unwieldy as to place great practical difficulties upon compliance". It is difficult to see how it is reasonably necessary for the House to order these documents. For those reasons, I oppose the motion.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (17:01): I move:

That the question be amended by omitting "21 days" and inserting instead "28 days".

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (17:02): It might come as a great shock to the Opposition, but I oppose the motion. Before I get into the reasons, I will also move an amendment. I move:

That the question be amended by omitting "all documents relating to" wherever occurring and inserting instead "ministerial briefings".

As the Minister for Transport said, a large volume of documents has already been provided in relation to these issues. This is another motion under Standing Order 52 that seeks to capture an extremely large volume of documents across multiple branches and multiple agencies. The original wording of the motion has a 21-day time frame, which is completely unrealistic given the sheer scale of the work required to comply with this request for documents. In August 2024 Transport required five weeks to produce 28,619 documents in response to a motion under Standing Order 52 in relation to the transport reviews.

The information I have from the Minister is that complying with that motion involved 4,500 staff hours and almost \$200,000 in external costs on top of those staff hours. The motion we are debating today is about three to four times larger in terms of the volume of documents and the work required to comply with it. Given the huge volume of material already provided, one can only think that these motions under Standing Order 52 are nothing more than a fishing expedition. I am a great supporter of information, but I would hope that the Opposition would be able to narrow the motion so that it did not require this level of effort to produce the documents. It seems clear that there is nothing there.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (17:05): I raise concerns about the current form of this motion under Standing Order 52, or SO 52, for a number of reasons. While a lot has already been said and a lot of concerns have already been canvassed, I suspect that I might have had the most recent experience in the public service, being on the other side of these requests and understanding the immense amount of work that goes into every single one. But that is not the only reason to consider such motions very carefully or to reconsider them. Of course there needs to be an appropriate commitment to transparency; of course there needs to be accountability and the capacity for documents and decisions to be scrutinised. I certainly would not argue for anything other than that. But every time I see another SO 52, particularly when they are in the same area over and over again, I cannot help but think of all the public servants on the other end required to be diverted from their real jobs to work on those orders. As I said, I am not taking away from the need for transparency.

I was not in this place during the last Parliament, but the practice of the Labor Party in opposition regarding SO 52 motions is often referenced, as is what I understand is known as the "Mookhey library". I looked at one of the Treasurer's orders of papers that was referenced in debate last week, to make the comparison and see if the comparisons are like for like. Are we actually talking about the same thing? The argument is that we did this all the time and now the Opposition does it all the time. What struck me—and I think the Hon. Bob Nanva referred to it—was the specificity of the Treasurer's motion that was referred to. He was asking for specific asset management policies, specific investment plans and specific documents, rather than the broad, sweeping, catch-all SO 52 motions that are becoming the norm in this place. I ask for more considered, more targeted motions that still serve the purpose of transparency and accountability.

The Hon. WES FANG (17:08): My contribution to debate on the motion will be brief. I support the motion. I note the consternation of members opposite, but that may be because the Government sacked 900 people from Transport for NSW, and that has made things somewhat difficult. If the Government had had the foresight to keep some of those people on board, it might not have been quite the issue it is now. I note the amendment moved by the Hon. Cameron Murphy to produce ministerial briefings instead of the documents sought. Let's be honest: If the rumour is true about this Government, it does not send anything out that might be incriminating through a ministerial briefing, but rather sends it via Signal.

Unless the Government tenders all its Signal messages, which are probably disappearing messages anyway, it will probably be a completely pointless exercise to provide the ministerial briefings. In relation to directing the Opposition to ministerial briefings, I also know that if there is anything to hide, the Government will not send us to look in the place where it has been hidden. The documents are what the Opposition wants. The ministerial briefings are not likely to expose anything of great interest. The fact the Government suggested it is key to the realisation that the Opposition probably does not want them anyway.

The Hon. Bob Nanva: That's an imputation.

The Hon. WES FANG: No, I think it is pretty accurate, especially given the way this Government operates. The last point I will make is that at least the Hon. Natalie Ward got to ask the question.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (17:10): I will speak briefly to the amendments. I thank Ms Sue Higginson for appearing to move the amendment that had been foreshadowed by Ms Cate Faehrmann to extend the period to 28 days. The Government prefers its own amendment of 42 days and asks the House to consider that, particularly given that we passed a very significant call for papers last week. As we have said, a team of 70 people is working on it. However, I am grateful that the other amendment has been moved. In relation to the second amendment concerning all documents, I assure the Hon. Wes Fang I do not know what is in all the briefings that are referred to.

The Hon. Wes Fang: You should have read them.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: They do not all come to me. I am not the only Minister in this cluster. I guarantee there is some great reading in there; the member would enjoy it. The point is that, in relation to last week and this week, calling for all documents in operational agencies is a mad, scattergun approach that is scraping up emails, operational documents and all the activities of operational agencies. It will produce a very significant number of documents that members will have to wade through rather than the Opposition adopting the usual practice of specifying what it wants. When the Minister is briefed, the matters being asked about—the cost, the delivery, the timeline and project delays—will be in the briefing. That would be available. As this is being requested, the number of documents will be extremely significant, as evidenced by the number of people who are currently working through that and the indicative cost advice that has been given to the Government. It is for those reasons the Government has moved the amendments.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (17:12): In reply: I thank all members who contributed to debate on the motion. I note the Opposition will not agree to the Government's amendments. It is interesting that the Government seeks to confine the production of documents to ministerial briefings, but it may assist the Minister for Roads to know whether or not she was briefed. It might give her some clarity about whether she received a briefing or not. It is clear to me the Government wants the Opposition to see only ministerial briefings, so the Opposition will not agree to that. The Opposition asked questions in estimates and provided the right opportunity, but we still do not have a date; we still do not have a cost; and we still have excuses. The Opposition cannot agree to those amendments.

I thank Ms Cate Faehrmann and note that, if the motion were too wide, she would be the first to call me out. She would be the first to say that the motion has gone too far. She knows from both sides what should be done. However, she also has watched me ask these questions in estimates. I thank the Hon. Bob Nanva, and Ms Sue Higginson for moving her amendment, which the Opposition will agree to. I also thank the Hon. Cameron Murphy and the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine—nice stump speeches, but no cigar. I note that, under Labor, Sydney Metro City and Southwest was late. We are very clear about that. Parramatta Light Rail was late. Those projects were ready to go, but this Government could not even deliver those on time. In relation to the Sydney Trains review, the irony of not producing that report is that the Government commissioned that report into why Sydney Trains run late, and only this Labor Government could produce a report late into why Sydney Trains run late. That is extraordinary.

The Opposition just wants to see what the documents are. We will not be confined by this Government, which was elected on the basis of accountability and transparency. It claimed, "We'll do it differently. We want to show you everything. We're open for you to see how we do things." Clearly, that is not what the Government is doing, and, as evidenced by a number of other calls for papers, it is getting worse. The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine said this is "another" Standing Order 52 motion but, with the greatest respect, that is the job of this House. I respect public servants immensely, but another Standing Order 52 motion is absolutely the job of this House and it is the pot calling the kettle black.

These two calls for papers, one from last week and one from this week, are entirely different. One is about the asset base and the assets, and the other is about specific projects. This motion is about three metro projects, the M6 and a train review, which is totally different to assets. The catchcry is "This is appalling!" The public servants are fantastic and I wish them well in finding the documents sought so that somebody, for the billions of dollars being spent by this Government, can give the public an answer, which was not forthcoming in estimates from either Minister, despite being given repeated opportunities. The Government could have saved the public servants hundreds of hours of time by answering the questions in estimates. The Opposition gave the Government that chance, but the Government said no. We say that we will provide the public with the opportunity to understand where their billions of dollars are being spent. We agree to The Greens' amendment. We do not agree to the Government's amendments.

NOES

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

PAIRS

Munro

Lawrence

Motion as amended agreed to.

METROPOLITAN MEMORIAL PARKS CEMETERY SITES

Production of Documents: Order

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (17:27): 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 Premier's Department, The Cabinet Office, the Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, Minister for Sport and Minister for Jobs and Tourism, the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (including Property and Development NSW) or Metropolitan Memorial Parks relating to the consideration and selection of new metropolitan cemetery sites in Sydney:

- (a) all documents, including emails, electronic messages or briefs, relating to the consideration or selection of new cemetery sites;
- (b) all documents, including emails, electronic messages or briefs, relating to all search parameters used within Land iQ for the identification of sites to be eliminated from or included for consideration;
- (c) all documents, including emails, electronic messages or briefs, relating to all sites considered as part of the Land iQ identification process, including all documents relating to the reason for eliminating or excluding an identified site from consideration;
- (d) all documents, including emails, electronic messages or briefs, relating to consultation with organisations, including documents which disclose the names of representatives consulted or the dates of consultation, regarding the identification of Carnarvon Golf Course as a potential site for a cemetery;
- (e) all documents, including emails, electronic messages or briefs, relating to all organisations that have been engaged as part of the consultation process for new cemetery sites and the cost of that engagement;
- (f) all documents, including emails, electronic messages or briefs, relating to all lists of possible sites provided by Metropolitan Memorial Parks to the Minister for Lands and Property or any other minister for consideration;
- (g) all documents, including emails, electronic messages or briefs, relating to the exclusion of any organisation or person from the consultation process for new cemetery sites; and
- (h) 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 motion is clear about which documents I would like made available. I am someone who represented a south-west Sydney electorate for 12 years as a member for Parliament and in public life in the area. I am certainly somebody who is familiar with the Carnarvon golf course and Coleman Park. It is probably not a surprise then that I appreciate that many community groups, organisations and residents are highly stressed about the Government's intentions for the golf course and the park. It is important to do everything we can to put as much information out into the public realm as possible. Essentially, that is why I have moved a motion for the production of those particular documents. It is critical that as much information as possible be made publicly available. I appreciate that some documents will probably be privileged—that is understandable—however, I hope the Minister and his department do what they can to ensure that as much detail as can be is made publicly available. If the Government is more transparent, it might be able to bring across at least some people who see merit in the idea, even if it cannot get everybody on board.

I am very sympathetic to how the community feels about the issue, and acknowledge that there have already been some significant rallies. A rally on 31 August was organised by Labor's own member for Auburn, Lynda Voltz. Federal member Jason Clare was in attendance, as were members of both Cumberland City Council and City of Canterbury Bankstown Council. There is currently concern about and a petition against the closure of the golf course, which is trying to reach 10,000 signatures to force a debate in the Parliament of New South Wales. It is not surprising that communities are organising rallies around the golf course. It has been part of community life in south-west Sydney for as long as I have known and grown up in the area. Recreational space in general is rare in many parts of Sydney, particularly in that part of Sydney, so it is not surprising that people want to hold onto that very beautiful golf course and the very well-utilised Coleman Park, where junior soccer and other sports are regularly played.

I understand and appreciate that there is a dire need for new burial grounds in Sydney, so I do not dismiss that the Government is within its rights to at least start investigating appropriate sites. I appreciate that work needs to be done. According to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks, "A new Crown Cemetery has not been built in the heart of Sydney for more than 80 years." We know that the issue also caused a great deal of contention and concern for the former Coalition Government, which was also trying to find burial space within Sydney. There is no question that we have significant population growth. We certainly have demand for burial grounds. Metropolitan Memorial Parks also reports that over 50 per cent of deaths in Greater Sydney require land for interment, either through burial, cremations and so forth.

The report of the statutory review of the Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013, called *The 11th Hour*, found that burial space in Sydney will be almost exhausted by 2030. Without new burial space, the future unmet demand will be significant. As such, it is pivotal that we get to the bottom of the issue of whether Carnarvon Golf Club should be utilised as Sydney's next Crown-owned cemetery, which is why I have moved this Standing Order 52 motion. Given the potential community ramifications of losing invaluable open spaces at Carnarvon and Coleman Park, transparency is crucial. I acknowledge that the Government has already informally indicated to me that it will not oppose the motion, and I thank it.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (17:33): The Greens support the motion moved by the Hon. Tania Mihailuk for a number of reasons. For years in this place, The Greens have moved for the release of documents about cemeteries, particularly about the Catholic Cemeteries and Crematoria board. We have been closely following what happened after the release of the report that the Hon. Tania Mihailuk mentioned, called *The 11th Hour*. On the issue of the Carnarvon Golf Club being essentially chosen for the community to be consulted on, it is a bit suspicious that it has been chosen to be converted into a cemetery when no other site has been suggested. It looks as though a decision has been made.

This Standing Order 52 motion is about finding out exactly what sites were put forward and what discussions occurred within Metropolitan Memorial Parks and various offices. After looking at a lot of the documents that have come back from my call for papers about cemeteries, and the call for papers by my former colleague Senator David Shoebridge, it is obvious that there is a lot of money to be made not only from the people selling the land but also in the burial sector. That is why it is important that there is full transparency. The community does not believe there has been full transparency, and anybody who has listened to the various radio interviews knows that there has been a lot of focus on it. It certainly looks as though some decision has been made, and we do not know why. Why is this almost sham consultation process going forward? It is yet another example of a lack of transparency from the Government and certain Ministers, leading to a Standing Order 52 motion in this place.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (17:36): The Government does not oppose the Standing Order 52 motion. The Government is proud of its work in this area. Government members have been transparent about the mess they inherited, and open about what they are doing to fix Sydney's burial space crisis. There is nothing to hide. Our work in this space has been comprehensive, and we are fully transparent about what are doing and aim to do. I put a few facts on record. Due to the inaction of successive governments, we inherited a cemetery sector in crisis. Cemeteries were not properly regulated, and the future of Crown cemetery operators was uncertain. We are running out of space in Sydney, as has been widely accepted in this debate. The Minns Government is addressing those issues.

We have strengthened the regulator to ensure we have a strong cop on the beat, provided certainty to the sector by locking in the two-operator model for Crown cemeteries, and instructed Crown cemetery operators to identify options to increase the supply of new burial space in Sydney. We are getting on with the job of fixing the mess that we inherited. In relation to Carnarvon Golf Club, I reiterate what the Minister has already said: We have directed Crown cemetery operators to identify new burial space. We have also directed Crown cemetery operators to undertake community consultation on any preferred sites. At this stage, no decision has been made on any site. As is required by the process, the community will have an opportunity to provide feedback on any preferred site. We will not apologise for taking proactive action to address our burial space shortage. We will not make the same mistake, as successive governments have done before us.

Unlike governments before us, the Minns Labor Government acutely understands two things. Firstly, it understands the significance of this sector and industry, given the importance of a fitting goodbye and resting place for loved ones. Secondly, it understands the scale of the supply crisis and mess we inherited. We are proud of what we have achieved so far, and open about what we are doing. Upon entering office in 2023, we inherited a sector in crisis. Two things became clear: one, that substantial and lasting reforms were required after years of inaction and indecision and, two, while those reforms could not be rushed, they must be a priority. In July 2023 we embarked on some of the biggest reforms in generations with the establishment of a new two-operator model

for Crown cemeteries, resolving years of uncertainty and decades of inaction. We have nothing to hide, are proud of our transparent process and are more than happy to support the member's Standing Order 52 motion.

The Hon. WES FANG (17:39): I make a contribution to debate on the motion of the Hon. Tania Mihailuk. I indicate that the Opposition will support this excellent motion. I had the good fortune—or misfortune, as some might say—to be in the estimates hearing where we discussed this issue with Minister Kamper. I quite like Minister Kamper; he has grown on me. Sure, he cannot get my name right. That is a bit of a problem. But, other than that, he is quite an affable bloke. But let us be honest: He does not give us a lot of answers a lot of the time. That estimates session was certainly more about us putting questions and getting a lot of "I don't know" responses.

What we did glean from those answers was that, while the Government says that it is seeking to address the issues, it looks like it has taken the easy route. By "easy route", I mean the only route it is putting down. It seems to have only one solution. That was quite apparent when the department did not consider any of the alternative sites that seemed to match the Government's criteria for finding vacant land. Whilst I note that the Parliamentary Secretary said that there is consultation and the Government is looking at avenues to solve the problem, ultimately, the only site on the table is Carnarvon golf course.

Locals are quite rightly concerned that the rushed process has been driven to look at only one site. I, for one, would like to see what other sites were considered and how the analysis was done of the other sites that might have fit the criteria. I would like to know why a fantastic local member like Lynda Voltz, a former member of this place, slammed her own Government for its stitch-up of the Carnarvon golf course. When a local member is as scathing as she is about what the Minns Labor Government has done to her community, railroading them by ripping away their golf course, it prompts us in this House to ask questions about that decision. I wholeheartedly support the Standing Order 52 motion moved by the Hon. Tania Mihailuk. I have only one question left to ask: Why does the Minns Government hate golf so much? Why does it always target golf courses? Why not look at something else? I just do not understand.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (17:42): I do not intend to speak on this matter. I just want to advise the House that I have a pecuniary interest in this question.

The Hon. Tania Mihailuk: Do you play golf?

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: No, I have a property that is proximate to the affected lands.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (17:42): I make a few general observations in debate on the motion moved by the Hon. Tania Mihailuk. One arises directly from one of our previous debates in the Chamber today about Standing Order 52 and the approach of members on this side of the House to Standing Order 52 motions. I make the observation that we are not opposing this Standing Order 52 motion. It is a legitimate request from the Hon. Tania Mihailuk, who has had a long-term interest in Western Sydney and what happens to the population there. We recognise that. We do not have a one-size-fits-all approach, where every Standing Order 52 motion is opposed on the basis of requesting information. That speaks to our commitment to transparency and the role of Standing Order 52 where appropriate.

I do not pretend to be an expert on either golf or burial grounds, but I know that difficult decisions do need to be made. Obviously, when we are talking about the allocation of land for that use, what we do and how we respect traditions are important. To respond to the comments of the Hon. Wes Fang, it is also important to acknowledge that it is not unexpected and is, in fact, fairly predictable that local members fight very hard for what they think their constituents want and need. That is exactly what we have seen from the member for Auburn in the other place. She has been representing what she understands to be the needs of her electorate. There is nothing to see there. Lots of local members take up issues, whether in concert with their leader or not, when it comes to the constituents they represent. In fact, all of us in this House should make sure that we are prepared to do that on the issues that matter to the constituents we represent. There is nothing surprising or exceptional about that. Again, we do not oppose this Standing Order 52 motion.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (17:45): In reply: I thank every member who contributed to debate on the motion: Ms Cate Faehrmann, the Hon. Mark Buttigieg, the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine and the Hon. Wes Fang. I also acknowledge the Hon. Anthony D'Adam's declaration. I am pleased that the Government is supporting the motion, but obviously I think there is a general consensus in this House that everybody does want more transparency. There has been some debate about Standing Order 52. But I think we acknowledge that it is always so relevant and so significant, when we are making decisions, that we have as much documentation as possible and that people are given the details they need.

A number of speakers have already said how important it is to undertake consultation. Government speakers, the Opposition speaker and The Greens speaker all said that we just want to make sure that the community has the opportunity to actually have their say. I note that the Hon. Wes Fang acknowledged the

questioning that he undertook throughout budget estimates. The Minister did have some difficulty at that time in responding to these issues; he generally has difficulty in responding to a lot of different questions. We know this. That might be why the CEO of Metropolitan Memorial Parks [MMP], Denise Ora, will probably be sent to the consultation. I acknowledge there is a consultation this Friday 19 September at the Carnarvon Golf Club itself, where community members will be able to come along and speak with Denise Ora. It would be great if they could speak with the Minister as well.

It would be wonderful if the MMP would bring its freshly minted board members, the Hon. David Elliott and the Hon. Walt Secord. They are the bosses of the CEO. One has to ask why the Minister has brought those two champions of our Parliament onto the board. We know why. The jokes have already started. It is because they know where all the bodies are buried. If you want a task done, who better than David Elliott and Walt Secord? That might be why Minister Kamper has brought them on board to pursue a burial ground in Sydney, as opposed to him going to the meetings or undertaking the work. But I do encourage the Minister to get actively involved, go out there, meet with the member for Auburn—she will welcome him with open arms—and meet with the community, who are very upset and want a better response from the Government.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bills

CRIMES AMENDMENT (INTIMATE IMAGE AND AUDIO MATERIAL) BILL 2025

First Reading

Bill received from the Legislative Assembly, read a first time and ordered to be published on motion by the Hon. Mark Buttigieg, on behalf of the Hon. Daniel Mookhey.

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

Statement of public interest tabled.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: 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. MARK BUTTIGIEG: 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

FIRST HOME BUYERS ASSISTANCE SCHEME

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (17:50): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that more than 64,000 first home buyers have found their first home thanks to the Minns Labor Government's signature first home buyers assistance program.
- (2) That this House further notes that the Minns Labor Government's program has saved New South Wales first home buyers more than \$1.3 billion in stamp duty since July 2023.
- (3) That this House recognises that these tens of thousands of first home buyers have saved an average of \$20,529 under this program.

The motion acknowledges an extraordinary milestone and the success of the Minns Government's First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme. This is not just a policy; it is a lifeline that has transformed the lives of tens of thousands of people across New South Wales. I must acknowledge that, since I gave notice of this motion, the figures for the number of households and dollars saved has grown. Since its inception this program has helped more than 70,000 households secure their very first home. That is 70,000 singles, couples and families who have turned the dream of home ownership into a reality. Collectively, they have saved more than \$1.4 billion in stamp duty, money that could have otherwise been a barrier to their future.

Let us be clear: Buying a first home has never been easy, but in recent years it has become even harder. Rising living costs, soaring property prices and a high-inflation environment have hit New South Wales families hard. For many, the dream of owning a home has been slipping further away. That is why one of the first things we did when we came to government was to reform stamp duty, a tax that has long been one of the biggest hurdles

for first home buyers. We knew that if we wanted to make a real difference we had to act boldly and decisively. Our reforms lifted the stamp duty exemption threshold to \$800,000 and extended concessions to up to \$1 million. That was a game changer. Why? Because the previous Government's scheme was out of touch. Its thresholds did not even cover the cost of an average first home in Sydney.

Worse still, its program was skewed. Half of all assistance went to just 13 per cent of buyers purchasing homes worth between \$1 million and \$1.5 million. Meanwhile the vast majority, 84 per cent, of first home buyers purchasing homes under \$1 million were left behind. We fixed that imbalance. Our program is fairer, smarter and more targeted. It focuses on the people who need help the most: the eight in 10 first home buyers who purchase homes under \$1 million. The results speak for themselves. Under our program, more than 50,000 households have received a full exemption from paying stamp duty, and over 20,000 households have received significant concessions. On average, households have saved \$20,500, and some have saved as much as \$30,400. But those numbers are more than statistics; they represent real people and real stories. Every dollar saved is another dollar put towards furniture or a child's education. It is the difference between renting forever and finally having a place to call one's own.

The impact does not stop at individual households. The program is strengthening communities across New South Wales. When people buy their first home, they put down roots. They join local schools, support local businesses and contribute to the social fabric of their neighbourhoods. Home ownership builds stability, and stability builds stronger, safer and more connected communities. Think about what that means for regional towns, where young families can now afford to stay rather than move away. Think about the suburbs where first home buyers are breathing new life into local economies. This is not just an economic policy; it is a community-building policy to build a better New South Wales. That is what good government looks like. It is about listening to the people, understanding their struggles and delivering practical solutions that make a real difference. The First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme is proof that, when we focus on fairness and equity, we can achieve extraordinary outcomes.

But we are not stopping here. We know there is more to do. Housing affordability remains one of the biggest challenges of our time. That is why we continue to explore new ways to support first home buyers, to increase housing supply and to ensure that the dream of home ownership remains within reach for not only today's generation but also generations to come. As someone with a couple of kids in their twenties who are thinking about how they are going to afford to buy a house at some stage, I think about it a lot. All of these programs are really important not just for them but for their families, who are worrying about what they will do in the future. Today, as we celebrate this milestone of helping 70,000 households, with more than \$1.4 billion saved and countless communities strengthened, let us recommit to this mission, because every family deserves the security, dignity and pride that comes with owning their own home.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (17:55): The Opposition does not oppose the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine's motion. But let us be frank: It is not the land of milk and honey that she would have us believe. Housing affordability is, of course, far out of reach for many young people and first home buyers. The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine talked about the dream of home ownership being within reach, but when the median house price in Sydney is over \$1.7 million and the first home owner concessions threshold is \$1 million, many people who are trying to buy their first home and get on the property ladder will not get those concessions.

One might ask what the alternative is. There was an alternative. It was First Home Buyer Choice, where people had the opportunity to take a smaller annual fee when buying a property for up to \$1.5 million. One might say that does not equate to \$1.72 million, which is the Sydney median, but back in 2023 when this Government was elected, the Sydney median was sitting at about \$1.45 million. The Government has made some welcome changes to stamp duty concessions but, through some of its unexpected receipts, it could have actually done both. It could have had First Home Buyer Choice and also increased the stamp duty threshold.

Look at what other States are doing. Queensland brought in a program to help facilitate new home builds and first home buyers with its no stamp duty on new builds program. That is a first home buyers concession with no stamp duty, and it is uncapped for people buying a newly developed home. That is helping supply and encouraging first home buyers to buy new properties, but it is also helping first home buyers to get into the market. First Home Buyer Choice was a program where people voted with their feet, with 5,000 taking it up in just six months. That showed how popular that program was and how many people wanted get a foot on the home ownership ladder with what could have been a two-year saving.

The Opposition has been critical of the Government giving with one hand and taking with the other. Of course, that is what the Housing and Productivity Contribution has done in New South Wales, with a \$12,000 tax on every new home. While Queensland is taking away taxes on new homes, New South Wales is imposing taxes on new homes and threatening supply. That is why we are 41 per cent behind our National Housing Accord targets in New South Wales.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (17:59): As The Greens Treasury spokesperson, I contribute to debate on yet another self-congratulatory but mostly harmless motion from the Government. The Menzies Government introduced cash grants for first home buyers in 1964. The home savings grant offered \$500 to married or engaged couples under the age of 36 to buy a home. The Fraser, Hawke and Howard governments all had their own iterations of the scheme. State and Territory governments over the years have added to the Federal schemes by offering additional cash or by lowering or waiving other associated costs such as stamp duty.

The basic premise of those first home owner grant programs is that they make it easier for a broader range of people to enter the housing market because they lower the deposit barrier, but the evidence after six decades does not bear that out. The schemes do not appear to significantly increase housing accessibility for new entrants into the market at all, but actually just accelerate the purchase of a home for those who were already going to be able to do so. In other words, the scheme does not broaden access; it just hastens the entry of the same pool of people into the market.

If the schemes do not lead to more people being able to enter the housing market, do they at least make housing more affordable? No, the statistics do not bear that out either. By increasing the purchasing power of first home buyers, the schemes actually inflate house prices. Members do not need an economist to tell them that. It is logical that, all other things being equal, giving people money to spend on housing will just increase house prices, and that is what it has done. The data indicates that the schemes actually reduce housing accessibility in the long term. Further, they tend to benefit existing home owners, who will profit from their property prices increasing, and disadvantage future first home buyers, who will be forced to pay more.

While no doubt welcome for those who find themselves in a housing market that has been so poorly managed by successive Federal and State governments, and who are able to get to the point where a little bit of extra assistance will help them buy a home quicker, the Minns First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme is yet another in the long list of policy mistakes that led to the housing affordability crisis in the first place. We really need to finally address the structural drivers of the problem: the policy settings that make it easier for a person to buy their tenth home than their first. That starts with scrapping the billions of dollars given out each year by Federal and New South Wales governments to investors and developers and instead putting that money into building genuinely affordable public housing. But sure—Government members can pat themselves on the back again for yet another case of doing what amounts to nothing in the face of a crisis.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (18:01): I celebrate an exceptional milestone and the monumental success of the Minns Government's signature First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme, which has now supported more than 70,000 households in securing their first home. More than 70,000 first home buyers have found their dream home thanks to the Minns Labor Government's signature stamp duty assistance program. The Government has also saved first home buyers across New South Wales more than \$1.4 billion since July 2023, helping first home buyers to achieve home ownership. The program has made a life-changing impact for thousands of first home buyers, who have saved an average of \$20,500. More than 70,000 singles, couples and families were able to get into their home sooner while saving a combined total of \$1.4 billion on stamp duty.

People buying their first home face a lot of barriers. Rising cost of living and high inflation have hit New South Wales families hard, making it more difficult for people looking to get a foot onto the property ladder. One of the first things we did when we entered government was reform stamp duty to provide more support and help ease some of that stress. Our strategy is clear—to give first home buyers the opportunity to enter the property market by easing the burden of stamp duty costs, focusing our support on those who need it most. The former Government's scheme was out of balance. Half the total assistance was going to the 13 per cent of people who could afford a home worth between \$1 million and \$1.5 million. It did far too little for the 84 per cent of people buying homes for less than \$1 million. The changes the Government made are helping more people to save more money and buy their homes sooner.

Under the improved and expanded First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme, eligible buyers purchasing a home for up to \$800,000 receive a full exemption. That is right: They pay zero dollars in stamp duty. Eligible buyers paying between \$800,000 and \$1 million still receive a concession on stamp duty, saving them thousands of dollars. Under the program, first home buyers can save up to \$30,412 on stamp duty. On average, households receiving that crucial stamp duty assistance save \$20,500. Since the implementation of the program in July 2023, first home buyers across New South Wales have collectively saved over \$1.4 billion in stamp duty. It is a very successful program and a great reform for first home buyers. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (18:04): I support the motion because it means \$1.3 billion less to the Minns Labor Government, which is not spending it particularly well. But stamp duty is a terrible tax. Every tax review, including those commissioned by the Labor Party like the Federal Henry tax review, has shown that stamp duty is one of the most inefficient taxes in the Commonwealth. Any attempt to reduce stamp duty is a good thing, especially for first home buyers, who are finding it very difficult to enter the housing market. In 1984 it cost the

average Australian five times their annual income to buy a home in Sydney, and it is now around 14 times the average salary. That shows just how difficult it has become for first home buyers in Sydney.

The First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme is a fairly good scheme. Our scheme was better because it was actual reform. This is just laziness. All the Government has done is increase the threshold at which stamp duty kicks in for first home buyers. That is a good thing because we do not want first home buyers paying stamp duty if possible. But it is not courageous reform; it is pretty dull. A better way of doing it would be to phase out stamp duty over time, starting with first home buyers. That is what Opposition members did when we were in government. The Hon. Mark Buttigieg and the rest of the Labor Party seem to think our scheme was terrible because the majority of the uptake was for first home buyers for properties of between \$1 million and \$1.5 million, but the average house in Sydney is worth \$1.5 million.

They make it sound as if a home in Sydney for \$1 million will be some sort of palace. It is not; \$1 million does not get anyone very far in Sydney. The Government is trying to say that our scheme was looking after the rich and powerful, but \$1 million does not get much in Sydney. Our scheme was more generous in many ways. It was actual reform, not just the lazy attempt by members opposite to lift the threshold for first home buyers—even if it does mean less tax going to the Minns Government, which is obviously a very good thing. So it is a decent scheme. Our scheme was better because it was based on choice. When people have a choice, they do not choose stamp duty. When Opposition members were in government, 80 per cent of people chose not to pay stamp duty but instead opted for a land tax.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE (18:08): I welcome the Opposition's support for the Minns Government's First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme, which has now supported over 70,000 households in realising their dream of owning a home. I am tempted to speak to the points raised by The Greens, who clearly want to abolish the program. All I will say is that their contribution confirms why economics is regarded as the dismal science. This achievement is a powerful testament to our unwavering commitment to tackling the housing crisis and easing the cost-of-living pressures many households are facing. As someone who grew up in Campbelltown, lived for a decade in Camden and now lives in the Hills area, I want to talk about Western Sydney, in particular, and the benefits for local families in that part of the world.

At a time when rising living costs and high inflation have made saving for a deposit increasingly challenging, this program provides a much-needed lifeline. By offering a full stamp duty exemption for eligible properties up to \$800,000 and a concession for homes priced between \$800,000 and \$1 million, first home buyers can save as much as \$30,412 in stamp duty. That ensures that the vast majority of first home buyers—those purchasing homes for less than \$1 million—receive the support they need. Over 50,000 households have enjoyed a full exemption, while more than 20,000 households have benefited from a valuable concession.

I can proudly say that the people of Western Sydney have been the biggest winners from the program. More than 25,000 home owners have found their dream home in the wonderful suburbs across Western Sydney. For example, in the Blacktown local government area, 4,437 new home owners have saved an average of \$20,159. In the City of Parramatta local government area, 4,390 first home buyers have saved an average of \$22,537 on stamp duty. In the Cumberland local government area, 2,980 households received an average of \$20,108 in stamp duty savings. It goes on. In Canterbury-Bankstown, 2,723 first home buyers saved an average of \$20,294. In Penrith, 2,423 households saved an average of \$20,169, while 2,224 first home buyers in the wonderful community of Campbelltown saved an average of \$20,553 on stamp duty costs. In Liverpool, 1,958 households saved an average of \$18,688 on stamp duty. There is more to come.

The Hon. WES FANG (18:11): I find these sorts of motions interesting. Whilst the Government seeks to congratulate itself, the motion ultimately points to a policy failure. The Hon. Peter Primrose indicated that Western Sydney was the biggest winner from the policy, and that might be the case. However, let us be honest. Where can someone buy a house for under \$800,000? There are not many places, but it is possible in rural and regional New South Wales. If someone wants to be the biggest winner out of this Minns Labor Government policy, they should look to rural and regional New South Wales. However, if someone wants to buy a house anywhere within 20 kilometres of the Sydney CBD, I suspect they will be out of luck in making use of the policy. That is why I find these sorts of motions interesting.

The mover of the motion spoke about how the policy provides fairness and equity. Whilst that might be the case in the eyes of the Minns Labor Government, in reality the policy is not indexed. The Hon. Scott Farlow spoke about the increase in the average median house price since the Minns Labor Government took over from our former Government. That rise in the median house price indicates that fewer and fewer houses will be covered by the policy as one gets closer to the CBD. Let us be honest. The policy is directed at those trying to get a one-bedroom or studio apartment with no parking in an old, dilapidated building that might need a bit of a reno—that is what a person might get if they want to scrape in for under \$1 million anywhere near the Sydney CBD.

This is not the sort of policy that the Government should congratulate itself on. It does not address the systemic failure of housing affordability in the State. However, it does point to the fact that if someone wants to take advantage of a cash splash by the Minns Labor Government, the best place to do that is in rural and regional New South Wales. Once again, I encourage people to look at rural and regional New South Wales. That is where they might be able to get a little bit of money out of the stingy Minns Labor Government and pay a little bit less for their house. Ultimately, the motion is dressed up to try to cover up the fact that not enough housing is being delivered in this State, and that there has been an absolute policy failure on housing from the Minns Labor Government. Things are only going to get worse, not better.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (18:14): I truly did not intend to contribute to this debate, but I will. After listening to the contributions of some of the other speakers, a few points must be made. I sympathise with the position put forward by Ms Abigail Boyd. As she put it, negative gearing and our tax system make it easier for people to buy their twelfth house than their first house. She is correct. It is one of the problems that the Labor Party tried to reform in an earlier election, but was unsuccessful. That has been put to bed in the Labor Party, but some members are agitating for change. However, we must bear in mind that negative gearing is not a State issue. The Commonwealth tax system is not something we can influence from this place, but State Labor can influence this policy.

I address the Opposition's land tax proposal, which was put forward prior to the last election, and which resulted in Labor's policy commitment. Opposition members said, "It is all right. We were going to allow people to buy premises without paying stamp duty. We'll just put that onto people's rates, and they can pay it over time." I live in Jerrabomberra. Members should ask anybody who lives in the Australian Capital Territory what they think of land tax. People in suburbs like Deakin and Red Hill are paying \$9,000 a year in rates—a tax that they will pay forever.

Stamp duty is an inefficient and awful tax, but it is a tax that people pay once on the transfer of the premises. The Opposition talked about a forever tax that people will pay as long as they own a property—forever and a day. It is a tax that will increase with their rates. In the long term, it is not of any assistance to first home buyers. They will struggle through their mortgage and pay that tax as they go along. It is a terrible idea that was comprehensively rejected by voters in favour of Labor's policy. People might say that the First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme is not much, and that it is difficult to buy a house—but at least it is of assistance. The scheme has been well supported and taken up by people buying their first homes. At least it is something. On that basis, the Opposition is wrong, as it usually is. I commend the motion to the House.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst): Before I call the Hon. Emily Suvaal, I welcome guests of the Hon. John Graham, Jas and Mehar Chawla, to the gallery.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (18:17): I speak in support of the wonderful motion moved by my colleague the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine. The Minns Government's signature stamp duty discounts have now reached over 70,000 households. That achievement signifies a major step forward in our efforts to ensure that more people can realise the dream of home ownership. Our reformed program corrects previous disparities by focusing on those most in need rather than catering to the higher priced segment. Over 50,000 households have received a full stamp duty exemption and more than 20,000 households have enjoyed the concession, making home ownership a reality for many. For thousands of families in regional New South Wales, being able to save thousands of dollars in stamp duty has made a huge difference.

The First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme has delivered stamp duty savings to thousands across the regions, including 3,652 first home buyers in the Hunter Valley, who saved an average of \$20,311; 3,385 first home buyers in the Newcastle region, who saved an average of \$22,828; 2,612 first home buyers in the Illawarra, who saved an average of \$22,611; 2,184 first home buyers in the Central West, who saved an average of \$17,645; 1,978 first home buyers in New England and the north-west, who saved an average of \$14,111; 1,873 first home buyers in Richmond-Tweed, who saved an average of \$20,023; and 1,682 first home buyers in the Riverina, who saved an average of \$16,434.

The scheme also delivered stamp duty savings to 1,673 first home buyers in the Mid North Coast, who saved an average of \$19,267; 1,318 first home buyers in the Far West and Orana, who saved an average of \$12,138; 1,146 first home buyers in the Murray, who saved an average of \$13,905; 1,148 first home buyers in the Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven, who saved an average of \$22,255; and 1,109 first home buyers in Coffs Harbour and Grafton, who saved an average of \$19,917. This is a testament to the vision, dedication and hard work of the Minns Labor Government, and we will continue to point that out every Wacky Wednesday. We have made home ownership an attainable goal for every family, particularly for those in regional New South Wales who the Opposition forgot.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (18:20): In reply: I thank all members who contributed to the debate, being the Hon. Scott Farlow, Ms Abigail Boyd, the Hon. Mark Buttigieg, the Hon. Chris Rath, the Hon. Peter Primrose, the Hon. Wes Fang, the Hon. Cameron Murphy and the Hon. Emily Suvaal. I will pick up on a few points that were made during debate. Firstly, I thank Ms Abigail Boyd for calling me only "harmless". Well, I will not say me—she was referring to my motion—but I have been called much worse, so I will take that. The Hon. Scott Farlow inferred from my contribution some kind of triumphalism. Perhaps that is how it came across, but I did not intend that. It was not triumphalism; it was a recognition that we are making progress.

I acknowledged how difficult it is and my concern about the ability of my grown-up kids to afford their own homes. They are lucky to have the support of their parents, which other people do not have. I point out to the member that no-one is saying the job is done, but the Government is pointing to signs of hope. The idea that we are targeting the wrong people clearly does not hold up: The Hon. Peter Primrose and the Hon. Emily Suvaal went through the impressive numbers of people from Western Sydney and regional areas who have benefited from the Government's policy and are now home owners. Members need to be careful not to bring a Sydney-centric and inner city-centric bias to the issue.

The Hon. Bob Nanva did a quick and dirty google of the number of properties in the inner west that are available to purchase for under \$1 million to see whether the policy could be used in the inner city. There are 1,019 properties for under \$1 million in the inner west, so the First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme does not preclude people from considering living there or in a range of other places. I say again that the program is part of a suite of reforms, including the planning reforms that we announced today. We are looking at the supply side and at how to speed up approvals and the construction of houses. Importantly, we are launching developments in Woollahra, where hopefully we will have 10,000 new dwellings, and on Parramatta Road as well. The program is one thing among a suite of other reforms, and we will continue to do work in this area. I commend the motion to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bills

CRIMES AMENDMENT (ANIMAL SEXUAL ABUSE) BILL 2024

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 20 November 2024.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (18:24): The New South Wales Government acknowledges the extensive work done by the Hon. Emma Hurst on the Crimes Amendment (Animal Sexual Abuse) Bill 2024. I thank her and her office for their engagement on this important bill, which modernises the criminal law relating to animal sexual abuse. In particular, the bill introduces a definition of "animal sexual abuse" in new section 79AA of the Crimes Act 1900 and replaces the current offences of bestiality and attempt bestiality with the offences of animal sexual abuse and attempt animal sexual abuse.

The bill introduces the new offences of animal sexual abuse in company and the advertisement, sale or purchase of animals for animal sexual abuse. The bill also replaces references to "bestiality" in the Crimes Act 1900 with "animal sexual abuse". The Government supports the policy intention behind the bill, but I foreshadow moving amendments to ensure that penalties are proportionate, unnecessary offences are omitted and appropriate exclusions are included. The Government amendments have been developed in consultation with key stakeholders, including the NSW Police Force, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Legal Aid and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. Our amendments strike the appropriate balance to ensure that all necessary conduct is criminalised while also preventing overreach and unintended consequences.

I now briefly address the details of the private member's bill. Division 10 of part 3 of the Crimes Act is currently titled "sexual offences against adults and children". Schedule 1 [2] to the bill will change this heading to "sexual offences against adults, children and animals". Division 10 contains the current bestiality offences and will contain the new animal sexual abuse offences. It is therefore appropriate that the division be renamed to reflect that it also contains sexual offences against animals. The Government supports renaming the division in principle but will move an amendment to simplify the title of the division.

Schedule 1 [3] to the bill will repeal the current offences of bestiality and attempted bestiality and replace them with the new offences of animal sexual abuse and attempt animal sexual abuse. The bill contains an expansive definition of "animal sexual abuse", which includes penetration to any extent by a body part and the application of a mouth or tongue to the genitalia or anus. It would also cover penetration of an animal by an object

manipulated by a person, the sexual touching of an animal and other acts carried out by a person that would reasonably be considered to be intended or apparently intended to excite or gratify a sexual interest. This differs from the existing bestiality offences which have been found to only capture penile penetration by an animal or person.

The limited common law definition of bestiality has prevented the prosecution of serious animal sexual abuse in cases that do not meet the definition. The new definition overcomes those limitations, but the bill does not presently differentiate between sexual assault, the sexual touching of an animal and other sexual acts in relation to an animal. These are all captured under the offence of animal sexual abuse and are subject to the same maximum penalty of 14 years imprisonment. The maximum penalty is disproportionate to the less serious forms of conduct captured by the offence, in particular the sexual touching of an animal. Having one offence that captures all of this conduct is also inconsistent with the current approach to sexual offences against the person, where graduated maximum penalties apply depending on the type of conduct involved.

The Government accepts the policy of a more comprehensive definition to ensure that the current limitations faced by prosecutors are resolved, but it will move amendments to ensure that the approach taken is consistent with offences against people and that maximum penalties are proportionate to the conduct. Schedule 1 [3] outlines a number of exceptions to animal sexual abuse, including for acts of veterinary science, acts carried out solely for hygienic purposes, acts to research veterinary care and treatment, acts carried out to assist a female animal at parturition, acts carried out in the best interests of an animal for the physical health and care of the animal and other acts prescribed by the regulations.

Following consultation with relevant stakeholders, the Government will also move amendments to the exceptions to ensure that all necessary activities, including those related to agriculture and animal husbandry, are not inadvertently criminalised. The bill will also create the following proposed offences: animal sexual abuse in company, which attracts a maximum penalty of 20 years imprisonment; and advertising, selling or purchasing animals for sexual abuse, which attracts a maximum penalty of 2,500 penalty units or imprisonment for five years or both.

Schedule 1 [4] to the bill also provides that the offence of animal sexual abuse is to be an alternative verdict to the offence of animal sexual abuse in company. The Government does not support the introduction of an offence of animal sexual abuse in company and therefore does not support the alternative verdict provision. In consultation with key legal stakeholders, a number of concerns were raised about that offence, including in relation to the policy rationale and proposed maximum penalty. Where an act of animal sexual abuse is committed in company, it can already be considered on sentencing by having regard to the "in company" aggravating factor in section 21A (2) of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999.

In principle, the Government supports the new offences of advertising, selling or transferring animals for sexual abuse, as they criminalise conduct currently not captured by the criminal law in New South Wales. However, the Government will move amendments to ensure that there is no overreach or unintended criminalisation. In conclusion, the Government supports the overall policy intent of the bill but will be moving a number of amendments that have been developed on the advice of key stakeholders.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst): I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 8.00 p.m.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (20:03): On behalf of the Opposition, I indicate that we are happy to support the Crimes Amendment (Animal Sexual Abuse) Bill 2024. I should correct myself that we are not happy about this bill at all; we are deeply unhappy that the bill is even necessary. We are deeply unhappy with the types of behaviour addressed in the bill, and the fact that it is necessary to address them at all. But it is clearly necessary to do so, since it is apparent that the common law of bestiality, with its focus on penetration, does not adequately cover all the many forms of abuse that appear to be happening to animals. The bill is important because it will hopefully advance the protection of animals, and also because there is such a clear link between the abuse of animals and psychopathy, so we need to do everything we can. On that basis, I indicate that we are prepared to support the bill.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (20:05): On behalf of The Greens, as our spokesperson for animal welfare and for gendered violence and abuse, I indicate our support for the Crimes Amendment (Animal Sexual Abuse) Bill 2024. I sincerely thank the Hon. Emma Hurst for her tireless dedication to fighting for stronger protections and rights for animals, and for bringing the bill before Parliament to address a major and alarming gap in our laws. Our animal protection and welfare laws are decades behind the times, becoming more detached from contemporary scientific evidence and community expectations with every passing day that the Government fails to overhaul them. Although our laws fail to recognise it, animals are sentient beings. Although they are commonly recognised

as beloved companions to humans, animals are rarely recognised as the sentient beings that they are, and as victims in their own right.

As a result, animal sexual abuse is too often wrongly framed as a rare and niche obscenity instead of a crime against animal victims as well as a key and escalating marker of domestic, family and sexual violence against humans. The bill addresses a major gap in our laws by legislating for the first time a definition of animal sexual abuse, replacing the term "bestiality" with the term "animal sexual abuse" throughout relevant pieces of legislation where it is currently referenced. The bill replaces the existing offences in the Crimes Act relating to "bestiality" with offences of "animal sexual abuse" and proposes new offences for when animal sexual abuse is performed in the company of another person, and for the advertisement, offer, sale, transfer, supply or purchase of animals for the purpose of animal sexual abuse.

By modernising the terminology that governs animal sexual abuse, and by creating serious offences for the crime of animal sexual abuse, the bill, if passed, finally recognises the severity of the crime and marks a pivotal moment in the fight to eliminate violence against humans and animals. Though criminal offences for bestiality and attempted bestiality currently exist in New South Wales, the term is not defined in any legislation. The lack of any legislative definition of animal sexual abuse, and the outdated use of the term "bestiality", has left a significant gap in our legislative framework, shielding perpetrators who use that to their benefit, whilst also trivialising the harm of sexual violence against animals.

We have seen that through particularly horrific cases exposed in recent years, which the Hon. Emma Hurst spoke about in her second reading speech. Importantly, those were just a few high-profile cases that came to light following investigations into human abuse, and do not even begin to scratch the surface of the extent of harm occurring in that context. The well-documented link between the sexual abuse of animals and domestic, family and sexual abuse of humans has been overlooked for decades, although in recent years we have seen growing recognition thanks to the expert and dedicated work of people on the front line who deal with the nuances of abuse every day and who support animal and human victim-survivors to escape, heal and recover from violence and abuse.

The fight to eliminate abuse against animals and humans, and to prevent violence before it occurs, is a long and complicated road that requires a complete dismantling of the intertwined systems of abuse that enable and perpetuate harm to sentient beings. Recognising animal sexual abuse as a serious sexual offence is a crucial step forward in not only closing a legislative loophole and holding perpetrators to account but also beginning to confront the realities of abuse and violence and the systems within which it occurs. Finally, I put on record the immense gratitude and respect that The Greens have for the experts leading the fight, especially the Animal Defenders Office, which continues to advocate on behalf of animals at every turn. The Greens support the bill and urge all members in this place to do the same.

The Hon. EMMA HURST (20:09): In reply: I thank all members who spoke in debate on the Crimes Amendment (Animal Sexual Abuse) Bill 2024: the Hon. Emily Suvaal, the Hon. Susan Carter and Ms Abigail Boyd. I also thank the Attorney General for working with us on the bill, as well as his team; the shadow Attorney General for his support; Parliamentary Counsel's Office drafters Jessica Sutton and Iain Martin; my staffer Sarah Margo, whose blood, sweat and tears have gone into this; RSPCA NSW; the New South Wales Sex Crimes Squad; the New South Wales child exploitation unit; and animal law experts, who we consulted with on the bill. I thank everybody for their support. I will speak further about some of the comments on my second reading speech during my discussion of the amendments in the Committee of the Whole.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

In Committee

The CHAIR (The Hon. Rod Roberts): There being no objection, the Committee will deal with the bill as a whole. There are two sheets of amendments: Animal Justice Party amendments Nos 1 to 6 on sheet c2025-067F and Government amendments Nos 1 to 14 on sheet c2025-173N. I understand there have been some conversations about the amendments between members and with the Clerks as well. There are some conflicts between some of the amendments. So I understand—and I will be guided by members—that the proposal is that the Government will move all of its amendments in globo and the Animal Justice Party will do the same. Then we will go through the questions separately and work out where the conflicts lie.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (20:14): By leave: I move Government amendments Nos 1 to 14 on sheet c2025-173N in globo:

No. 1 **Commencement**

Page 2, clause 2, lines 4 and 5. Omit all words on the lines. Insert instead—

2 Commencement

This Act commences on a day or days to be appointed by proclamation.

No. 2 **Division heading**

Page 3, Schedule 1[2], line 7. Omit all words on the line. Insert instead—

Omit "**against adults and children**".

No. 3 **Sexual touching**

Page 3, Schedule 1[3], proposed section 79AA, definition of *animal sexual abuse*, paragraph (a), lines 28–37. Omit all words on the lines. Insert instead "anus of a person, but".

No. 4 **Sexual touching**

Pages 3 and 4, Schedule 1[3], proposed section 79AA, definition of animal sexual abuse, paragraph (b), line 38 on page 3 to line 4 on page 4. Omit all words on the lines. Insert instead—

(b) does not include an excluded act.

No. 5 **Authorising the commission of an act of animal sexual abuse**

Page 4, Schedule 1[3], proposed section 79AA, line 5. Omit all words on the line.

No. 6 **Meaning of "genitalia or anus"**

Page 4, Schedule 1[3], proposed section 79AA. Insert after line 5—

genitalia or anus, for an animal, includes a body cavity with an external orifice that is used for defecation, urination or producing offspring.

Example—a cloaca of a bird

No. 7 **Sexual touching**

Page 4, Schedule 1[3], proposed section 79AA. Insert after line 5—

excluded act means the following—

- (a) an act carried out in good faith for one or more of the following purposes—
 - (i) veterinary purposes,
 - (ii) agricultural or aquacultural purposes,
 - (iii) hygiene purposes,
 - (iv) scientific research purposes,
- (b) an act carried out to assist a female animal when giving birth,
- (c) an act carried out in the best interests of an animal for the physical health and care of the animal,
- (d) an act prescribed by the regulations.

No. 8 **Authorising the commission of an act of animal sexual abuse**

Page 4, Schedule 1[3], proposed section 79(2), lines 9 and 10. Omit all words on the lines.

No. 9 **Sexual touching**

Page 4, Schedule 1[3], proposed section 79A, lines 11–14. Omit all words on the lines. Insert instead—

79A Animal sexual touching

- (1) A person must not sexually touch an animal.
Maximum penalty—imprisonment for 5 years.
- (2) For this section, *sexual touching* means a person touching an animal—
 - (a) in circumstances where a reasonable person would consider the touching to be sexual, and
 - (b) whether or not the touching is—
 - (i) with a part of the body or something else, or
 - (ii) through anything, including anything worn by the person or the animal.
- (3) The matters to be taken into account in deciding whether a reasonable person would consider touching to be sexual include—
 - (a) whether the area of the body touched or doing the touching is a genital area, anal area or mammary structure, including a breast, or

- (b) whether the person doing the touching does so for the purpose of obtaining sexual arousal or sexual gratification, or
 - (c) whether another aspect of the touching, including the circumstances in which the touching is done, makes it sexual.
- (4) An excluded act is not sexual touching.

No. 10 **Advertising and transferring animals for animal sexual abuse**

Page 4, Schedule 1[3], proposed section 79B(a), line 17. Omit "for use in acts". Insert instead "intending the animal to be used in an act".

No. 11 **Advertising and transferring animals for animal sexual abuse**

Page 4, Schedule 1[3], proposed section 79B(c), line 20. Omit "for the purpose of committing". Insert instead "intending the animal to be used in".

No. 12 **Animal sexual abuse in company**

Page 4, Schedule 1[4], lines 26–33. Omit all words on the lines.

No. 13 **Prohibited animal abuse material**

Page 4, Schedule 1[5], lines 34 and 35. Omit all words on the lines. Insert instead—

[5] Section 547E, heading

Omit the heading. Insert instead—

547E Prohibited animal abuse material

[5A] Section 547E(1), (2) and (6), definition of "bestiality or animal crush material"

Omit "bestiality" wherever occurring. Insert instead "animal sexual abuse".

[5B] Section 547E(2A) and (2B)

Insert after section 547E(2)—

- (2A) A person who produces or disseminates animal sexual touching material is guilty of an offence.

Maximum penalty—imprisonment for 3 years.

- (2B) A person who possesses animal sexual touching material is guilty of an offence.

Maximum penalty—imprisonment for 2 years.

[5C] Section 547E(3)(a)

Omit "was bestiality or animal crush material,". Insert instead—

was—

- (i) for an offence against subsection (1) or (2)—animal sexual abuse or animal crush material, or
- (ii) for an offence against subsection (2A) or (2B)—animal sexual touching material,

[5D] Section 547E(3)(f) and (6), definitions of "disseminate" and "possess"

Omit "bestiality or animal crush" wherever occurring.

[5E] Section 547E(6)

Insert in alphabetical order—

animal sexual touching material means material depicting the sexual touching of an animal.

sexual touching has the same meaning as in section 79A.

[5F] Section 547E(6), definition of "produce"

Omit "bestiality or animal crush material includes".

Insert instead "material includes".

[5G] Section 547E(6), definition of "produce", paragraphs (a) and (b)

Omit "bestiality or animal crush material" wherever occurring.

Insert instead "the material".

[5H] Section 585

Insert after section 584—

585 Review of provisions relating to animal sexual abuse

- (1) The Minister must conduct a review of the reviewable provisions to determine whether—
 - (a) the policy objectives of the provisions remain valid, and
 - (b) the terms of the provisions remain appropriate for securing the objectives.
- (2) The review must be commenced as soon as practicable after the period of 3 years after the commencement date.
- (3) A report on the outcome of the review must be tabled in each House of Parliament within 12 months after the end of the period.
- (4) In this section—

commencement date means the day on which Part 3, Division 10, Subdivision 13 is substituted by the *Crimes Amendment (Animal Sexual Abuse) Act 2025*.

reviewable provisions means—

 - (a) Part 3, Division 10, Subdivision 13, and
 - (b) section 547E.

No. 14 Procedure for offences

Page 6, Schedule 2.3. Insert after line 19—

[2] Schedule 1 Indictable offences triable summarily

Omit "80," from Table 1, clause 2.

[3] Schedule 1, Table 2, clause 4C

Omit the clause. Insert instead—

4C Offences involving animals

An offence under the *Crimes Act 1900*, section 79A, 79B, 80, 530, 531 or 547E(2A) or (2B).

I will go through the amendments one by one. Amendment No. 1 deals with commencement. The private member's bill is proposed to commence on assent. Government amendment No. 1 will change that so that the Act will commence on a day or days to be appointed by proclamation. That is necessary because the bill contains a number of amendments that change the law significantly. Sufficient time is required to allow for preparatory work to be undertaken by relevant agencies, including training of police officers and prosecutors, systems upgrades and updates to policies and procedures. It is crucial that the reforms are able to be operationalised properly and sufficient time is needed for that to occur.

In relation to amendment No. 2, currently part 3, division 10 of the Crimes Act 1900 is titled "Sexual offences against adults and children". The bill would change the heading to "Sexual offences against adults, children and animals". Division 10 contains the current bestiality offences and will contain the new animal sexual abuse offences. It is therefore appropriate that the division be renamed to reflect its content, namely, provisions relating to sexual offences. Amendment No. 2 will amend the heading of division 10 to "Sexual offences". The Government considers that the shorter and less prescriptive title is appropriate and that is the purpose of this amendment.

I will address amendments Nos 3, 4, 7 and 9 together, as they all relate to the proposed new offence of animal sexual touching and the Government's exceptions to acts of animal sexual abuse. Currently, the bill does not differentiate between sexual assault, sexual touching and other sexual acts in relation to an animal, all of which are captured under the definition, and proposed offence, of animal sexual abuse and are subject to the same maximum penalty of 14 years imprisonment. The approach is inconsistent with the approach taken to sexual offences against people, where less serious sexual offences, such as sexual touching, have lower penalties that are proportionate to the level of conduct.

To address the issue, Government amendments Nos 3 and 9 remove sexual touching and sexual acts from the animal sexual abuse offence and create a new standalone offence of animal sexual touching in new section 79A. The new offence has a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment, which is the same penalty as the one for sexual touching against an adult in section 61KC of the Crimes Act 1900 and less than the penalty for the equivalent offence committed against a child. The Government considers that is the appropriate position and the penalty is proportionate to the level of conduct. The proposed definition of sexual touching that will apply to the offence is also based on the definition of sexual touching in section 61HB of the Crimes Act 1900.

An offence capturing other sexual acts on an animal is unnecessary because we expect that the proposed offences of animal sexual abuse and animal sexual touching will cover the field in relation to sexual offences committed against animals. I note that the Government amendments also propose a statutory review, which can consider if there are any gaps in the law. Amendments Nos 4 and 7 clarify what acts, when done in good faith, are excluded from being animal sexual abuse or animal sexual touching. The Government is concerned that the bill's proposed exceptions to animal sexual abuse do not cover some necessary animal husbandry and medical activities, or acts done for agricultural or aquacultural purposes. In consultation with the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, we have developed a list of excluded acts in amendment No. 7 that capture all necessary activities to ensure that the offence does not overreach.

The proposed exempted acts are based on the exceptions to equivalent offences in Victoria, the Northern Territory and Tasmania but retain some aspects of the bill's proposed exceptions to ensure that all relevant acts are excluded from the operation of the offence. The Government's excluded acts capture all acts done in good faith for veterinary, agricultural or aquacultural hygiene and scientific research purposes, as well as acts carried out to assist a female animal when giving birth. It also includes a catch-all for acts carried out in the best interests of an animal for its physical health and care, and a regulation-making power to prescribe other acts in case any necessary matters are not already captured. The private member's bill introduces an offence of authorising an act of animal sexual abuse in new section 79 (2), which has a maximum penalty of 14 years imprisonment. Government amendments Nos 5 and 8 omit that offence from the bill, as that conduct is already covered by principles of accessory liability and other offences in the Crimes Act 1900. The offence is therefore unnecessary.

Accessory liability captures people who help or encourage a principal offender to commit the principal offence and generally carry the same maximum penalty as the principal offence. Principles of accessory liability have been found to apply to bestiality offences. The case of *Osland v The Queen* [1998] HCA 75 referred to an earlier case where a husband was found guilty of bestiality after compelling his wife to have sexual intercourse with a dog. Existing offences in the Crimes Act 1900 could also cover instances of duress and coercion in relation to animal sexual abuse, including incitement to commit a sexual offence under division 10 in section 80G, coercive control in section 54D and detained for advantage in section 86. It is therefore appropriate to remove the proposed offence of authorising an act of animal sexual abuse from the bill.

Amendment No. 6 inserts a definition of "genitalia or anus" in new section 79AA that only applies to animals. Following consultation with key legal stakeholders, the Government is moving amendment No. 6 to clarify that animals without ordinary genitalia or anuses, such as birds and fish, are also protected by those new offences. An example of the cloaca of a bird is also included to assist with interpretation. The addition of the reference to a body cavity with an external orifice operates to expand the capture of that definition beyond ordinary genitalia.

The bill proposes three new offences capturing the advertising, sale or transfer of animals for sexual abuse, each with a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment or 2,500 penalty units, or both. The Government supports those offences as that intentional conduct is abhorrent. However, only one of those offences includes a mental element of intention. It is appropriate that all three offences include that mental element to avoid overreach. Amendments Nos 10 and 11 introduce the requirement for intention into new section 79B (a) and section 79B (b) respectively. Given the significant maximum penalty for those offences and the fact that the person advertising or purchasing the animal is not the person committing the act of animal sexual abuse, they should only capture people who intend that result.

The bill introduces a new offence of animal sexual abuse in company. It also provides that the offence of animal sexual abuse is to be an alternative verdict to the offence of animal sexual abuse in company. The Government does not support the introduction of an offence of animal sexual abuse in company and therefore does not support the alternative verdict provision. Amendment No. 12 removes new section 80AB. Consultation with key legal stakeholders raised concerns about the policy rationale for an offence of animal sexual abuse in company with a substantial maximum penalty of 20 years imprisonment.

Further, when an act of animal sexual abuse is committed in company, that can be taken into account as an aggravating factor on sentence by virtue of the operation of the in-company aggravating factor in section 21A (2) (e) of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999. The New South Wales Government is also proposing to include a statutory review provision relating to those amendments that will enable any issues in this space to be further considered but, at this stage, based on feedback from key stakeholders and due to the existence of an existing aggravating factor, the Government cannot support the introduction of a new 20-year offence and is moving these amendments to omit it.

Currently section 547E of the Crimes Act 1900 captures producing, disseminating and possessing bestiality—to be changed to animal sexual abuse—and animal crush material. The Government's amendments introduce a new offence of animal sexual touching. To complement that new offence, amendment No. 13

introduces two new offences at new sections 547E (2A) and 547E (2B) of producing, disseminating and possessing animal sexual touching material. The following offences will have lower maximum penalties than the existing offences in section 547E to reflect the proportional seriousness and harm involved in that conduct: The offence of producing or disseminating animal sexual touching material will have a maximum penalty of three years imprisonment, and the offence of possessing animal sexual touching material will have a maximum penalty of two years imprisonment.

Amendment No. 13 also makes a number of consequential amendments to update terminology. Importantly, it also introduces a statutory review provision, so the operation of the amendments will be reviewed three years after their commencement. That will allow any issues in the operation of the offences to be identified, noting that the bill criminalises new conduct. Government amendment No. 14 includes the following offences in table 2 of the Criminal Procedure Act 1987: The offences of animal sexual touching in new section 79A; the offences of advertising, selling or transferring an animal for sexual abuse in new section 79B; the new offences of producing, disseminating and possessing animal sexual touching material in new sections 547E (2A) and 547E (2B); and existing offences related to animals including attempt bestiality, serious animal cruelty and killing or seriously injuring animals used for law enforcement at sections 80, 530 and 531 of the Crimes Act 1900. That means that these offences will proceed summarily in the Local Court unless the prosecutor elects for them to be heard on indictment in a superior court, most likely to be the District Court.

The maximum penalties, available sentencing statistics and the seriousness of the conduct captured by those offences all suggest that they are appropriate as table offences. To be clear, putting those offences in table 2 does not diminish their seriousness or mean that they cannot be dealt with on indictment. In many cases, it may instead facilitate a faster path to justice and more efficient outcomes by the resolution of those matters in the Local Court. The table offence regime has significant benefits for the justice system in terms of reducing delays and facilitating plea negotiations. Importantly, prosecutors can still elect for appropriate cases to be dealt with on indictment, particularly where the Local Court's jurisdictional limit is insufficient to deal with the seriousness of the offending conduct. I commend the amendments to the Committee.

The CHAIR (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The Hon. Emma Hurst, it is not for me to dictate, but I understand that you may also want to move your amendments in globo.

The Hon. EMMA HURST (20:27): Should I speak to the Government amendments first, or should I seek leave to move my amendments now?

The CHAIR (The Hon. Rod Roberts): That is for you to decide for yourself.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: I will speak briefly to some of the key amendments moved by the Government first, and then I will move my amendments. Government amendment No. 1 provides for commencement upon proclamation. I do not oppose that amendment but place on record that I would hate for the bill to sit in limbo. It still has to pass the lower House. Then comes the work of implementation. In the time those steps take, there could very well be a change in those responsible for proclaiming the bill. I would hate for a change of government or a change of Minister at the next election to be the reason that this bill is left in limbo. I recognise and acknowledge the conversations I have had with the Attorney General's office to say that the bill will not languish, and the idea is for the required work to be underway very quickly after the bill passes. I place that commitment on record. It is far too risky for animals, children and people for the bill to fall off the agenda, and I expect the timeline for proclamation to reflect that urgency.

Amendments Nos 3 and 9 establish a separate offence of animal sexual touching. While the Animal Justice Party's preference is to have a single, inclusive offence that captures all forms of sexual abuse, we understand the Government's rationale for creating a separate category for offences of sexual touching. The Animal Justice Party sought to create a definition that would capture all forms of sexual abuse against animals. Cases often involve multiple perverse acts, and we were informed by prosecutors and police that it would be most effective to pursue prosecution if all acts of sexual assault were categorised under a single definition. Splitting the acts into separate offences, especially where some offences carry lower penalties and would arise in a different court, creates a complicated situation for prosecutors, who then need to pursue and provide evidence for multiple charges and potentially make tough decisions about which charges to proceed with and in which court jurisdiction.

That said, I am aware that the approach being proposed by the Government mirrors the existing system in place for crimes against humans, where sexual touching is a distinct offence to sexual assault and carries a lower maximum penalty. I appreciate that within this model sexual crimes against humans are treated with the utmost seriousness. For this reason, as long as both sexual abuse and sexual touching are recognised as a form of assault against an animal, the Animal Justice Party will support this approach. Amendment No. 9 also serves to remove the in-company offence. A standalone in-company offence is central to the purpose of this bill. We were asked to include the in-company offence as a standalone provision with a higher penalty, based on how common it is for

animal sexual abuse to be committed in group settings. Many of the reports of animal sexual abuse occur in company. As with similar offences, the in-company element elevates the level of harm.

The behaviour is normalised and encouraged in a group. It is more difficult for an animal to resist or escape, and the animal may be victim to multiple offenders. A standalone offence would be consistent with other sexual offences, rather than relying purely on aggravating and mitigating factors at the point of sentencing. Animal sexual abuse is yet to be treated with the requisite seriousness in society generally. It is still dismissed, ignored, denied or treated humorously. Again, an express offence would send a clear message that it is of utmost seriousness. The 20-year maximum penalty is aligned with the maximum penalty for aggravated sexual assault against a person, which is an appropriate higher maximum penalty.

Amendments Nos 4 and 7 would change the existing exemptions in the bill and instead provide a definition of an excluded act. I want to be very clear that the exemptions included in the Animal Justice Party's bill sought to exempt only acts done in the best interests of animals, for example, when a vet is taking an animal's temperature or where an animal giving birth needs assistance. I do not and cannot support extending these exemptions to scenarios that are not in the best interests of animals. The excluded acts proposed by the Government include acts that are not in the best interests of animals, including animal sexual abuse that occurs for agriculture or aquaculture purposes and scientific research purposes. Animals in intensive farming industries are some of the most systemically abused animals on the planet. Horrible acts have become so routine and so ingrained in standard husbandry that we have lost sight of what they actually are. If these practices are described in plain language, it becomes very clear they are acts of animal sexual abuse. As for animals in scientific experiments, the level of bodily invasion is beyond shocking and demonstrates complete and utter disregard for bodily autonomy.

While the Government's amendments are likely to pass, it is my assumption that the wording of the amendments means that only the use of animals in accordance with a genuine animal ethics committee approval will be excluded. It would be grossly unaligned with the purpose of the bill for the proposed definitions of excluded acts to allow a loophole for unapproved scientific use of animals, even if performed in so-called good faith. The qualifier of good faith is seriously problematic. My office was contacted by the lead prosecutor at RSPCA NSW, who has extensive court experience dealing with these charges and also frequently provides advice to police prosecutors dealing with these kinds of charges. She informed us that good faith is not a sufficiently robust basis for granting an exemption to a criminal offence. She had examples of recent cases where such a phrase would have completely undermined the ability to prosecute clear acts of animal sexual abuse.

Rather than relying on ambiguous good faith, she proposes that a more appropriate standard would be acts performed on a genuine and reasonable basis. This is something I hope to continue to talk through as the bill progresses through the lower House. It is extremely important that we pass this bill to introduce a definition of animal sexual abuse and, in doing so, ensure these heinous crimes are illegal. I understand the Government will not be supporting the bill without these amendments, and, while I do not agree with them, I will not be opposing them. It is important that the bill passes to protect as many animals as possible from various forms of sexual abuse that are currently not recognised in our laws.

Amendments Nos 5 and 8 remove the authorisation element. I do not oppose this, but I place on record why the authorisation element was originally included in the bill. The main anti-cruelty statute in this State is the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. Section 5 of the Act provides the basic offence of cruelty to animals. It states:

A person shall not commit an act of cruelty upon an animal, and a person in charge of an animal shall not authorise the commission of an act of cruelty upon an animal.

Keep in mind these are criminal offences. The authorisation element is necessary because of the power imbalance. Animals are subject to completely different legal standing and social status. Animals are part of a legal fiction, being considered property under the law, so they begin from a significantly disadvantaged starting point when it comes to protecting their interests. So-called owners of animals have protections, but animals themselves have very few. Animals do not have a legal voice and are particularly vulnerable when they are completely in the hands of a human and at the mercy of that human's decisions about what kind of life the animal is going to have.

Amendment No. 13 adds sexual touching and a statutory review to section 547E. Given sexual touching is set to become a standalone offence, it is appropriate to extend the offence of possession, production and distribution to include animal sexual touching materials. I also support the inclusion of a statutory review as we certainly want to make sure these offences are working in practice to close loopholes and deter dangerous behaviours. It is the Animal Justice Party's expectation that any opportunities to strengthen the offences at the time of the statutory review will be taken. Police informed our office that they wished other Australian States and Territories had a crush offence like New South Wales. It is an excellent sign that the Northern Territory has followed suit on this by introducing a crush offence modelled off the reforms passed in New South Wales by the

Animal Justice Party. This is a sign that there is strength in these laws and that Australia is currently realising the gravity of such acts.

I anticipate and expect any statutory review to recognise the impacts of these offences and, where appropriate, continue to strengthen them. Amendment No. 14 tables certain offences. This Government amendment is adding certain sections of the bill of tabled offences. I can understand the rationale here as those offences carry penalties comparable to very serious tabled offences against children and adults. Where the facts of a case appear particularly severe and deserving of a higher sentence, the prosecution can elect to pursue proceedings in the District Court.

By leave: I move Animal Justice Party amendments Nos 1 to 6 on sheet c2025-067F in globo:

No. 1 Geographical nexus

Page 3, Schedule 1. Insert after line 5—

[1A] Section 10F Special provisions with respect to geographical jurisdiction

Insert after section 10F(3)—

- (4) The necessary geographical nexus exists between the State and an offence against section 79 or 79A if—
 - (a) the offence is committed by a person ordinarily resident in the State, and
 - (b) audio, visual or audio-visual material of the person committing the act of animal sexual abuse is disseminated by means of the internet.
- (5) The necessary geographical nexus exists between the State and an offence against section 547E if the offence is committed by a person ordinarily resident in the State.

No. 2 Aggravated offence of streaming

Page 4, Schedule 1[3], line 11. Insert "**or while live streaming**" after "**company**".

No. 3 Aggravated offence of streaming

Page 4, Schedule 1[3], lines 12 and 13. Omit "abuse in the company of another person or persons.". Insert instead—
abuse—

- (a) in the company of another person or persons, or
- (b) while live streaming audio, visual or audio-visual material of the person committing the act.

No. 4 Advertisement, sale or transfer offence

Page 4, Schedule 1[3], lines 15–22. Omit all words on the lines. Insert instead—

79B Advertisement, sale and transfer of animals for offences

- (1) A person must not do the following—
 - (a) advertise or offer an animal for use in—
 - (i) animal sexual abuse or animal crush material, or
 - (ii) an act of animal sexual abuse,
 - (b) sell, transfer ownership of or supply an animal with the intention that the animal will be used in—
 - (i) animal sexual abuse or animal crush material, or
 - (ii) an act of animal sexual abuse,
 - (c) solicit an animal from another person or offer to purchase an animal for the purpose of using the animal in—
 - (i) animal sexual abuse or animal crush material, or
 - (ii) an act of animal sexual abuse,
 - (d) purchase or otherwise obtain an animal for the purpose of using the animal in—
 - (i) animal sexual abuse or animal crush material, or
 - (ii) an act of animal sexual abuse.

Maximum penalty—2,500 penalty units or imprisonment for 5 years, or both.

- (2) In this section—

animal sexual abuse or animal crush material has the same meaning as in section 547E.

No. 5 Penalties for animal sexual abuse and animal crush material

Page 4, Schedule 1. Insert after line 35—

[5A] Section 547E(1), penalty, paragraph (b)

Omit "5 years". Insert instead "10 years".

No. 6 Penalties for animal sexual abuse and animal crush material

Page 4, Schedule 1. Insert after line 35—

[5B] Section 547E(2), penalty

Omit "3 years". Insert instead "10 years".

I acknowledge that it is unusual to amend your own bill. For context, after this bill was tabled, we received further feedback from police and investigators at the NSW Sex Crimes Squad and the NSW Child Exploitation Internet Unit. The amendments are based on that important and valuable feedback. I will briefly talk to each amendment.

Amendment No. 1 would establish a geographical nexus for certain offences. This amendment is borne out of necessity and was suggested by police who work directly in this field, have experience prosecuting these cases and see where cases that should have been successful ultimately failed. The first part of this amendment would mean that footage depicting a New South Wales resident committing animal sexual abuse would be sufficient to lay charges against that person. What we have heard is that police frequently face a difficult scenario where offending material is shared online, but the physical location of where the offence took place is unknown or cannot be proven. Given so much of the footage is filmed and posted on the internet, and that is the primary source of evidence of these dangerous acts occurring, we cannot have a situation where dangerous individuals are able to use geographical loopholes to escape conviction. By creating a geographical nexus, police can still lay charges where the offender depicted in the footage is an identifiable resident of New South Wales.

The second part of the amendment relates to crush offences. The Animal Justice Party introduced crush offences to the Crimes Act in 2021 with unanimous support. Crush materials are sexual fetish images and videos that depict animals being brutally tortured or killed. It seems obvious that this would be illegal. And yet, until just recently, New South Wales was the only jurisdiction where it is an offence to produce, possess and distribute these violent and perverse materials. Thankfully, the Northern Territory has now introduced a crush offence modelled off our offences in New South Wales. Police have confirmed that the New South Wales crush offences have been essential to their work and that it would be highly beneficial to have equivalent offences in every Australian jurisdiction.

There is clearly a serious and urgent need for national consistency, but until each jurisdiction follows suit, thousands of these videos are being shared without consequence. The second part of this amendment therefore seeks to ensure that a resident of New South Wales cannot simply avoid prosecution by crossing State borders to commit these abhorrent acts. Amendments Nos 2 and 3 seek to ensure that the animal sexual abuse in company offence expressly includes live streaming. Once again, these amendments arise from discussions with New South Wales enforcement authorities. We received feedback from investigators that a lot of animal sexual abuse occurs over the internet, often via live streaming. Those who participate by committing animal sexual abuse for a live audience or by watching an animal be sexually abused live on camera are undoubtedly intensifying the harm of these crimes. Participating in an act occurring in real time, whether in person or over the internet, has a more impressionable and negative impact.

Perhaps not surprisingly, live streaming is also often used as a form of live tutorial to show others how to commit animal sexual abuse offences. Amendment No. 4 seeks to strengthen the offence of advertisement, sale or transfer of animals for animal sexual abuse. Firstly, the amendment clarifies that the offence includes soliciting an animal for animal sexual abuse purposes. Several major websites on the dark web serve as forums for people to share materials and discuss animal sexual abuse. We have seen screenshots of those forums, which include posts where people are seeking to procure or obtain animals. The intention is clear and often graphic. This amendment, therefore, seeks to ensure that people who attempt to solicit an animal are also captured by the offence.

Secondly, at the request of the police, the Animal Justice Party has sought to extend the offence to apply to the advertisement, sale or transfer of an animal for animal crush purposes. Animal crush is a separate offence to animal sexual abuse and, unless expressly included in this offence, offenders could continue to lawfully sell and buy animals for use in cruel animal crush materials. I do not need to explain to members why it would be appalling if New South Wales laws allowed that to happen. The offence would also be proportionate in light of the Animal Justice Party amendments to increase the penalties for crush offences. Amendments Nos 5 and 6 seek to increase the penalties for the production, dissemination and possession of crush materials.

When the Animal Justice Party first introduced crush offences in New South Wales, we proposed a 10-year penalty. Given that it was a new offence in Australia at the time, lighter penalties were moved in an amendment. Since then, crush offences have been so effective that the police are now calling for the New South Wales crush offences to be replicated in all Australian jurisdictions. Animal crush offences are animal torture videos or photos purely for enjoyment or sexual gratification. People who produce or share those materials are dangerous. A five-year penalty does not reflect the gravity of those offences, particularly when it is known that crush offences are a precursor to animal sexual abuse and violence.

It is clear in practice that possession must not be taken as a lesser offence. It deserves a higher penalty than three years. Individuals are being brutally tortured or killed for sexual fetish or perverse gratification. There is no grey area in those videos. They are deliberately violent and purposely inflict the maximum possible amount of pain, suffering and fear. According to statistics, animals are tortured with unimaginable acts designed to prolong and maximise their emotional, psychological and physical pain for the enjoyment of viewers. Possession of those materials should be enormously alarming, and there is no question that it is deserving of a stronger penalty.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (20:41): I will address the amendments moved by the Hon. Emma Hurst one by one. Animal Justice Party amendment No. 1 will insert new section 10F (4) into part 1A of the Crimes Act 1900. Part 1A of the Crimes Act 1900 currently provides for the extraterritorial application of offences. Section 10C provides that an offence can be committed by a person outside of New South Wales if a geographical nexus exists between the State and the offence. Section 10F expressly provides that a geographical nexus exists for certain offences. The amendment will amend section 10F to provide that a New South Wales resident can commit an offence against section 79 "animal sexual abuse or authorising the commission of an act of animal sexual abuse", section 79A "animal sexual abuse in company", and section 547E "produce, disseminate, possess bestiality or animal crush material", if the conduct occurs outside New South Wales and is disseminated on the internet.

The Government does not support the amendment. There are long-settled principles that relate to the requirement for a geographical nexus between offending conduct and the jurisdiction in which a matter is sought to be prosecuted. The amendment would extend that geographical nexus such that it could be established merely on the basis of a person being "ordinarily resident" in New South Wales. That is a substantial expansion of the geographical nexus that may give rise to significant legal and practical complications. Feedback on the amendment indicates that the terminology is vague and not clearly defined, which may create uncertainty, and the effect of the amendment may amount to an overreach of jurisdiction. For those reasons, although the Government understands what this amendment seeks to achieve, it cannot be supported.

Animal Justice Party amendments Nos 2 and 3 will expressly provide that the new offence of animal sexual abuse in company at new section 79A will capture scenarios in which a person commits an act of animal sexual abuse and live streams the act. The Government understands that the amendments are in response to advice that the initial drafting of the "in company" offence at new section 79A would likely not capture people who live stream animal sexual abuse material. The Government does not support the new offence of animal sexual abuse in company, and therefore it does not support these two amendments.

The Government notes that it is likely that live streaming animal sexual abuse material would be captured by the offence at section 547E of the Crimes Act 1900. In many cases, a person live streaming an act of animal sexual abuse would also be captured by the principles of accessorial liability. In particular, the offence of "principal in the second degree" captures people who intentionally and actively help or encourage the principal offender to commit the crime while being present when the offence is committed and knowing all the essential facts of the principal offence. In such cases, the person doing the live streaming would be liable to the maximum penalty for animal sexual abuse, which is 14 years imprisonment. In some cases, a person live streaming the animal sexual abuse could be held liable as a principal offender, for example, if there was a joint criminal enterprise. For those reasons, the Government cannot support these amendments.

Animal Justice Party amendment No. 4 will expand the new section 79B offences in the bill to also prohibit advertising, selling or transferring animals for animal crush material and to create a new offence of soliciting an animal for use in animal sexual abuse or animal crush. The Government does not support the amendment. The Government supports the new offences at new section 79B; however, only the offence at new section 79B (b) includes a mental element of intention. The Government has moved its own amendments to new section 79B (a) and new section 79B (c) to ensure that all three offences include a mental component. That is important to prevent unintended criminalisation. The Animal Justice Party amendment does not include the mental element in new section 79B (1) (a), (c) or (d). That creates a real risk of overreach.

Furthermore, if new section 79B includes offences of advertising, selling or purchasing animals for the purpose of using an animal in animal crush material, that will have the perverse result that the preparatory conduct would attract the same maximum penalty as producing or disseminating animal crush material, and a higher

maximum penalty than possessing animal crush material. That would not be proportionate or justified. The conduct of "soliciting" an animal for the purposes of animal sexual abuse is also not comparable in seriousness to advertising, selling or purchasing an animal for that purpose, and therefore would not be appropriate for inclusion in new section 79B. The Government's consultations with key stakeholders did not identify any evidence of that conduct occurring, so these offences are unnecessary and the Government cannot support this amendment.

Animal Justice Party amendment No. 5 will increase the penalty for the offence of "produce or disseminate bestiality or animal crush material" at section 547E (1) (b) of the Crimes Act 1900 from five to 10 years. Animal Justice Party amendment No. 6 will increase the penalty for the offence of "possession of bestiality or animal crush material" at section 547E (2) of the Crimes Act 1900 from three to 10 years. The Government does not support those amendments. The Government has consulted with key stakeholders and is not aware of any evidence to suggest that the existing maximum penalties in section 547E are insufficient. It is also not appropriate for those offences to have the same high penalty of 10 years imprisonment. The Government considers that the production or dissemination of bestiality or animal crush material is more serious than the possession of that material, and that should be reflected in the maximum penalties, as is currently the case.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (20:48): My colleague Alister Henskens in the other place and I have had the benefit of extensive discussions with the Government. We thank the Government for that. We have also had extensive discussions with the Hon. Emma Hurst about the bill and the amendments. I indicate that the Opposition is happy to support the Government amendments for the reasons outlined by the Hon. Emily Suvaal. However, we are unable to support the amendments moved by the Hon. Emma Hurst, even though we understand and support much of their intent.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (20:48): The Greens support the Animal Justice Party amendments. We do not support the Government amendments for the reasons outlined by the Hon. Emma Hurst.

The CHAIR (The Hon. Rod Roberts): It is not for me to guide debate, but perhaps I can guide the process. Am I correct in suggesting that the Government does not support any of the Animal Justice Party amendments?

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Yes.

The CHAIR (The Hon. Rod Roberts): If the Committee is comfortable with it, I will put the question on the Animal Justice Party amendments first. Once we have dealt with them, I will put the question on the Government amendments. The Hon. Emma Hurst has moved Animal Justice Party amendments Nos 1 to 6 on sheet c2025-067F. The question is that the amendments be agreed to.

Amendments negatived.

The CHAIR (The Hon. Rod Roberts): We will now talk our way through the next section. Does the Hon. Emma Hurst agree to all of the Government amendments or are there issues with some of them? If there are issues, then I will put the questions accordingly.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: We could go through them one at a time.

The CHAIR (The Hon. Rod Roberts): We will do that. The Hon. Emily Suvaal has moved Government amendments Nos 1 to 14 on sheet c2025-173N. A request has been made that the amendments be put seriatim. The question is that Government amendment No. 1 on sheet c2025-173N be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The CHAIR (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The question is that Government amendment No. 2 on sheet c2025-173N be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The CHAIR (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The question is that Government amendment No. 3 on sheet c2025-173N be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The CHAIR (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The question is that Government amendment No. 4 on sheet c2025-173N be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The CHAIR (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The question is that Government amendment No. 5 on sheet c2025-173N be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The CHAIR (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The question is that Government amendment No. 6 on sheet c2025-173N be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The CHAIR (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The question is that Government amendment No. 7 on sheet c2025-173N be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The CHAIR (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The question is that Government amendment No. 8 on sheet c2025-173N be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The CHAIR (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The question is that Government amendment No. 9 on sheet c2025-173N be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The CHAIR (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The question is that Government amendment No. 10 on sheet c2025-173N be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The CHAIR (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The question is that Government amendment No. 11 on sheet c2025-173N be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The CHAIR (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The question is that Government amendment No. 12 on sheet c2025-173N be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The CHAIR (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The question is that Government amendment No. 13 on sheet c2025-173N be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The CHAIR (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The question is that Government amendment No. 14 on sheet c2025-173N be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The CHAIR (The Hon. Robert Borsak): The question is that the bill as amended be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: I move:

That the Chair do now leave the chair and report the bill to the House with amendments.

Motion agreed to.**Adoption of Report**

The Hon. EMMA HURST: I move:

That the report be adopted.

Motion agreed to.**Third Reading**

The Hon. EMMA HURST: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

*Documents***JAMIE CLEMENTS****Further Return to Order**

The CLERK: According to the resolution of the House of Wednesday 10 September 2025, I table a return received on Wednesday 17 September 2025 from The Cabinet Office, stating that no documents that are covered by the terms of the resolution lawfully required to be produced are held.

WOOLLAHRA HOUSING DEVELOPMENT**Production of Documents: Order**

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (20:55): 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 all documents created since 28 March 2023 in the possession, custody or control of the Premier, the Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning and Minister for Western Sydney, 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 Health, Minister for Regional Health and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast, the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, the Minister for Finance, Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, the Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Youth Justice, the Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health and Minister for Youth, the Premier's Department, The Cabinet Office, the Department of Education, Treasury, Transport for NSW, the Ministry of Health, the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, Landcom, the Department of Customer Service, the Department of Communities and Justice (including Homes NSW), Sydney Water or the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water relating to feasibility and infrastructure capacity assessments related to the proposed construction of the heavy-rail train station at Woollahra and the proposed state-led rezoning of Woollahra and Edgecliff stations, and any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.

This is a fairly straightforward motion for the House. Unfortunately, I was unsuccessful when I attempted to move it during formal business this morning. I will not seek to take up too much time. When it comes to housing policy, the Minns Labor Government continues to confuse big promises with actual delivery. Its latest glossy announcement for a train station and up to 10,000 homes in Woollahra is no exception. The Coalition supports the proposal to build a train station at Woollahra and the resulting housing uplift, but the Government's approach to this issue brings more questions than answers.

Members should not forget that this Government has got form. It rushed out the Rosehill debacle which is now not going to happen. Will Woollahra be any better? The Premier does not get the benefit of the doubt when it comes to scrutiny. I believe that this House needs to have a look at some of the Government's analysis for this proposal. What assessments have been done on school capacity in the area? How will local roads handle the thousands of additional people in the area? Is the proposal even feasible? If what will be built in the area is outside the realm of first home buyers, will the market actually move in place? How did the Government come to the figure of 10,000 homes in the first place? To achieve such a figure would require forty-three 39-storey buildings to somehow fit into such a small footprint. Over what time frame will this be delivered? A significant number of strata properties are already in this pocket of the world. How will the Government work with those strata properties and find that densification? This motion is not knocking the proposal. We are trying to understand it better because we have received very little information to date.

One of the other questions we have relates to water. On 11 December 2023 a headline in that journal of record, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, stated, "Minister reveals why Sydney's eastern suburbs were spared housing density push". Two things were cited by the Minister which members should take into account. One concerned water capacity. The Minister said:

Bondi Junction, for example, already resembles a transport-oriented development site; they're already building on their transport hubs with density, ...

He further went on to discuss the high-capacity experienced by transport infrastructure in the area. The article cites that, "The data shows 10.3 million people passed through Bondi Junction." With that kind of traffic, we will need to see what the transport analysis is along the line for the new station in Woollahra. The Opposition supports the Government initiative, but it also wants a few more answers. I hope that this call for papers under Standing Order 52 will achieve that.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (20:59): I thank the shadow Minister for his contribution. I was encouraged to hear where he was heading with this motion. The Government opposes this call for papers because the requested documents mainly pertain to the Cabinet decision around this matter. The Government suspects that the Opposition is looking for ways to not support this important plan. I was pleased to

hear the shadow Minister indicate that he supports the station and the resulting housing uplift. The only trouble is that other Opposition members are not necessarily on the same train. That is the Government's concern.

The Hon. Chris Rath: I am.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I do not doubt the Opposition Whip's position. He is on a unity ticket with us. It is the rest of the Opposition we are concerned about. I was particularly relieved to hear the shadow Minister state his position because I am advised that in the recent budget estimates hearing, held the day after the announcement on Woollahra station was made, the planning Minister asked the shadow Minister eight different times whether the Liberals support more housing at Woollahra, and he got no answer. That is to the shadow Minister's credit.

The Hon. Scott Farlow: We ask the questions, you give the answers.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: The shadow Minister should not have been distracted by the planning Minister challenging him to answer questions. Nonetheless, he ducked every challenge. I am informed that another 11 times during that session the shadow Minister failed to clarify whether the Opposition supports the rezoning plans. I am glad that he did not fall for the bait, but it did lead to questions, and not just about the actions of the shadow Minister but also those of many of his colleagues who have ducked for cover and are running that line anywhere but Woollahra.

I put a couple of things on record. Woollahra train station is slightly longer than the trains that will pull up to it. Sydney Water has confirmed that there is water and sewerage capacity. There is spare capacity of 72 per cent in seven of the local public schools and, of course, it has been well canvassed that the population of the area has declined by 11 per cent over the past 50 years, despite what we have seen across the rest of the State. That is why the Government is backing this plan. Even if this motion is successful, the Cabinet documents that pertain to the plan are unlikely to be produced. The Government looks forward to this discussion. We are happy to provide any additional details, but it would help if the shadow Minister would get the rest of his colleagues on board the train.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (21:02): In the interests of transparency, The Greens support this call for papers. We are particularly interested to see, through the production of these documents, whether the Minns Labor Government undertook any genuine deliberations on whether these 10,000 new homes will be genuinely affordable and whether there was consideration for public housing. The Greens are calling for a minimum commitment of 30 per cent of new homes to be affordable in perpetuity and 10 per cent to be public or not-for-profit social homes. The Labor-Liberal duopoly only cares about housing supply when it involves taking a sledgehammer to safeguards in the planning system and giving handouts to big developers. When it means reform of the system to regulate Airbnbs, or to ensure climate resilience, biodiversity protection or inclusionary zonings for in-fill development, all of a sudden, the duopoly is slightly less interested.

We know that Labor Premier Chris Minns personally intervened to remove protections for renters by removing the requirements for landlords to show proof when they evict renters in order to conduct "renovations". These are hardly the actions of a Premier with a genuine concern for the renters at the front line of the housing crisis. The problem with our planning system is not the so-called red tape or the provisions that protect the environment; the problem with our planning system is that it overwhelmingly benefits developers and the extremely wealthy. Is that what is happening with the Woollahra plan? We will see when we get the documents. Of course we need to densify our cities to avoid the environmentally damaging urban sprawl that The Greens have been calling for an end to for so long, but we do not just need to increase density; we need to increase affordability and accessibility. By surrendering infill development space entirely to developers, we are asking the same people who got us into the housing crisis to get us out.

To rent a new unit in Woollahra costs \$900 a week on average. Even at 80 per cent of market rate, that is enough to put a graduate nurse or a graduate teacher into housing stress. If the Minns Labor Government is looking for planning reform to actually increase housing affordability, then look no further than the thousands of empty Airbnb homes. According to data from Inside Airbnb, for every one rough sleeper in the Northern Rivers region, there are seven whole homes sitting empty; for every one rough sleeper on the Mid North Coast, there are 13 whole homes sitting empty; and for every one rough sleeper in Sydney, there are 11 whole homes sitting empty. I bet there are lots of them in Woollahra. We could unlock thousands of long-term rentals at no cost to the budget by taxing and regulating Airbnbs properly. We look forward to reviewing the returned documents from this call for papers.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (21:05): I move:

That the question be amended by inserting "Sydney Trains, Transport Asset Manager" after "Transport for NSW".

The amendment expands the call for papers ever so slightly. I back in the comments made by the shadow planning Minister. The Opposition is pro Woollahra train station. The best time to build the Woollahra train station would

have been in the Wran Government; the second-best time to do it is now. But the Opposition is opposed to the complete lack of homework done by the Government. We will not get any documents, not because of Cabinet in confidence but because there are no documents and the Government has done no homework. Let us call this out for what it is: a political stunt and a gimmick to try to divide the Opposition. No serious work whatsoever has been done on this announcement.

It is a great idea. I have loved the idea for well over a decade. It is a fantastic idea. It should have been done in the '70s and it should be done now. But let us call it out for what it is. It is a gimmick, a stunt and typical wedge politics by those opposite. It has nothing to do with their concern for more housing in the eastern suburbs and nothing to do with building Woollahra train station. It was not even on the Government's agenda a couple of months ago. It certainly was not on its agenda a year ago when Sydney Water said that there could not be any more density in that part of Sydney.

Now, all of a sudden, the advice has changed and we apparently can have more density there. Of course we should upgrade that part of Sydney. Has anyone been to Edgecliff shops recently? It is revolting. We should have more density there. Even Woollahra Council suggests that Edgecliff needs to be redeveloped, with more density around the train station. It is an excellent idea. It should have been built in the '70s, but the second-best time to build it is today. But let us call it out for what it is: a complete and utter political stunt. There are no documents because the Government has not done its homework.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (21:08): I contribute to debate on the call for papers from the Opposition in relation to Woollahra train station. Why are Opposition members moving the call for papers? It is because this is obviously the next step in their "Anywhere but Woollahra" campaign. Despite what members have just heard, they were nowhere to be seen. They do not like Woollahra, so much so that they ended up concocting a crazy plan to shut down Long Bay jail in order to beef up their eastern suburbs cred on development. What is it going to take to get Opposition members on board? Where are they going to put prisoners from Long Bay jail? Maybe we need some brutalist architecture in Woollahra and we could build the jail there. It is accessible to the station. Would they support that? I doubt it, because they do not support development anywhere near their electorates. We have seen that through a succession of different things. They say they are yimbys. They used to be nimbys. What is the new term?

The Hon. Scott Farlow: ADIMBYs.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: ADIMBYs—appropriate development in my backyard. All of that is code for "I love housing, but do not build it in a Liberal Party electorate." All they stand for is sending it somewhere else. I will move an amendment because this motion under Standing Order 52 is far too wide. I move:

That the question be amended by:

- (1) Omitting "the Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning and Minister for Western Sydney, the Treasurer,";
- (2) Omitting "the Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast,";
- (3) Omitting "the Minister for Finance, Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, the Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Youth Justice,";
- (4) Omitting "the Department of Education, Treasury,";
- (5) Omitting "the Ministry of Health,";
- (6) Omitting "the Department of Customer Service,"; and
- (7) Omitting "Sydney Water, or the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water".

It is an appropriate amendment to confine this fishing expedition under a Standing Order 52 call for papers that is extraordinary in its breadth. It will allow the Government to sensibly manage the ridiculous campaign of the Liberals to try to strike some level of credibility when they just do not support development in any of their electorates.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (21:11): I raise a number of issues, the first one being the blitzkrieg of motions under Standing Order 52 coming from the Opposition. I remind members of the supercilious words of Oscar Wilde, who said that the job of a critic is to educate the public but the job of an artist is to educate the critics. The critics in the Opposition have run out of ideas. In the absence of any policy ideas, they are throwing sand into the gears of every idea that comes along. When an idea comes along, they scramble around and say, "Let's turn Long Bay jail into housing." It is an absolute farce. The Hon. Chris Rath put it better than anyone could. He said, "There are no documents. We don't expect there to be any documents." They are actually looking for nothing; they are hoping to find nothing.

The Hon. Chris Rath: The Minister said that.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: That is what you said. The Hon. Chris Rath said that it has all been so rushed that there cannot be anything there. He is hoist on his own petard. The real issue is that the Liberals are terrified of development in Woollahra, one of their blue-ribbon electorates, and they are not the only ones. Lord Shoebridge of Woollahra is leading the Waverley Greens out, like many times before, against any sort of density in that rotten borough. While we are talking about Woollahra, it would be a really good idea to abolish the council.

We should amalgamate the eastern suburbs councils of Woollahra, Waverley and Randwick, with a bit of rate redistribution to make sure that the people at the southern end of the electorate get some of the amenities and services that the people on the harbour do. But the Liberals do not want to do that. They did not do it. The Hon. Chris Rath says, "Why was this not done in 1975?" Why was it not done in 2015? Why did the Coalition not do it when in government? That is because it was terrified of the blue-ribbon electorate, as it is now. The Opposition has been hoisted on its own petard, and it should come up with some ideas rather than throw sand in the gears, like The Greens, of any half-decent idea that comes along.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Youth) (21:14): I speak in opposition to this Standing Order 52 motion. The Hon. Scott Farlow described it as a straightforward motion. What is not straightforward is the Opposition's position on this particular proposal. I could not agree more with the comments made by my colleague the Minister for Transport that the Opposition is obviously attempting to try to find some way to credibly oppose the proposal. That is clearly the agenda. The Opposition has no way of threading the needle in its position on this issue, so its members are desperately trying to trawl through whatever documents they can come up with to justify a position of opposing housing.

I appreciate that members opposite have said they support the train station. They are more than happy with transport infrastructure being delivered in their electorates. But God forbid we work to combine investment in transport infrastructure with housing uplift, which has been a core principle of our Government's approach to housing since day one and is consistently objected to by the Opposition. In some ways, when it comes to these housing conversations, I feel like we cannot win. We come out with a proposal, and we are clear about our vision to consistently invest in transport and housing that sits alongside, but we rightfully say we want to have a conversation. Much as I am tempted by some of what the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham has put on the record, we rightfully say there is a role for dialogue with organisations like local councils. Yet when we do that and say this is our vision and our proposition and that we want dialogue to fill in the details, based on that feedback, we are lambasted for not having the detail.

The alternative would be that we did all of that detailed work without the conversation that we are committed to having with the community, and we would be criticised yet again—"You have made all the decisions. All the detail is there. Everything is done. There is no place for community dialogue." In an effort to be a sensible government with a clear vision and a clear commitment to delivering housing alongside transport infrastructure, we come out and set the vision. Our agenda is clear, and we create the space for dialogue with the local community. Yet we still cannot get a clear position from the Opposition about whether or not this is a proposition that it can support. We do not want to waste time trawling through documents to try to fix the Opposition's internal problems. We want to spend our time fixing the State's problems by delivering housing alongside transport infrastructure.

The Hon. WES FANG (21:17): It takes three Labor members before I am given the call. Deputy President Kaine has actually done me a favour by letting the Minister for Housing speak before me because, ultimately, she belled the cat on this issue. The Minister said, "The Opposition will not be able to thread the needle." The Hon. Chris Rath was right: This is simply a political wedge by Labor. I do not think there is any plan for housing at Woollahra by the Labor Party, because this is simply a wedge against the Liberal Party. I have absolutely no skin in the game. I do not care how many houses the Government builds in Woollahra. I do not care. The idea is that we are talking about some blue-ribbon electorate. Well, it is just another electorate. There are 93 seats in this State. Whatever electorate Woollahra is in—Vaucluse—does not matter. It is just another electorate, and it just another set of housing for me.

What I want to know is what planning has been done on this proposal. We saw what this Government did with Rosehill. Those opposite lined up, had their big press conference, and what did they do 18 months later? Absolutely nothing. How much time was wasted on that proposal by those opposite? The Hon. Cameron Murphy has moved an amendment to the motion to narrow its scope. That is because, ultimately, he also knows that there are no documents. By narrowing the scope, we prove the point that there are no documents there—"Nothing was returned, but we narrowed the scope".

Ultimately, the scope could be as wide as the whole government and we would probably get the same number of documents back anyway, because that is ultimately all there was. There was literally no work done on

this. The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham says that the Opposition just wants to throw sand in the gears of the Government by moving this order for papers. Ultimately, all the Opposition is doing is asking for documents. No-one is trying to put a handbrake on the development. I do not even see any development happening. I do not know what plans there are; that is what we are trying to find out.

The last point I will make is that the Federal Government now has Ministers and assistant Ministers. In the New South Wales jurisdiction, we have Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries. Maybe we should do what has been done in the Federal sphere and bring in assistant Ministers. We could pretty much call every Minister other than the Premier an assistant Minister, because the Premier is effectively like Scott Morrison: He gives himself every portfolio and runs everything in this place. All the Ministers are only assistant Ministers in this place. We see Chris Minns make an announcement and override a Minister at every opportunity. Let us see exactly how much Chris Minns has done in relation to this.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (21:20): I will speak briefly to the amendment to make three points. Firstly, this policy has been 50 years in the making. We are told to do our homework. The Opposition could rewind the date from 28 March 2023 to 28 March 1975 and they would get even more papers this time around. Secondly, Opposition members' argument is so scattergun. They have scooped up 10 Ministers. Surely, they could be a little bit more laser guided. Finally, we will not be lectured about doing our homework when Opposition members had to move an amendment to include Sydney Trains. This is a call for papers about a train station and they forgot to put Sydney Trains in the motion. They should forget the "do your homework" routine.

The Hon. BOB NANVA (21:21): I want to make a calmer and more considered contribution in opposing the motion, but the very fact that the Opposition is going down this path is as clear an indication as we can possibly get of how fraught an issue housing and planning is for the Liberal Party. Depending on the political circumstance, the Opposition has sought shelter behind every single iteration of "-imbyism" we could conceive of—nimbys, yimbys, adimbys and qimbys—and is desperately twisting, turning and contorting out of taking a consistent and coherent stand on any transport oriented housing proposal. In the end, the best strategy the Opposition has to resolve the housing conundrum is to say that it supports new projects in principle but opposes them in practice. It happens every single time and that is exactly where the Opposition is going here. It is on a desperate fishing expedition to find a reason, as specious as it is, to oppose Woollahra station and more density in the eastern suburbs.

On the Government side of the Chamber, we have no such dilemmas. We recognise that Sydney is going through a housing crisis. We know the key to managing Sydney's future growth lies in having the right planning laws in place, making sure there is transport infrastructure and services in place before new housing is built, leveraging our investment in existing infrastructure and having the courage to stand up for the next generation of Sydneysiders, who do not want to pack up and move interstate because they cannot afford to buy a home in Sydney. What is more, this Government has learnt from the planning mistakes of the past. The story of Sydney's notorious ghost station at Woollahra is a telling case study of those mistakes.

When the eastern suburbs line was being built in 1979—I agree with the Opposition Whip—Woollahra residents fought to make sure their suburbs were bypassed and public transport users were forced to walk to either Edgecliff or Bondi Junction. Since then, the population of Woollahra has declined while the rest of Sydney has boomed. No-one can seriously argue that inner city areas like Woollahra cannot do more to meet Sydney's housing needs. But doing more should not be seen as a burden, as it is in some communities and as it is for the Opposition. It should be seen as an opportunity. It is an opportunity for a renewal. It is an opportunity for a more appropriate residential mix of medium density housing. It is an opportunity to renew areas and to breathe new life into them through cafes, bars and restaurants. It is an opportunity for a sleepy place like Woollahra to come springing back to life just like other town centres have, particularly those in my backyard in Western Sydney.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (21:24): I am glad we have had this very fruitful discussion tonight. We finally flushed out the policy position of those opposite, which is that they want station upgrades but not housing. They say, "Won't someone think of the local shops? Won't someone think about the poor state of Edgecliff shops?" Kellie Sloane, the member for Vaucluse in the other place, opposed development in her part of the world because there was no supermarket. Opposition members will think of any excuse—"Won't someone think about the poor state of the local supermarkets?" The "anywhere but Woollahra" policy of members opposite speaks volumes. Members need not just take the Government's word. Eamon Waterford from Committee for Sydney said:

This could be the breakthrough Sydney's east so desperately needs, taking areas with great amenity and making them part of the solution to our housing crisis.

...

It's going to take clever ideas like this, opening up a planned train line that's been sitting in plain sight for decades—

including the time when those opposite were in government—

to unlock the housing Sydney so desperately needs.

Tom Forrest from Urban Taskforce said the project is "a clear sign we have turned a corner when it comes to planning and housing in infill Sydney". It goes on and on. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (21:26): In reply: Government members have obviously been able to achieve their key performance indicators tonight, being able to talk out a motion and carry on like pork chops. This Government wants so desperately to try to wedge us that even when we are saying, "Yes, we support it. Yes, we support the resulting density of it", they still have to carry on as if somehow they have got the Opposition with this great wedge issue. They say, "We've been able to wedge them!", even when it is not true. Opposition members in this House are saying, "Have you done your homework on this? We want to actually see what the documents are."

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: We are told there are no documents, but then the Hon. Cameron Murphy tell us, "Oh, by the way, it's a fishing expedition. We've got to have an amendment to limit your scope because there will be too many documents." Then the Hon. John Graham says, "Let's get these resolutions back to the 1970s", when Neville Wran axed the project. Government members cannot have it both ways. They do not know whether they are Arthur or Martha when it comes to this proposal and what is actually on the table, which is effectively a very simple proposition to provide us with the documents to show us what capacity assessments have been done and how it got to 10,000; what it will mean for local schools and for local roads; whether there is sufficient water and sewerage capacity; and what the train station capacity is in the area.

Those are all very sensible questions that one would expect the Government would be up-front in answering. But instead, as we see with this Government every single time, it wants to hide them away. They want a big, glossy announcement, but they do not want to do the work behind the scenes. We hope they have done the work. We would like to see the documents, just to provide the community with more information. As the Hon. Wes Fang mentioned, we have seen this all before, such as the big, glossy announcement about Rosehill racecourse. There are big, glossy announcements, nothing is done behind the scenes, and we have a government chasing a mirage.

The Minister for Planning and Public Spaces and his representatives in this House might like to talk about budget estimates—I know he is very frustrated and would love to be in the upper House and ask questions in budget estimates—but we all know that when it comes to budget estimates the Opposition and crossbench members ask the questions and the Ministers answer them, not the other way around. I know that Minister loves to come to budget estimates, not answer very much and pose questions to everybody else. He has taken the Brad Hazzard approach when it comes to budget estimates but—

The Hon. Wes Fang: He's not that good.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I note that interjection. At the end of the day, we want to see some simple documents to educate all of us—the crossbench and the Opposition, and maybe even the Government.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine): Ms Cate Faehrmann and Ms Sue Higginson will cease their audible conversation so that we can put the question. Some other members also rate an honourable mention. It would be appreciated if members could keep the volume of their conversation down so we can get through this wacky Wednesday.

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Scott Farlow has moved a motion, to which the Hon. Cameron Murphy and the Hon. Chris Rath have moved amendments. The question is that the amendment of the Hon. Cameron Murphy be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes15
 Noes20
 Majority.....5

AYES

Buckingham
 Buttigieg
 D'Adam
 Donnelly

Houssos
 Jackson
 Kaine
 Lawrence

Moriarty
 Murphy (teller)
 Nanva (teller)
 Primrose

- (a) the global legal cannabis industry was valued at approximately \$50 billion in 2022 and is forecast to grow to more than \$400 billion within the coming decade;
 - (b) in the United States, the legal cannabis sector generates over \$33 billion annually and supports more than 440,000 jobs, making it one of the fastest growing employment sectors;
 - (c) in Canada, the legal cannabis industry directly contributes more than \$16 billion annually to GDP and supports over 227,000 jobs, surpassing the economic contribution of several traditional industries, including brewing and forestry;
 - (d) by comparison, Australia's dairy industry employs around 33,500 people and contributes approximately \$6 billion annually to the economy;
 - (e) Australia's medicinal cannabis market is projected to grow from nearly \$1 billion in 2024 to over \$1.2 billion by 2028, despite the absence of a comprehensive development framework; and
 - (f) the Victorian Government has recognised this opportunity and adopted a Medicinal Cannabis Industry Development Plan, with a stated goal of supplying half of Australia's medicinal cannabis by 2028 and creating 500 jobs in the process.
- (2) That this House calls on the Government to:
- (a) develop a medicinal cannabis industry policy to support the growth of this emerging sector in New South Wales;
 - (b) consider measures to assist the industry off the ground, including research and development support, investment attraction, workforce training and streamlined regulation; and
 - (c) ensure New South Wales is positioned to benefit economically and socially from the global growth of the medicinal cannabis industry.

I move this motion because New South Wales has before it a clear and compelling opportunity: the chance to build a thriving medicinal cannabis industry that delivers jobs, investment and better health outcomes for our people. Globally, the legal cannabis industry has already surpassed the value of \$50 billion, and forecasts suggest it will expand to more than \$400 billion in the coming decade. That is not speculation; it is hard economic fact, and it is being realised right now in places like the United States, Canada, Germany, Thailand, South Africa and Morocco. In the United States, despite ongoing federal prohibition, the legal cannabis market is worth more than \$33 billion a year and supports over 440,000 full-time jobs.

In Canada, where full legalisation occurred in 2018, the industry contributes over \$16 billion a year to GDP and supports more than 220,000 jobs, outstripping the contribution of industries like brewing, forestry and logging. In some provinces, cannabis is now the single most valuable agricultural crop. By comparison, dairy, one of Australia's cornerstone agricultural industries, directly employs about 33,000 people and contributes around \$6 billion a year in farm gate value. Those figures demonstrate the transformative scale of the cannabis sector overseas. What was once dismissed as a fringe market is now an economic powerhouse, creating jobs and revitalising rural and regional economies. Australia's medicinal cannabis market is also growing strongly. Analysts estimate it will increase from nearly \$1 billion this year to more than \$1.2 billion by 2028. That is despite a patchwork regulatory environment and the absence of a coherent industry development framework.

Victoria has recognised the potential. Its Medicinal Cannabis Industry Development Plan set a clear target to supply half the nation's medicinal cannabis by 2028 and to create 500 new jobs. That is the sort of vision and strategic planning New South Wales needs if we are to compete for our share of the global market. At present our State risks being left behind. Investors and innovators are looking for jurisdictions that will back them with supportive policy, regulatory certainty and infrastructure to get industries off the ground. If we fail to act, those opportunities will go elsewhere, along with the jobs, research and export potential. That is why my motion calls on the Government to develop a medicinal cannabis industry policy for New South Wales.

Such a policy should set strategic goals for industry growth; provide assistance to help companies establish cultivation, manufacturing and research facilities; streamline regulations while maintaining safety and product standards; and invest in the training and infrastructure that will allow the industry to flourish in our State. Medicinal cannabis is not only about economics. It is also about patients who need safe, affordable and reliable access to treatment. By building a strong domestic industry, we can ensure that supply chains are secure, quality is guaranteed, and prices are competitive. Patients should not have to rely on imported products when we can grow and manufacture the highest quality medicines in New South Wales. In conclusion, the evidence from North America shows that legal cannabis can create hundreds of thousands of jobs and add billions to an economy. Australia has the natural resources, the agricultural and horticultural expertise, and the scientific capacity to do the same. What we need now is the political will to make it happen by getting behind the Australian medicinal cannabis industry. I commend the motion and the industry to the House.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (21:45): On behalf of the Government I make a contribution in support of the motion of the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham. The medicinal cannabis industry in New South Wales is a fast-growing sector that contributes to a range of positive outcomes, including health innovation, regional

development and advanced manufacturing. While the industry is federally regulated, our State and our Government play a key role in supporting industry capability and infrastructure. The Australian medicinal cannabis market is valued at \$445.6 million in 2025-26, and New South Wales is one of the largest consumer markets. Reliable data on the value of medicinal cannabis production in New South Wales is limited due to the sector's emerging nature and strict regulatory controls.

The industry is governed federally under the Narcotic Drugs Act 1967, and while the Therapeutic Goods Administration maintains information on product approvals and patient access, economic data is not systematically collected. Strategic support for local production will strengthen New South Wales' position in the national industry. The Office of Drug Control, a Federal agency, publishes a list of medicinal cannabis licence holders who have consented to public disclosure. These licences cover cultivation, production and manufacturing activities under the Commonwealth Narcotic Drugs Act 1967. As of February 2025, at least 15 companies with operations in New South Wales are listed, including the Australian Natural Therapeutics Group, Cymra Life Sciences/EIR Health, Aruma Labs, MedReleaf/Indica Industries, PharmaCrop and MedTEC Services. Those businesses hold various combinations of cultivation, production and manufacturing licences, indicating a strong and diverse industry presence in our State. The list does not include companies that have opted to remain confidential, so actual numbers may be higher.

Through its Regional Economic Development branch, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development [DPIRD] works directly with established and emerging medicinal cannabis businesses in regional New South Wales to support industry growth. That includes facilitation, investment attraction, workforce development and project support. Medicinal cannabis and industrial hemp are treated as distinct sectors due to their different regulatory frameworks and end uses. That distinction is also made to avoid confusion in public perception, which often occurs. While medicinal cannabis is federally regulated and used for therapeutic purposes, industrial hemp is a low-THC cannabis variety that is regulated at the State level and used in food, fibre and construction. DPIRD has focused its support on the industrial hemp sector through initiatives such as the NSW Hemp Industry Development Plan, which I have talked about previously, that outlines opportunities for collaborative research and development, crop productivity improvements and market development. The Government wants to see this sector and this industry grow in New South Wales.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (21:48): While I take the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham at his word as far as the statistics in this motion are concerned, I note that he slightly undersells the value of the dairy industry by excluding the value of manufactured products, which would of course take it closer to \$16 billion. However, I support the crux of the motion. After all, The Nationals played a massive role at the embryonic stage of the medicinal cannabis industry in New South Wales. At that time I had the great pleasure of meeting Lucy Haslam, who has been instrumental on this issue. Mrs Haslam and her husband took it upon themselves to source cannabis for their son, who was dying of stage four cancer. Mrs Haslam recently said:

The effect was immediate. The colour came back into his face. He was hungry again. It gave him some quality of life before he died, aged 25.

This statement is so powerful to me as a father. I cannot imagine what the Haslams went through and the difference it must have made for them just to see that change. They are due a lot of the credit for the decision to support the fledgling medicinal cannabis industry in New South Wales and, effectively, Australia. The work done by The Nationals on this goes back more than a decade. In 2016, on the back of work done by the then Nationals primary industries Minister, Niall Blair, New South Wales became the first Australian State authorised to conduct medicinal cannabis cultivation research. That authorisation was combined with significant investment and a regulatory framework. It was in the wake of a 2013 inquiry chaired by the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, as well as ongoing advocacy from the member for Tamworth, Kevin Anderson, and a former member of this place, the Hon. Trevor Khan. So, yes, I support this motion in line with what we have been doing for more than a decade.

I also had the great privilege of hosting some youth advocates from Youth Action today. We discussed this matter, knowing that it was going to be on the agenda, and their answers actually surprised me a little. While acknowledging the assistance medicinal cannabis has provided to a number of people with certain health conditions, as a group they did raise a number of concerns. They had seen issues such as "doctor shopping" in their own social circles—people getting prescriptions and then sharing that medicinal cannabis at parties. They raised concerns about addiction and several spoke of the risks of psychosis. I also note concerns raised by Lucy Haslam recently, including about the trend towards seemingly unfettered access, which is a big shift away from the initial intent of the policy. The Nationals support the industry and the benefits it can provide. But we also need to make sure it is done correctly. We need strong regulations and even more research so that we fully understand the impacts of widespread use and availability of prescription cannabis, especially when it comes to our young people.

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (21:51): This is a mostly excellent motion and the Libertarian Party supports the idea of cannabis legalisation. Our support for legalisation is not because we have a strong opinion about cannabis but because of more fundamental policy reasons, including the innate value of human choice, harm minimisation instead of the criminal justice system, the value of a legal taxpaying industry and redirected police resources, and our understanding that prohibition leads to the unintended consequences of organised crime and more dangerous drugs. So kudos to the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham for continuing his push for cannabis legislation. That said, there is one part of this motion that is sorely misguided. The motion correctly lauds the commercial upside of a legal cannabis industry. If that is the case, why on earth call for government handouts to support the industry if it is so profitable? Paragraph 2 (b) of the motion calls for "measures to assist the industry off the ground, including research and development support" and "workforce training".

Real industries—industries with true supply and demand—do not need government assistance. I had hopes that the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham was on a rational ideological trajectory—and I believe he is. But he is still stumbling around in the ideological bog of his former party, the big-government loving Greens. He has not yet matured into realising that government sponsorship of an industry is crony capitalism and only hurts the industry. It comes with too many strings attached, which stifle a good industry. The motion bemoans "the absence of a comprehensive development framework" for the industry. I say to the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham that all good new industries are somewhat chaotic—and that is a good thing. Mobile phones arrived on the scene in the mid-1990s. They did not need government subsidies or government-mandated frameworks to become a huge industry; it just happened. Chaos is creative. It will not take long for the cannabis industry to find its feet if there is no heavy-handed government control.

Government subsidies are also counterproductive because they burden all taxpayers with the cost of unnecessary corporate welfare and thereby undermine one of the key arguments for legalisation in the first place. One of the arguments in favour of cannabis legalisation is that it will improve the Government's budget position, bringing in extra tax revenue and decreasing the cost of government enforcement. Those arguments are persuasive to many people who care about good policy, even if they are uninterested in cannabis. We should not then turn around and ask those people to pay some extra tax so that the Government can subsidise businesses that will already be profitable. With paragraph 2 (b) included, I will sadly oppose the motion.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (21:54): I speak on behalf of The Greens to support the motion. It is high time that we legalise cannabis in New South Wales. The legal cannabis industry is a massive and rapidly growing global industry that is worth tens of billions of dollars and creates hundreds of thousands of jobs. In Canada and the United States [US], the legal cannabis market has generated billions of dollars in revenue and created whole new industries. It has freed up police resources, reduced the harm of the black market and ensured that people can access a safer, regulated product. Here in New South Wales, people are still being dragged through the courts for possessing small amounts of cannabis, and patients are still struggling to access their medicine or having to choose between it and driving due to discriminatory drug testing laws that test for the mere presence of THC, not impairment, while the billions of dollars that could be funding our hospitals, schools and housing are instead being handed to organised crime.

Medicinal cannabis is just the beginning. If we were to legalise cannabis for recreational use in New South Wales, as countries like Canada, Georgia, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Germany and Uruguay and at least 24 US states have, the benefits would be enormous. We could build a whole new agricultural and manufacturing sector, create thousands of new jobs, especially in regional areas, and fund vital public services through increased revenue. Most importantly, we could end the failed experiment of prohibition that has caused far more harm than the plant itself ever could. What an understatement that is.

More than 40 per cent of us have tried cannabis. The latest data from the National Drug Strategy Household Survey of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare found that 68 per cent of Australians think that the possession of small amounts of cannabis for personal use should not be a criminal offence, while just 17 per cent think it should be a criminal offence, with 15 per cent being unsure. New South Wales once led the way on drug harm minimisation, but it is now being left behind. The Victorian Government has a plan for its medicinal cannabis industry and the ACT Government has removed criminal sanctions for the use and possession of cannabis for personal use. Let us hurry up and develop a medicinal cannabis industry policy to support the industry here in New South Wales, but let us not lose focus on the real goal here: to end the war on drugs and just legalise it.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (21:57): I make a brief contribution in support of the motion. I do so because, as the Hon. Scott Barrett said in his contribution, in 2012 I was chair of the committee that looked into issues of accessing cannabis for medical purposes. That committee reported in 2013. It was a fascinating committee to be the chair of. We ended up with unanimous recommendations, which is quite extraordinary in this place, considering the membership included myself, the Hon. Robert Borsak, three Labor members, the Hon. Trevor Khan and the late Dr John Kaye, who I acknowledge was very much a pioneer in the space and in

this Parliament. The recommendations were unanimous. Considering there were members from all over the political spectrum looking at the issue, one would not necessarily expect that we would have a united view on it, but the evidence about people using cannabis was so compelling.

I acknowledge the Haslams, particularly Lucy Haslam, for the incredible work she has done. I had the great fortune of meeting Dan and getting to know him before he passed away. I attended his funeral. The way that they were able to advocate for not just their son but others in his condition is still one of the most remarkable things I have seen in my time in public life. There is an industry here. There is real need for people to be able to access cannabis for medicinal purposes. It is important that we have the policies in place. I saw Niall Blair do work in the space as the Minister. We know that cannabis makes a difference for people. The evidence is there. It makes sense for the Government to be backing in a policy for the cannabis industry. I support the motion and thank the member for bringing it to the House.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (21:59): In reply: I thank all members for their unanimous support, apart from the Libertarian Party, and remind them that there was significant government support for the mobile phone industry and the internet when they were getting off the ground. This is not about recreational cannabis. This is about the medicinal cannabis industry as it already is in this State and this country. It is legal and well regulated, and we have an opportunity to expand it to create jobs and an industry, especially in the regions. With that said, and mindful of the time, I commend the motion to the House and thank all members for their contributions.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine): The question is that the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine): According to standing order, it being 10.00 p.m. proceedings are interrupted.

Adjournment Debate

ADJOURNMENT

According to standing order, members made the following statements.

COMMUNITY PRESCHOOLS

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (22:00): A few weeks ago I had the opportunity to attend the opening of the major redevelopment at Albury Preschool funded by the previous Liberal-Nationals Government to the tune of some \$1.8 million. It was a delight to attend the official opening of the service with my colleague Justin Clancy, the member for Albury; Sussan Ley, the local member and Leader of the Opposition in the Federal Parliament; Jo Barton, the director; and other members of the community. I give a shout-out particularly to Bianca Smith, who is the president of Albury Preschool. It was wonderful to celebrate with parents, tradies, community members and the council, who were all part of making that wonderful project come to fruition. The project means that families in Albury will now have double the number of places available for children to attend the preschool. There is big demand for the service. It has been operating for decades at the highest level of quality, and this gives so many more children and families in Albury the opportunity to have a really great start to their learning. As I said, I was just thrilled to be invited and to be a part of the official opening.

I will talk a bit more broadly about community preschools across New South Wales and the campaign from the teachers in those community preschools, who are looking for more support for their wages. It has been well canvassed in the House that the Independent Education Union has been visiting Parliament and meeting with MPs, and my colleagues and I were delighted to host them last week in The Nationals party room. Many of us sat down to spend time with the preschool directors who had come, largely from regional communities, to Sydney to meet with us and talk about some of the challenges they are facing in relation to pay parity. It is not overstating things to say that it is a crisis impacting their workforce.

They told us that they have many services that are barely surviving. They are concerned about staff who are leaving because they cannot afford to pay their bills. They are being outpriced by either the government preschool sector or the long day care sector that receives Federal money, which have been able to put educators on higher pay. There are examples, and they have lot of data that shows the pay parity challenge that our wonderful teachers in community preschools are suffering under. They receive rates of pay that are up to 30 per cent less than their colleagues with the same qualifications and roles in State Government preschools and school settings. The problem is that some of the highest quality teachers working in our preschools are wondering whether they can stay in the sector, and they are the people we need to keep in early childhood education.

We know there are more than 700 community preschools across New South Wales. They are managed by volunteer committees of parents whose only priorities are children's education and safety. They are not for profit, and they have a higher standard than most other services. They are three times more likely to be rated as high quality than for-profit services. It is important that the Government works with the sector to help give it what it wants. The sector is going through negotiations with the Government now. I note that the Government is not the direct employer, and I understand that, but the issue is that the Government is the majority funder of these services, and its responsibility is to fund them for operational purposes.

These services are stuck in a conundrum of wanting to offer low-fee or fee-free places for families, in line with Government policy, but not being able to pay their teachers enough to keep them. So their choices are that they either lose high-quality teachers or they have to up the fees for families, which means that many families will no longer be able to afford to send their children to preschool. We cannot ignore the catastrophic effects that will lead to for those children. It is heartbreaking to listen to those directors. I have known some of them for years, and I have spoken to them about this. They have said that, as experienced preschool teachers of some decades, including some who are in director positions, they are earning less than a beginning teacher in a school, even though they have the same qualification and more responsibility in their roles.

The Government can fix this problem, but it will cost money. The estimates from the Independent Education Union, Community Early Learning Australia and others range from between \$70 million to \$100 million a year, which is not a small amount of money. But in government terms, it is a worthwhile investment. This week the Government announced \$100 million to provide for the expansion of community preschools, but that is by trying to turn them into long day care centres, telling them they have to work longer hours, open additional days and care for younger children. That is a slap in the face to the good model of community preschools, and shows the Government completely misunderstands what the community preschool sector is and does. The Government needs to fund them and make sure teachers get the pay they deserve.

NATIONAL CLIMATE RISK ASSESSMENT

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (22:05): The National Climate Risk Assessment released by the Australian Government this week paints a deeply worrying picture of the climate harms that now face the country and our State. The costs to Australians it has identified under a range of realistic climate change scenarios are astronomical: one million homes effectively uninsurable by 2050, a loss in property value of \$611 billion by 2050 and \$211 billion in lost wealth from reduced labour productivity. The report follows a landmark decision in the New South Wales Court of Appeal last month that went to this very issue, namely *Denman Aberdeen Muswellbrook Scone Healthy Environment Group Inc v MACH Energy Australia Pty Ltd* [2025] NSWCA 163.

The court found that for the Mount Pleasant mine expansion, the environmental impact statement must include a thorough assessment of adverse effects of climate change harms in the locality, including the impacts of downstream scope 3 emissions. It indicated that the climate impact assessment must encompass social, economic and environmental impacts, as required by the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. That is an absolutely monumental decision in the history of this State. This vital decision confirms what the people of New South Wales have been saying for a long time: It does not matter where the coal and gas is burnt, be it here or overseas; it is the ultimate impacts and costs that our communities will bear from the resultant climate change and extreme weather events that must be considered.

Rural and regional communities are sick of paying through the nose for the increasingly extreme costs caused by fossil fuel driven climate events. Insurance premiums are rising, rates are rising to pay for ruined roads and infrastructure, and even the cost of food is rising as the agricultural sector faces an ever more volatile climate. All these costs should be covered by those responsible for climate change, predominantly the fossil fuel sector. Not only is that sector not made to pay, but they have not even been made to assess how much they are costing us—until now. This landmark Court of Appeal decision means that the New South Wales Government can no longer remain blind to the full climate impacts of the coal projects it is approving.

The court set a binding precedent which specifies that consideration of the costs and impacts of climate change in New South Wales is a mandatory consideration when assessing coal projects. That judgement requires a whole new approach from the Labor Government. It cannot keep going with business as usual, ticking off every coalmine that comes before it, as it has with the seven coalmine expansions it has approved so far. Urgent action is needed, and it is needed now. Unfortunately, to date, all I have heard from the New South Wales Government is vague words about getting legal advice, and all I have seen is the biggest coal project in New South Wales, the Hunter Valley Operations project, allowed to go ahead and exhibit a revised assessment that categorically fails to implement the Court of Appeal judgement.

I call on the Minister for Climate Change and the planning Minister to prevent games being played on this issue. I call for a proactive statement from the Ministers that the New South Wales Government will implement

the judgement in full. I seek assurances that all 20 coalmine expansions that are proposed are required to redo their assessments to include climate impacts and then re-exhibit them to the public. I want to see all relevant planning guidelines amended to reflect the judgement. Otherwise all of those projects will end up in the courts, with years and years of litigation.

ANTI-IMMIGRATION PROTESTS

The Hon. BOB NANVA (22:09): The self-proclaimed "Marches for Australia" in Belmore Park and in other major cities should give us all cause for concern because those rallies represented a brazen coming out of this country's racist hard right—very much a minority—which is emerging from the shadows to assert itself as a legitimate force in the political mainstream. Good journalism has helped to shed some light on the people and the groups behind the rallies and what they were trying to achieve. We know that a key organiser of the rally was a woman who goes by the pseudonym of "Bec Freedom". *The Sydney Morning Herald* published a leaked audio recording of Bec Freedom explaining the purpose of the rally and giving her supporters instruction on how to guide ordinary people down the ideological path from everyday patriotism to white supremacy. In the recording, she said:

I understand why people are saying it's not about race. But they're scared.

If we break it down this is how I try to explain it to somebody, OK:

Protect Australian culture, heritage, way of life.

Next step: protect European culture, heritage, way of life.

The next step is: protect white heritage—so it all means the same thing, it's just different ways to put it.

In other words, the rallies were absolutely about race, with patriotism used as a lure to bring people through the gate so extremists could preach their white supremacist rhetoric to a captive audience. That is how it played out on the day. The very first speech of the rally in Belmore Park set the tone. Event emcee Jesse Stewart said:

If the founding stock of Australia becomes demographically replaced, will it still remain Australian?

Whether you like it or not Australia is a British nation.

The people who found it, settled it and built it have Anglo-Celtic blood, and they built it for the Anglo-Celtic people of Europe to inherit.

That talk of founding stock and Anglo-Celtic blood sends a chill down the spine of all non-white Australians. Of course, right-wing political movements are not new to Australia, nor is racism. But actual Nazis have always been seen as extremists occupying a place on the very fringe of society. To see men proudly wearing their neo-Nazi uniforms and being allowed to take the stage and address the crowd, and to march through the streets at the head of a rally, with thousands of people following them, is something that very few of us ever anticipated in our country.

While the rallies were organised by extremists, we must recognise that many of the people who attended the rallies were there for entirely different reasons. Some of the crowd may have been union members. Some of them may have been members of our political parties. A fair few of them may well have voted for me. Those people will probably find my comments confronting and confounding, but my message to them is that they ought not be blamed for being taken in by the deceptive tactics of the groups behind the rallies. The hustlers and the grifters behind the rallies know what they are doing, and they know what buttons to push.

However, I urge everyone to tread carefully. We all ought to stay alert for the signs that we are being used or manipulated, and we have to understand in whose steps we are following. While some people drape themselves in the Australian flag, they betray our sacred banner by using it as a shield to protect themselves while preaching their toxic, imported ideology of division and hate. The people organising those rallies do not have the people's best interests at heart. They do not share our Australian values. They do not care for the country we love.

CHARLIE KIRK DEATH

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (22:13): I quote:

When people stop talking, really bad stuff starts. When marriages stop talking, divorce happens. When civilisations stop talking, civil war ensues. When you stop having a human connection with someone you disagree with, it becomes a lot easier to want to commit violence against that group. What we as a culture have to get back to is being able to have reasonable disagreement where violence is not an option.

Those words are from Charlie Kirk, the brilliant young conservative activist who founded Turning Point USA at just 18 years of age, mobilising millions of young people across America and beyond to champion Christianity, civilisation, patriotism and unyielding family values. Tragically, Charlie was assassinated last week, while speaking at Utah Valley University, where he was advocating for free speech and open debate. Charlie was a man

of conviction who spoke to many thousands on campus, always treating opponents with respect and kindness. He spoke only to facts, never descending into personal attacks, and believed fiercely in the Socratic method, probing ideas through rigorous civil debate. As he once said, without free speech, there is no such thing as truth. Ironically, he died mid-discourse, a bullet silencing the very free speech he fought to protect.

The reaction of some locally on the left to the killing of Charlie Kirk, sadly, has demonstrated a disturbing rise in left-wing intolerance and excuses for violence. The appalling social media post of Hannah Ferguson of Cheek Media, who wrote after Kirk's murder "Is violence sometimes necessary? Yes", is symptomatic of a leftist culture that is, quite frankly, morally bankrupt. The fact that a legislator like the disingenuous Zali Steggall chose to like such a post is shameful. Agreeing to disagree, without the need for violence, hate or cancel culture, is vital for the survival of any democracy. And it is at our own universities in New South Wales, which, sadly, have in many ways followed American campuses in becoming intolerant of views that challenge the left's long-term dominance, where we need to see respectful debate and disagreement once again thrive. We need young Australians to get involved in politics, and we need them to place, like Charlie Kirk did, a value on civil debate and discourse.

Like many of my fellow members of this place, my introduction to political debate and the battle of ideas was on campus in the mid 1990s, through the Australian Liberal Students' Federation and the National Union of Students [NUS]. I recall debating at Macquarie the leftist student union president who went on to become The Greens member for Balmain. I recall at NUS a Socialist Left Labor student named John Graham becoming national president. I remember hearing about names like Penny Sharpe and ADA. I remember Labor Unity personalities like the Hon. Tania Mihailuk. I remember Liberals active on campus fighting for voluntary student unionism, like my friends the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones and the successful Liberal candidates for University of Technology Sydney union president, now in the other place, the member for Lane Cove and the member for Willoughby. My point is that we—Liberal, Labor, the left—disagreed passionately but civilly. There was no violence. We encouraged young people to engage in political debate and stand up for their convictions.

Yet, in recent times, this has fallen apart. Throughout human history, conflict meant violence—tribes clashing, empires falling in blood. But, in the West, we achieved a miracle: solving disputes through debate, not death. This Parliament is that miracle embodied. It is a legacy to cherish and protect, especially for our youth. I call on young people to not emulate this cowardly assassin, to reject violence and embrace healthy debate, as Charlie did. Free speech is the remedy to violence. It airs grievances, builds understanding and prevents the rage that festers in silence. As Charlie said, the answer to bad speech is more speech, not enforced silence. Some opposed Charlie's views, but he devoted his life to engaging those opponents in open dialogue, which is the essence of democracy itself.

In the past two years, we have heard endless warnings about threats to democracy. Let us be unequivocal: The real peril lies in equating mere words with acts of violence. Yet, tellingly, no riots or looting have erupted across Australia in response, for that is not how the right conducts itself. We respond with restraint and resolve. Fittingly, Charlie founded Turning Point USA, and today we stand at a turning point. The path ahead looks foreboding, but we must steer it towards light. Charlie lived these truths. Let us honour him by recommitting to them. In New South Wales we must safeguard free speech in our universities and streets. If fear now silences us from defending free speech, the assassin triumphs. For family, for freedom, for the miracle of debate, let us never let silence win.

ANTI-IMMIGRATION PROTESTS

Dr AMANDA COHN (22:18): On 31 August rallies against immigration were held across the country, with the open support and attendance of neo-Nazis. In my own regional community, an estimated 250 people attended. Our collective response to the rise of fascist ideology and neo-Nazism within the communities we represent should be a simple and unifying one. We fought a world war in opposition to fascism and Nazism. This history lesson was not lost on the neo-Nazis who chose to gather at my local war memorial. As a third-generation Holocaust survivor and a queer woman, the rapid rise of neo-Nazism in Australia has chilled me to my core.

Of course, the Nazis did not only come for the Jews. They targeted people with disability, people of colour, LGBTQIA+ people and people with dissenting political views. These rallies should serve as a call to action for all of us, not only those of us directly threatened by them. Threats to any marginalised group of people make us all less safe. LGBTQIA+ events across the State have increasingly been targeted by hate groups. I was at the Albury Pride Night film festival earlier this year. This screening of short films at our local cinema was confronted by a crowd of neo-Nazis with explicit, threatening messages.

For the past seven years I have been working to draw public and police attention to the threat of neo-Nazis within my regional community. I spoke about it in my inaugural speech to Parliament. Far-right extremist movements thrive when people are disenfranchised and disconnected. People with a white supremacist agenda

have a much easier time scapegoating migrants and people of colour when owning a home is just a pipedream for most young Australians, when wages are well behind the cost of living and when people are so focused on putting food on the table that they do not have the time and energy to meaningfully connect with each other. We cannot solve these problems with policing and law enforcement alone. If anything, successive governments have made it worse.

During the height of the COVID pandemic, instead of sending out nurses and social workers to support households through lockdowns, the Government sent in police to target already marginalised communities. The Minns Labor Government doubles down on criminalising children rather than providing the supports they need to break the cycle of poverty and disenfranchisement. If people had access to safe housing, fair wages and opportunities for connection and recreation, it would not be as easy as it has been for far-right extremist groups to grow. We cannot combat a problem if we do not begin by naming it. We have the problem of Nazism in this country, and we have the problem of racism in this country.

The Australian Human Rights Commission has produced an excellent road map to eliminating racism in Australia through the National Anti-Racism Framework. Its recommendations say that leadership from State Governments is particularly needed for education, health and the justice system. Instead of implementing this, some of my colleagues in this Parliament are using their platform and their privilege to amplify division and hate. The media, even those parts of it intending to critique or analyse far-right organisations and events, has platformed and disseminated propaganda.

My Oma and Opa were forced to flee the Holocaust as German Jewish teenagers. Their stories are well documented in my Opa's memoir, including his forbidden visit to the Berlin Olympics. He tells us this was possible only because of the large influx of foreign visitors at the time. My Oma survived the notorious Kristallnacht with her father by riding round and round on the train that circled Berlin with the family savings stuffed in her socks. My great-grandparents and great-uncle died at Auschwitz and Theresienstadt concentration camps. My Oma and Opa's experiences taught me the danger of an "us versus them" mentality and the importance of standing up for all persecuted people. In their memory, we must actively oppose neo-Nazism today and every day. Never again for anyone.

POLITICAL VIOLENCE

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (22:22): I speak of a matter of grave importance for our democracy: the recent acts of political violence both in Australia and overseas. What most immediately comes to mind is the recent shooting of United States alt-right commentator Charlie Kirk, which has shocked people not only in the United States but across the world. Obviously, political violence is unacceptable. There cannot be a moral justification for taking the life of another due to their political beliefs. Even stark divisions cannot be solved by violence. It has no place in politics or public life. But in saying that, we must face some uncomfortable truths.

First, the general devaluing of human life, particularly certain human lives, gives rise to an environment in which violence is more common and likely. As someone who advocated for televised public executions and stoning members of the LGBTQI+ community to death, Kirk was, unfortunately, part of the culture and discourse which argues that some lives are worth more than others. Second, political violence is on the rise globally and here in Australia. Third, the vast majority of political violence in recent years has been committed by those on the right. According to the Anti-Defamation League, there has been a sharp increase in right-wing terror incidents since 2017 in the United States. Further, white supremacists were responsible for the majority of those incidents. Unfortunately, I fear this trend is being reflected in Australia. Here, organised extremism does not come from the left. It comes from the far right, authoritarian groups and organisations, and self-identified Nazis.

We saw this on full display just weeks ago at the so-called March for Australia, held on 31 August in cities across the country, including Sydney. While billed as an anti-immigration protest, it was revealed by *The Sydney Morning Herald* that the march was organised by, attended by and platformed speakers from an openly neo-Nazi organisation, the National Socialist Network, as well as other extremists and white supremacists. One such person was Bec Walker, also known as Bec Freedom. Ms Walker has identified herself as one of the organisers of the march. Ms Walker held a two-hour livestream on X on 11 August, during which she said:

Protect Australian heritage ... the next step is protect white heritage. So it all means the same thing.

On the same live stream, she openly admitted that the use of terminology such as "protecting Australian culture" was a tactic to prevent the media calling the march a Nazi rally. If the march was not a white nationalist rally, you could have fooled me. Protesters carried banners calling for white heritage to be defended and chanted, "Australia for the white man". They harassed and intimidated a man and two young children in attendance, simply for holding an Aboriginal flag. Online, the organisers and their supporters shared pro-Hitler memes and other Nazi paraphernalia. As per the ABC, the official website for the rally at one stage included references to the white

nationalist concept of remigration and the white supremacist conspiracy of the "great replacement theory"—of which, incidentally, Kirk was also a proponent.

We cannot sanitise what this is. It is fascism dressed up as patriotism. The consequences of such mobilisation are not abstract. The very next day in Melbourne, a group of known neo-Nazi figures violently attacked Camp Sovereignty, a sacred First Nations protest site. Armed with sticks and poles, they brutally, physically attacked women. A group of men kicked a prone woman on the ground and destroyed the Aboriginal flag. They chanted "white power" and used slurs that belong to the ugliest chapters of human history. This was political violence—targeted, deliberate and hateful. That is why we cannot fall into false equivalence.

Yes, political violence of any kind must be condemned. But we must also acknowledge where the real and present danger lies. It is not progressive students. It is not unions. It is not multicultural communities. The real threat comes from a resurgent, racist far right emboldened by international networks, spreading hatred and sometimes taking up arms. The shooting of Charlie Kirk is a reminder that political violence is always dangerous and corrosive, no matter the cause or the target. However, our focus must be on where the threat is greatest. The violent far right cannot be normalised, excused or ignored, here or overseas.

PRIMARY PRODUCER LAND TAX

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (22:27): For some time in New South Wales a land tax exemption has applied to primary producers. This has also always been applied to grapegrowers, including where producers process those grapes into wine and then set up a cellar door on their property. Recently, for some unexplained reason, a reinterpretation of these laws by Revenue NSW has seen businesses hit with land tax bills up to \$150,000. The producers cannot absorb those costs. It is a massive blow to not just those businesses but also the communities they support. The cellar doors and other agritourism businesses that this will affect attract and keep tourists in our regional communities. They provide jobs and income as well. This move is anti-business, anti-tourism and anti-regional New South Wales. I urge the Government as strongly as possible to overturn this change, and I look forward to work with anyone who strives to see this happen.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The House now stands adjourned.

The House adjourned at 22:29 until Thursday 18 September 2025 at 10:00.